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Cooperation Committee
for Cambodia
Comité de Coopération
Pour le Cambodge

Tokyo Democracy Forum 2021
Covid-19, Civic Space & Democracy
National Report: Cambodia

The Cooperation Committee for Cambodia

31 January 2021

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Executive Summary

Cambodia has gone, and is going through a turbulent period. This has seen civic space shrink dramatically, and a return to autocratic practices by the government. This report is a compilation of fundamental information on democratic governance in Cambodia, impact of Covid-19 on SDGs, human rights and civic space, and overall responses to Covid-19 by the government, civil society organizations between January 2020 and January 2021, and policy recommendations.

Cambodia has first community outbreak of Covid-19 in November 2020. However, until January 2021, widespread community transmission of the Covid-19 did not happen in Cambodia. More than 70% of Cambodia's total confirmed cases were acquired overseas, and the remaining are linked to those "imported" cases. Cambodia remains in Stage 1 of the outbreak, where most cases of the Covid-19 are imported case. Unlike its neighboring countries like Thailand and Vietnam, Cambodia did not have a complete lockdown or compulsory stay-home orders. By January 25, 2021 it has 458 positive cases, which included 156 Females, of which 409 have recovered. 375 cases were acquired overseas, representing 18 nationalities in additional to Cambodian. No deaths have been reported. Cambodia's public health surveillance and response system is continuing to work well to detect and response new cases.

The Covid-19 pandemic caused humerous social, health and economic impact. The pandemic exacerbates the vulnerability of specific group of workers including women, children, indigenous people and migrant workers due to unemployment and underemployment of informal works. The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly disrupted Cambodia's growth and could recess this country's economic from 7.2% in 2019 to -2.9% in 2020. The economic shocks cause medium-term impacts on poverty and welfare, especially among the more vulnerable in society and those who work in the informal economy. COVID-19 posts economic threats to different aspects of Cambodia's development, with tourism, manufacturing for export and construction seen to be the most affected sectors. Simultaneously, civil society organizations, especially media organizations, reporters, editors and rights group, etc., have expressed serious concern over the restriction environment and curtailment of freedom of expression for Cambodian citizens.

Civil society is a crucial actor in monitoring and implementation of SDGs, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic on democracy and civic space. In addition, CSOs expressed concern for potential gendered issues that may be exacerbated during and after the Covid-19 pandemic such as gender based violence (GBV) and discrimination against women and girls. For enabling environment point of view, CSO is active in holding policy-makers to account for the commitments they have made to meaningful participation, accountability, non-discrimination, empowerment, and to link SDGs 16 to human rights standards/mechanism. Fundamental freedom, especially the freedom of expression, is a key principle to foster important roles of citizen and the functioning of democratic society. Within this regard, everyone shall have the right to freely express their concern and opinions without interference from the government.

Acknowledgement

The Cooperation Committee for Cambodia (CCC), wishes to acknowledge the support and assistance to enable the National Report on Covid-19, Civic Space & Democracy in Cambodia to be undertaken, in particular from the Japan NGO Center for International Cooperation (JANIC), as a part of HAPIC (Happiness Idea Conference).

This Report will contribute to CSOs' as well as CCC's on-going efforts to improve implementation and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Cambodia at both national and international level. It is hoped that this Report will be used for guiding improvement in contributing to creating a more enabling environment and promoting more inclusive partnerships through the SDGs mechanism pertaining to the activities of CSOs, the Cambodia government and other key development stakeholders in Cambodia.

INTRODUCTION

1. Authors and Organizations

This report is compiled by the Cooperation Committee for Cambodia (CCC).

CCC is the longest-established membership organization in Cambodia. Since 1990, it has played a unique role in strengthening effectiveness of the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) working across diverse sectors in Cambodia. We have also established formal collaboration with 15 provincial NGOs networks out of 25 provinces in Cambodia. CCC plays a unique role as an enabling agent to facilitate civil society to collectively response and accountably work together for respect of human rights, democracy, good governance, enabling environment and sustainability of CSOs to achieving its vision for sustainable development for Cambodia.

We would like to express our gratitude to Cambodian participants' team namely Mr. HONG Reaksme, Ms. ONN Sokny, Mr. SOURN Butmao, and Ms. CHHORN Reakshar. They attended the Kyung Hee Civil Society Capacity-Building Program on SDGs in Asia 2020. The participants produced the Cambodia Country Report on Sustainable Development Goals.

2. Abbreviations and Acronyms

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CCC	Cooperation Committee for Cambodia
CARD	Council for Agriculture and Rural Development
CMDGs	Cambodian Millennium Development Goals, the localized development framework applied between 2000-2015
CRDB/CDC	Cambodia Rehabilitation and Development Board/Council for Development of Cambodia
CMAA	Cambodia Mine Action Centre
CNM	National Malaria Centre
CNMC	Cambodia National Mekong Committee
CSDGs	Cambodian Sustainable Development Goals, the localized development framework to be applied from 2016-2030.
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
E.U	European Union
LANGO	Law on Associations and Non-Governmental Organizations
MAFF	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
MSC	Ministry of Civil Service
MoEF	Ministry of Economy and Finance
MIF	Ministry of Information
MIH	Ministry of Industry and Handicraft
MLMUPC	Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning & Construction
MLVT	Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training
MOC	Ministry of Commerce
MOE	Ministry of Environment
MOI	Ministry of Interior
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs & International Cooperation
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoP	Ministry of Planning
MoND	Ministry of National Defense
MoSVY	Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation
MoT	Ministry of Tourism
MoWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs
MPAI	Ministry of Parliament Affairs and Inspection
MPT	Ministry of Post and Telecommunication
MPWT	Ministry of Public Works and Transport
MRC	Ministry of Cult and Religion
MoEYs	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
MRD	Ministry of Rural Development
MWRM	Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology
NAA	National AIDS Authority of Cambodia

NACD	National Authority for Combating Drugs
NBC	National Bank of Cambodia
NCDD	National Council for Decentralization and De-concentration
NCDM	National Committee for Disaster Management
NIS	National Institute of Statistic
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organization
NSDP	National Strategic Development Plan
OHCHR	(the United Nations) Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OCM	Office of Council of Ministers
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations

3. Major website address about national Covid-19, SDGs, Human Rights, etc.

No.	Issues	Websites
1.	Public Institutions and WHO on Cambodia	http://moh.gov.kh/?lang=en https://www.facebook.com/MinistryofHealthofCambodia https://www.who.int/cambodia
2.	SDGs	https://opendevelopmentcambodia.net/topics/sustainable-development-goals/ https://www.nis.gov.kh/index.php/en/about/general-information https://www.facebook.com/mop.gov.kh/
3.	Human Rights	https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/cambodia https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/asia-and-the-pacific/cambodia/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&gclid=Cj0KCQiAwMP9BRCzARIsAPWTJ_HxVd-Jco99k2OQhs6BI-nFulSSm3gIBOP1L75_-CQ9LG7sQOu8LogaApK2EALw_wcB https://cchrcambodia.org/index.php?url=home.php&id=1 https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/CAMBODIA-2019-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf
4.	Covid-19	https://opendevelopmentcambodia.net/topics/sustainable-development-goals/ https://data.opendevelopmentcambodia.net/en/dataset/ccc-vnr-csdgs https://www.kh.undp.org/content/cambodia/en/home/sustainable-development-goals.html https://www.unescap.org/op-ed/sustainable-development-2030-achievable-cambodia-and-asia-and-pacific https://www.csdgs.org/en/
5.	Civil Society Organizations on Covid-19, SDGs, and Human Rights	https://www.icnl.org/resources/civic-freedom-monitor/cambodia https://plan-international.org/press-release/2020-06-01-will-we-listen-them-covid-19-vs-childrens-rights-cambodia https://opendevelopmentcambodia.net/profiles/socio-economic-impact-of-covid-19-on-cambodia/ https://www.ccc-cambodia.org/en/resources/event-archives https://plan-international.org/publications/joint-statement-childrens-rights-and-covid-19-response-cambodia https://monitor.civicus.org/country/cambodia/ http://www.hacccambodia.org/

Main Section

A. Data and Trends about Covid-19

A.1 Chronology from January 2020 and 31 January 2021

Date	Global / National Events
Dec. 31, 19	China reports a cluster of 41 cases of pneumonia-like sickness in Wuhan. The World Health Organization is alerts by the Chinese authorities of a new and highly-infectious spreading in the Hubei province.
Jan. 10, 20	Ministry of Health deploys scanners and personnel at international airports in Phnom Penh, Siem Reap, and Sihanouk province to detect early symptoms of the novel coronavirus.
Jan. 13, 20	The Cambodian government issues travel warning to citizens with plans on going to Wuhan or any part of the Hubei province.
Jan. 28, 20	Cambodia confirms its first case from a Chinese tourist visiting Sihanouk province.
Feb. 10, 20	First case of Covid-19 in Cambodia officially cured and discharge.
Feb. 12, 20	MS Westerdam, a European cruise ship is allowed to dock in Sihanouk province after being turned away by 5 countries due to 20 suspected cases on the ship. All former Westerdam passengers and crew who were tested for Covid-19 have been found to not have the viral infection.
Feb. 21, 20	Vietnamese authorities require Cambodian visitors to have health check-up at the border before being allowed into Vietnam.
Mar. 13, 20	Cambodia now has a total of 7 Covid-19 confirmed cases.
Mar. 14, 20	The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport push e-learning class as schools and universities have closed to help prevent the spread of the virus. The government declares a ban on foreigners coming from Italy, Germany, Spain, France, United States and Iran.
Mar. 16, 20	Covid-19 cases in Cambodia rises to 12. The Ministry of Health has designed 3 Phnom Penh hospital as Covid-19 treatment center, including 25 provincial referral center in anticipation of more confirmed cases.
Mar. 17, 20	Covid-19 cases double to 24 after 11 Cambodian who returned from a religious congregation to Malaysia tested positive for Covid-19. KTVs, Cinemas and religious gathering were ordered to be closed and suspended until the Covid-19 outbreak was contained.
Mar 18, 2020	The government instructs ministries to begin working from home.
Mar. 19, 20	Cambodia government sets up the National Commission for Combating Covid-19 to oversee the implementation of the strategic plan for the prevention, control, and management of Covid-19, respond to issues of political, economic and social aspects at all levels.

Mar. 24, 20	Confirmed cases soar to 87.
Mar. 26, 20	More than 3,000 rooms have been reserved across the Kingdom in anticipation of a surge in cases.
Mar. 31, 20	Confirmed Covid-19 cases increase to 109. The Government has announced that the government will be convening to draft a bill declaring a state of emergency for the Kingdom of Cambodia.
From Mar. 22, 20	Influx of over 100,000 Cambodian migrants' workers returning from Thailand were instructed to follow quarantine measures in their homes with oversight by local authorities. Banning of mass gatherings included cancellation of Khmer New Year Holiday in mid-April with travel restrictions between provinces and quarantine measure upon return.
Apr. 7, 20	Cases in Cambodia increased to 115 after 3 days of no new infections. Total recovered cases have gone up to 54.
Apr. 9, 20	The government mandated a provincial restriction of movement throughout Cambodia. The decree prevents civilians from traveling between provinces with exemption for medical staff, armed forces, government officials on official business, and transportation of goods.
Apr. 13, 20	Total of confirmed cases reached 122, 77 have been cured of Covid-19.
May 20, 20	Lifting of bans of international arrivals from several high-burden countries, but applying strict entry requirements for all non-diplomatic foreigners entering Cambodia including: requiring negative Covid-19 health certificates, medical insurance, testing upon arrival, 14-day quarantine and further testing on day 13.
June 9, 20	The government announced a cash transfer scheme for I.D Poor 1 and 2 Card Holders, children under five, elderly persons, disable persons, and people living with HIV.
July 8, 20	The Asian Development Bank announced a \$250 million loan to support Cambodia's Covid-19 response by strengthening Cambodia's health care system, increasing social assistance to the poor and vulnerable, and providing stimulus to business.
July 15, 20	The Ministry of Interior hosted a high-level meeting between the Royal Government of Cambodia and UN Country Team on Joint Programme to Support Returning Migrants during Covid-19 Crisis and Its Impacts.
July 21, 20	A Council of the Ministers Letter announced that 20-high-safety standard schools in Phnom Penh, Siem Reap, and Battambang will be allowed to open from August as the first of a three-phase reopening plan. The first phase is for schools with higher standards, the second is for schools with medium standards and the third is for schools with minimum standards.
July 22, 20	21-year-old Cambodian man died while isolated in a quarantine center in Tbong Khmum province. He was a returning migrant worker who entered Cambodia by land via Thailand and was tested negative for Covid-19.
July 26, 20	There was a temporary suspension of incoming flights from Malaysia and Indonesia. The measures come in response to the significant increase in positive cases arriving from these countries in June and July.

Aug 2, 20	240 Confirmed cases of Covid-19 have been reported from Cambodia, of which 197 have been recovered. Among those reported, 84% of the 240 cases were imported, and the remaining cases were locally acquired and have all been epidemiologically linked to confirmed cases. 1,114 contacts are being quarantined at a quarantine center in Phnom Penh or in their respective province and are monitored daily for possible development of symptoms.
Aug 3, 20	The government has launched an Interactive Voice Response (IVR) tracking system to automatically receive incoming and outgoing calls from the 115 response hotline, aiming to ease congestion and quickly identify potential Covid-19 cases.
Aug 25, 20	The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport issued guidelines for the second phase of the plan to re-open schools. After six months of closures, four provinces that are considered at low risk for Covid-19 transmission are not allowed to reopen education facilities for all levels, from public kindergartens to high school, while the rest of country have reopened classrooms for Grade 09 and Grade 12 students.
Sep 20, 20	275 Confirmed cases of Covid-19 have been reported from Cambodia, of which 274 have recovered. 237 cases were acquired overseas, representing 11 nationalities in addition to Cambodian.
Sep 21, 20	The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport authorized directors of education departments across the country to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with and issue reopening permits for schools licensed by their respective One Window Service Office.
Sep 24, 20	The first phase of the second round of cash subsidies handed out to poor and vulnerable people during Covid-19 was completed. Almost a quarter of a million people have received pay-out totaling \$28.1 million in cash since August 24. The Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation announced that 644,665 families have received assistance during the second round of the programme.
Sep 27, 20	276 confirmed cases of Covid-19 have been reported from Cambodia, of which 275 have recovered. 238 cases were acquired overseas, representing 12 nationalities in addition to Cambodia, with the rest locally acquired.
Oct 11, 20	283 Confirmed cases of Covid-19 have been reported from Cambodia, of which 278 have recovered. 245 cases were acquired overseas, representing 12 nationalities in addition to Cambodian, with the rest locally acquired.
Nov 03, 20	The Hungarian Foreign Minister and his delegation visited Cambodia. He tested positive for Covid-19 in Thailand. Cambodian bodyguard to the foreign minister tested positive for Covid-19, the first locally acquired case in Cambodia for more than 180 days.
Nov 4-18, 20	1741 contacts were tested. Three further cases linked to this event were reported. Of the 1422 contacts tested on 18 November, none were positive for Covid-19.
Nov 28, 20	A Cambodian woman without a travel history tested positive for Covid-19 after displaying respiratory symptoms.

Dec 10, 20	The Ministry of Health has identified 39 cases in the cluster of November 28, 2020. Cambodia has reported 356 cases to date, with 275 cases acquired overseas and 81 cases locally acquired. No deaths have been reported.
Dec 10, 20	Laboratory testing capacity in Cambodia has increased since early 2020, from 500-600 samples per day at one lab, to more than 3000 samples per day in December. The three main Covid-19 testing laboratories are IPC, the National Institute of Public Health and Siem Reap province.
Jan 04, 21	More than 4,000 migrants have returned from Thailand and so far 17 individuals tested positive for Covid-19. 382 confirmed cases of Covid-19 have been reported from Cambodia, of which 362 have recovered. 299 cases were acquired overseas, representing 16 nationalities in addition to Cambodian, with the rest locally acquired.
Jan 11, 21	From 23 December 2020 to January 11, 2021, more than 14,000 samples collected from land borders were test. 392 confirmed cases of Covid-19 have been reported from Cambodia, of which 374 have recovered.
Jan 18, 21	Total number of Covid-19 is 439 confirmed cases. 69 Covid-19 cases involving returnees from Thailand were reported. 386 have recovered. 356 cases were acquired overseas, representing 17 nationalities. The Ministry of Health is providing support to provincial hospital at border including high-level visits, on-site support from national hospitals to provincial hospital, provincial establishment of quarantine facilities (e.g. guest houses, tented areas).
Jan 25, 21	82 Covid-19 cases involving returnees from Thailand were reported. 458 confirmed cases of Covid-19 have been reported from Cambodia, of which 409 have recovered.

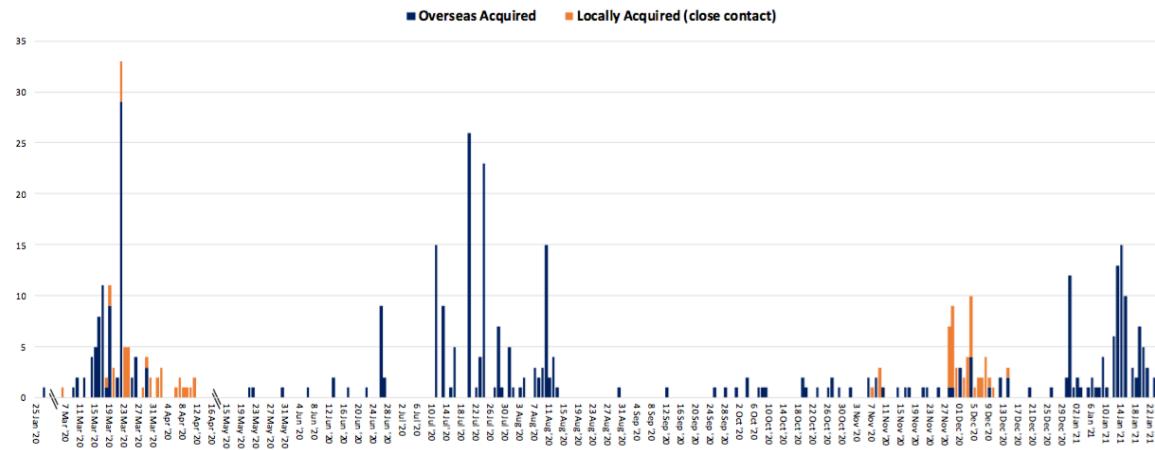
A.2 Most Recent Statistic, Data and Trends (January 2021) – No. of tests, confirmed cases, deaths, etc.

Cambodia has first community outbreak of Covid-19 in November 2020. However, until January 2021, widespread community transmission of the Covid-19 did not happen in Cambodia. More than 70% of Cambodia's total confirmed cases were acquired overseas, and the remaining are linked to those "imported" cases. Cambodia remains in Stage 1 of the outbreak, where most cases of the Covid-19 are imported case.

The first case was confirmed on 27 January 2020 in Sihanoukville province (coastal province) on a 60 years old Chinese man who came from Wuhan, Hubei with his family. Although Cambodia has a weak health care system and a resource limited country, but Cambodia has surprisingly managed this outbreak to not transmit within the community. According to Global Health Security Index's report 2019, Cambodia got 39.2 of index score and ranked 89 out of 195 countries in preparedness for infectious disease outbreak.

Epidemiology

Figure 1. Number of confirmed COVID-19 cases by acquisition status and date of positive test



Widespread community transmission of the Covid-19 did not happen in Cambodia. More than 70% of Cambodia's total confirmed cases were acquired overseas, and the remaining are linked to those "imported" cases. Identify this trend assist Cambodia authorities to apply zero tolerant on system of tracking, contract tracing and putting into quarantine people who had the virus, as well as their contacts. Therefore, it largely cuts off local transmission.

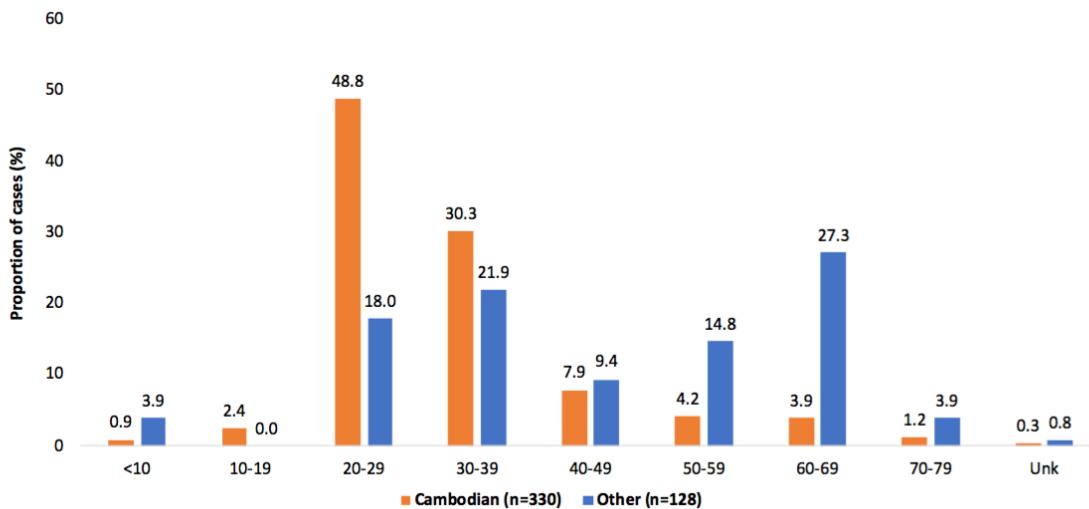
Table 1. Cumulative and new (past 7 days) cases and deaths by age and sex

Age Group	Female		Male		Total
	Cases	Deaths	Cases	Deaths	
0-9	1(0)	0(0)	7(1)	0(0)	8(1)
10-19	4(0)	0(0)	5(0)	0(0)	9(0)
20-29	51(2)	0(0)	132(3)	0(0)	183(5)
30-39	54(3)	0(0)	74(3)	0(0)	128(6)
40-49	12(4)	0(0)	26(0)	0(0)	38(4)
50-59	13(1)	0(0)	20(0)	0(0)	33(1)
60-69	19(1)	0(0)	29(0)	0(0)	48(1)
70-79	2(0)	0(0)	7(1)	0(0)	9(1)
80-89	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
90+	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)	0(0)
Unknown	0(0)	0(0)	2(0)	0(0)	2(0)
Total	156(11)	0(0)	302(8)	0(0)	458(19)

Unlike its neighboring countries like Thailand and Vietnam, Cambodia did not have a complete lockdown or compulsory stay-home orders. By January 25, 2021 it has 458 positive cases, which included 156

Females, of which 409 have recovered. 375 cases were acquired overseas, representing 18 nationalities in addition to Cambodian. No deaths have been reported. Cambodia's public health surveillance and response system is continuing to work well to detect and respond to new cases.

Figure 2. Proportion of confirmed COVID-19 cases by age group and nationality (n=458)



B. Covid-19: Impact on Democracy and Civic Space

B.1 Impact of Covid-19 on Key Human Rights and SDGs

B.1.1 Right to Health and SDG 3

The Ministry of Health has been progressing with plans to expand and decentralize laboratory testing capacity for Covid-19 to three provincial laboratories in Siem Reap, Sihanoukville and Battambang province. The government continuously assesses the adjustment of non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) through a gradual step-wise approach that considers the effectiveness, socio-economic cost, and public acceptability of each measure, while continuing to increase surveillance to inform decision-making.

As recommended by WHO, social distancing is currently the frontline and the most effective measure to control the spread of COVID-19 since vaccines are still in the developing stage. The Cambodian Government has followed expert recommendations and responded in a timely way to the issues. Many instructions and guidelines about COVID-19 including preventive measures, hygiene practices, quarantine and other foreign travel measures were issued by the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Combating COVID-19 and disseminated to the public. Awareness of the pandemic is being raised throughout the country by broadcasting on social media, television, radio and street banners. There are different promotional

materials including short instructional videos. Those projects are usually in partnership with development partners like Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and the United Nations' agencies as well as WHO.

To ensure a timely and effective response to a potential localized outbreak in the future, and to minimize disruptions to the delivery of essential health services, the Ministry of Health committee has been formed to lead the design and implementation of six regional workshops. The workshops are used to developed and/or refine provincial preparedness action plans, in line with the National Master Plan for Covid-19, and to identify key priorities to strengthen local preparedness.

B.1.2 Right to Education and SDG 4

COVID-19 caused social consequences specifically in the education sector and on indigenous people. In order to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport temporarily suspended classroom, all sports activities and exercises which require gathering in public and private sport.

To get access to online education, students need access to a stable internet connection and technological devices. These requirements have broadened inequality gaps among students in rural and urban areas. It is more likely that those in urban areas will receive and have better access to online education than those in rural areas. Private schools seem to have better online education programs and materials compared to the no-cost public ones. According to the Ministry of Education, in the 2018–2019 academic year, 210 000 students studied in 1 222 private schools compared to 3.2 million students in the public ones. Most of the 1 222 private schools are concentrated in urban areas – only 35 511 students living in rural areas study in private schools. Half of the students who are able to access e-learning or self-learning at home spend less than 10 hour a week to study, which equates to only around half of their normal time studying in the classroom. In some areas where the internet is not accessible, informal education is pursued during school closures due to the pandemic. This pandemic has also affected students with disabilities in getting equal access to education due to the lack of disability support programs and facilities at home.

Indigenous people, one among the most vulnerable social group also face great challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. Traditionally, indigenous people have faced social marginalization including in political participation, economic life and education. At the time of the pandemic, indigenous people around the world, including the 24 indigenous groups in Cambodia, are at higher risk to get transmitted to the disease, mainly due to the absence of quality healthcare and services and access to information. Speaking at the International Day of the World's Indigenous People, UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, expressed his deep concern and called on leaders to include indigenous groups in COVID-19 protection and response strategies.

B.1.3 Right to Food and SDG 2

Malnutrition has been a long-term challenge in Cambodia as recognized by the government and its development partners. Of course, much progress has been made in the last decade, but the impact of Covid-19 is very severe which put such progress in jeopardy. According to a complementary data collection within the report titled UN Covid-19 Socio-Economic Impact Assessment in Cambodia indicated that although access to food has not been affected greatly by the Covid-19, but people have been forced by economic circumstances to adopt a coping strategies like borrowing food, reducing food intake and greater reliance on cheaper goods.

The findings, revealed for the first time, show that in Cambodia more than half of households have at some points had to cut back on the size and quality of meals. Food prices increased during early 2020, especially for meat, eggs and fish products in Phnom Penh, and fresh vegetable in provincial markets. Although prices then stabilized, many households decreased their food intake and diet diversity in important food categories such as products rich in protein, vitamin A and iron. Households also resorted to more radical livelihood coping strategies, such as reducing essential spending on education and health, selling productive assets and sending household members to other provinces to look for work. These impacts are most worrying for more vulnerable household members, especially pregnant women and children.

B.1.4 Right to Work/Job and SDG 8

Over the past two decades, Cambodia has achieved a robust economic performance with average GDP growth of over 7% annually; making Cambodia one of the fastest-growing economies in the world. Consequently, there are a higher income, a substantial poverty reduction, high level of employment, improved on human development and public service delivery. Even though Cambodia is still categorized as a Least Developed Country (LDC), Cambodia has upgraded to reach a lower-middle income country status in 2016. With this achievement, Cambodia has a vision 2050 to promote economic inclusion and environmental sustainability to become an upper-middle income country by 2030 and a high-income country by 2050.

The global health crisis triggered by COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted to the economic growth, public health, and livelihood of the Cambodian people. In the first quarter of 2020, COVID-19 caused a drastic decrease in tourism sector, real estate, garment sector, construction activity which are the main factors for Cambodia's economy. As projection from the world bank, economic growth in 2020 is slow sharply to around 2.5 percent under the baseline scenario. Worryingly, although in 2009 Cambodia has achieved Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of halving poverty, but 90% of Cambodian people geographically live in the countryside and the huge number of them escaped from the poverty by a small margin. Furthermore, economic slowdown and external shock could pull back around 4.5 million people who are living in near-poor line to be a poor household again.

COVID-19 poses economic threats to different aspects of Cambodia's development, with tourism, manufacturing for export and construction seen to be the most affected sectors. In combination, these sectors contributed more than 70% of Cambodia's economic growth and around 39.5% of total employment in 2019. The global response preventing the spread of the virus, in turn, creates a decline in tourism and hospitality services. In 2020, Cambodia alone was estimated to experience a loss of revenues in the tourism sector of around \$3 billion according to the Minister of Tourism. In the first four months, around 1.6 million foreign visitors visited Cambodia, representing a decline of 52% compared with the same period a year earlier. Cambodia's most visited tourist destination, Siem Reap, recorded a contraction of 45.6% of tourist arrivals and a 99.6% reduction year-on-year for the month of April 2020. Around 2,956 tourism-related businesses have been closed, causing the unemployment of 45,405 people, while an estimate from the World Bank shows that at least 1.76 million jobs are currently at risk. A total of 433 factories and tourism-related businesses across the country have temporarily closed down according to the Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training. These suspensions have left some 135,000 garment workers and 17,000 tourism workers unemployed.

The COVID-19 outbreak meant that garment, footwear, and travel goods exports increased by only 7.5% in the first three months of 2020, dropping from 17.7% compared to the same period of 2019. According to the World Bank, this drop was led by a contraction of garment, footwear, and travel goods exports to the EU (including the UK) market by 0.5%, falling for the first time since the 2008–2009 global financial crisis. According to the Asian Development Bank (ADB), industry growth is predicted to slow down to 6.5% in 2020 with declines in garment production for export and in construction. This is largely the result of arrested growth in major advanced economies and a sharp slowdown in the People's Republic of China (PRC), and particularly in the curtailment of European Union trade preferences starting in August 2020.

The inflow of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) which is largely concentrated in the construction sector accounted for more than 50% of total FDI in Cambodia, coming mostly from China (including Hong Kong SAR) and Taiwan in recent years. However, after the COVID-19 outbreak in China, the value of approved FDI has contracted substantially. Growth of investment was around \$11 billion in 2019, nearly doubling from 2018's \$5.5 billion. COVID-19 has brought this to a negative rate growth of 5.3% in 2020 due to a decrease of FDI from China, according to an updated report from the Ministry of Economy and Finance.

According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the economic shocks will have more medium-term impacts on poverty and welfare, especially among the more vulnerable in society and those who work in the informal economy. Highlighted in a policy brief, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) showed that the pandemic will exacerbate the vulnerability of specific groups of workers including women, children, indigenous people and migrant workers due to unemployment and underemployment of informal workers. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), almost 1.6 billion informal economy workers have suffered damage to their ability to earn a living. This is due to the country's lockdown and preventive measures and/or because they work in the hardest-hit sectors.

In Cambodia, the situation is worse in the informal sector because garment workers stimulate the economy for street food vendors, hairdressers and transport providers. One past study estimated that each wage earner in the garment sector supports five to six persons in the informal sector via local economic stimulation. Thus, the unemployment of factory workers considerably affects those in the informal economy. There is also a decrease of remittances in Cambodia. According to Emerging Markets Consulting (EMC), Cambodia could lose about \$90 million for six months of remittances from Thailand. Data from ACLEDA Bank Plc for the first quarter of 2020 shows remittances from Cambodian workers in the Republic of Korea (South Korea) was \$3.5 million, with 1,373 transactions, down almost half from \$6.2 million with 2,270 transactions in the same period the year earlier.

After two decades of strong performance, Cambodia's economic growth is expected to decline in 2020. This is due to the COVID-19 pandemic and by-product effects of economic slowdown in the major advanced economies and the People's Republic of China, together with the country's reduced access to export markets, according to the Asian Development Bank. However, there is variation in the growth forecasts from different institutions as well as the Cambodian government in 2020 and especially the projection for the up-coming year 2021, as shown in the table.

Cambodia's GDP Growth Rate (%)				
Institution	Before COVID-19		After COVID-19*	
	2020e	2021f	2020f	2021f
Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC)	<u>6.5</u>	<u>7.0</u>	<u>-1.9</u>	<u>3.5</u>
Asian Development Bank (ADB)	<u>6.8</u>	N/A	<u>-4.0</u>	<u>5.9</u>
World Bank (WB)	<u>6.9</u>	<u>6.8</u>	<u>-2.0</u>	<u>4.3</u>
International Monetary Fund (IMF)	<u>6.8</u>	<u>6.7</u>	<u>-2.8</u>	<u>6.8</u>

(e=estimate, f=forecast)

Note: The data have been collected from the official sources and the data () shown in the table are the latest update and likely to be updated.*

B.1.5 Freedom of Movement (e.g. lockdown, shutdown, social distancing, etc.) (Target 16.10, etc.)

One of the first measures to curb community transmission consisted of local travel restrictions during the high peak of outbreak in March and April 2020. The government issued a travel ban and movement restriction and other guideline. Inhabitants of Phnom Penh were not allowed to leave the city while those living outside the capital were not allowed into the city nor to other Cambodian provinces.

However, lack of consultation and access to information in dialogue between the government and CSOs and other stakeholder during the Covid-19 pandemic. This dimension was difficult to qualify, as CSO responses to it were so diverse, also there are multiple factors that influence this dimension. Most CSOs have some operational relationship with authorities, this is frequently at commune and district levels, where CSOs often engaged and involved representatives of local authorities. As they are often the designated focal points for multiple development activities for example women and children committees, disaster management committees, etc., most frequently at commune and district levels but also at provincial levels.

However, many consulted CSO personnel believed that there was often ‘a cooling’ in relations with engaged local authorities and official during the period of the review, which they associated with the increased apprehensive political environment between 2016-2018.

There are restrictions on foreign national travelling to Cambodia. Travelers from countries with high transmission rates of the virus, namely United States, Germany, France, Spain, Italy and Iran, were banned from traveling to Cambodia in order to mitigate imported cases. Cross-border movements were also suspended as Cambodia temporarily closed its border with Vietnam and Thailand.

B.1.6 Inequality (SDG 10)

According to FAO (2016) about 13% of Cambodia’s population is living in severe poverty or with income less than US\$1/day, and half of the country population count not make more than \$2.5 per day. This group is extremely vulnerable that it could easily fall back into severe poverty through just one natural or human induced disaster. According to the World Bank , net enrollment increased to 97% in 2016, but the lower secondary school completion rates was at 57% only in 2017. This is significantly low compared to the average lower middle income countries. Lacking of human capital with knowledge and skills in scientific technology economy math (STEM) as well as technical and vocation skills are the key constraints for Cambodia to become added value in matufaturing export and industrialation.

Human Development Index (HDI): Cambodia has value for 2018 is 0.581, which put the country in the medium human development category-rank 146 out of 189 countries and territories. Gender Development Index (GDI): Cambodia value for 2018 is 0.919 (F 0.557 – M 0.606).

- Gender Inequality Index (GII): Cambodia value for 2018 is 0.474, ranking 114 out of 162 countries. 19.3% parliamentary seats are held by women, 15.1%. For every 100,000 live births, 161.0 women die from pregnancy related cause.
- Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI): refer to 2014, Cambodia MPI 37.2% are multidimensional poor.
- Dashboard: Cambodia perform better than at least two third of countries:
 1. Quality of human development: selection of 14 indicator associated with the quality of health, education, and standard of living.

2. Life-course gender gap: selection of 12 key indicators; childhood and youth, adulthood, and older age.
3. Women's empowerment: selection of 13 women-specific empowerment indicators; reproductive health and family planning, violence against girls and women, and social-economic empowerment.
4. Environmental sustainability: selection of 11 indicators that cover environmental sustainability and environmental threads.
5. Socio-economic sustainability: selection of 11 indicators that cover economic and social sustainability.

Access to health, water and sanitation, electricity and general public services remained limited for people living in rural area and those who make lower wage. As of 2017, about 21% and 31% of population did not have access to improved water and improved sanitation, respectively. About 1.23 million people (National Census 2019) were reported being migrant workers because of cannot find a decent job or good paid job within the countries. The mostly target countries include the neighbouring Thailand, South Korea and Malaysia.

B.1.7 Gender Equality (SDG 5)

Covid-19 has gendered impacts and risks. One in five women experiences intimate partner violence and one in four women feeling unsafe walking in city at night (ActionAid, 2016). Women's and girls' roles in their homes, communities and in the workforce place them at increased risk of exposure to Covid-19. This includes domestic and unpaid care responsibilities, as well as in employment as frontline health and social service providers.

The Cambodian Women's Resilience Index in 2019 showed Cambodian women and men have 56/100 and 59/100 resilience index respectively. The study found the least resilient capacity are access to sustainable income and livelihoods, access social protection, access to and control over natural resource and limited infrastructure (ActionAid Cambodia, 2019). Climate change has factored Cambodia in a critical vulnerable country to climate change, putting Cambodia at 19th mostly impacted by climate change between 1998-2017 (Global Climate Risk Index 2019). USAID estimated that climate change could victimize 61% of rural population and will directly impact 7 million employed in agriculture and 240,000 employed in construction sector by 2050. This will lead to a loss of \$1.5 billion.

Under these circumstances, women, girls and those from vulnerable and disadvantaged group (including gender and sexual minorities, health care workers, migrant workers, sex workers, ethnic minorities, landless women, women and girls with disabilities, informal sector workers, etc.) are at an increased risk of gender based violence during this pandemic. This is due to limited access to and control over resources and power in decision-making on household needs, social security nets, mobility and access to information/service. Public services and tax redistribution has under played investment in public education, health, agricultural infrastructure and input and water management, resulting less responsive and gender sensitive public services and investment.

B.2 Impact of Covid-19 on People, especially vulnerable groups and sectors

B.2.1 Migrants

According to UNDESA, Cambodia is a major country of origin of migrants, with over 700,000 living abroad in 2019. Most Cambodian migrant workers who seek work overseas due to lack of sufficient employment opportunities available domestically and the significant wage differentials of employment abroad.

Migrant workers have faced difficult conditions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Tens of thousands of Cambodian migrant workers have returned to their home country since the early starting period of the Covid-19 pandemic. Recently, due to the fact of community outbreak in migrant worker communities in Samut Sakhon province, Thailand, the number of returned migrant workers have increased dramatically, which has spread the virus to other neighboring Cambodia and Laos. Approximately 80 returned migrant workers had tested positive for Covid-19. The Cambodian government has bolstered quarantine and testing facilities to keep up with the large number of workers returning through land border checkpoints with Thailand.

In April, Cambodia Prime Ministry Hun Sen prohibited the return of 104 Cambodian migrant workers to return to Cambodia, despite putting in place no visa restrictions on Malaysia nor travel restrictions on flights from Malaysia. It is the restriction of freedom of movement, and unnecessarily deprived of right to enter their own country. The migrant workers were left stranded in Malaysia for more than two months and prevented from working and yet only given very little government assistance to help them cover their basic necessities.

While some migrant workers continue to return home due to job losses, others have begun (re) migration, with reports of migrant workers crossing the border to Thailand despite restrictions on entry and reports of some secret travelling to bring Cambodian migrant workers back to sectors desperately in need.

Migrant workers who have returned from countries like Thailand, Malaysia and Vietnam, have been facing a tough economic situation because the domestic economy, especially the critical garment and tourism sectors, have been severely hit by the global pandemic. Therefore, to support themselves and their families, many Khmer citizens resume work in May 2020, despite the border between the two countries being closed, and these workers are vulnerable to human trafficking due to their dependence on brokers to cross the border.

B.2.2. Women and Girls

Women have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 outbreak and the measures in response to it in Cambodia. One in five women in Cambodia had suffered violence. The rate of incidence has risen during the Covid-19 pandemic. Firstly, women are facing increased risks of gender-based violence ("GBV")

due to the outbreak exacerbating contributing factors, including domestic proximity and economic insecurity, along with fears of the virus and a generally anxiety-inducing climate. The GBV occurs predominantly against women and is rooted in gender inequality, abuse of power and harmful cultural norms. Most of the incidents of violence against women involved domestic abuse, sexual assaults and human trafficking.

In addition, the stay-at-home encouragement have made it harder for women and girls to escape abusive households, or access services to obtain help. Government measures in response to COVID-19 have increased domestic and household responsibilities for women. It is estimated that Cambodian women already do three hours more unpaid household labor than men due to entrenched societal gender norms, and it is mainly women picking up additional labor due to school closures, homeschooling and additional cooking and cleaning.

Moreover, women have been disproportionately affected by factory closures and the rollback of labor rights as women make up the majority of factory workers. Since the Covid-19 outbreak, time spent on unpaid care and domestic work has increased. In addition, we see insufficient access to water for cleaning and sanitation, particularly to protect from Covid-19, seems to be a growing concern in some areas and will presumably be worsened by climate condition and drought.

Women are also overwhelmingly represented in the [informal economy](#), e.g. street vendors and [domestic workers](#), and this work does not attract protections such as the Labor Law, nor the social assistance measures put in place by the government (e.g. out-of-work payments) to protect from the economic fallout from COVID-19.

B.2.3 Ethnic Minorities

In mid-March, the Ministry of Health, Cambodia, reported that many Cambodian Muslims who had returned from a gathering in Malaysia had tested positive for the virus, leading to increased [discrimination against the religious minority](#). The Ministry continued to report numbers of COVID-19 infections in the categories of 'Khmer, Khmer Muslim, and Foreigner'. It reported several Cambodian, from the religious minority, had returned from a gathering in Malaysia and tested positive for the Covid-19. However, while the Ministry had refrained from revealing the religious identities of other people who had the respiratory disease, official revealed that of the 79 Cambodian Muslims who traveled to Malaysia, around 26 of them had the virus. That is unnecessary to divide between Cambodian Muslim and Khmer as to prevent discrimination among ethnic minority in Cambodia.

Many of these social media comments were targeted at the Muslim community in Cambodia, with Facebook users blaming the community for the spread of the disease in the country. Following this separation by the Ministry of Health, who hadn't revealed the religious identity of any of the other

infected persons, Cambodian Muslims were targeted amongst the community and with hateful online comments blaming them for the spread of the disease in the country. It was dangerous to identify Covid-19 patients by religion, adding that it places a heavier burden on minority communities, especially the Muslim in Cambodia, who largely live in peace and are well integrated into society. In addition, It is essential that the right to privacy of patients is maintained, and that sensitive and superfluous personal information, such as religion, that is not in the public interest, is withheld.

B.2.4 Older Persons

Cambodia has 1.3 million older people, the majority 84% of which are living in rural areas and remote area where health and medical system is weak. Over 70% of older people are reported as poor but only 8% of them are under the I.D poor scheme, the government social assistance to Cambodian poor family affected by Covid-19.

According to a multi-sector research conducted by HelpAge Cambodia to assess the challenges facing older people over the age of 50 through phone surveys and host community members in five provinces including Battambang, Banteay Meanchey, Siem Reap, Kampong Thom, and Phnom Penh. A total of 324 older people were interviewed in May 2020.

The finding shows that:

1. Many of these older people do not have proper income –most of them are reliant on income from their children who are currently being negatively affected by the economic fallout caused by Covid-19.
2. 34% of the older people surveyed have reduced the quantity of food eaten since the outbreak of Covid-19, while 16% have reduced the quality. Also 52% of older people have only sufficient food in their homes to last 2 days.
3. 67% of older people do not know where their nearest treating facility is for Covid-19.
4. 40% of older people are feeling worried or anxious most of the time while 31% some of the time. Furthermore 35% of older people reported that they feel depressed about the current situation most of the time.

B.2.5 LGBTIQ

The pandemic has [exposed and deepened](#) existing discrimination, violence and other human rights violations on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (“SOGIESC”) around the globe. In Cambodia, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (“LGBTIQ”) individuals continue to struggle to access healthcare, and particularly HIV/Aids medication, as

many individuals travel to neighboring Thailand to receive this treatment. Cambodia's LGBTIQ people are continuing to urge the government to make laws and policies to give them equal rights.

LGBTIQ people suffers economic difficulties due to the fact that they do not earn income during the pandemic, and they need support on food, pay for rent, and utilities and other social assistance. Some LGBTQI who work in the service sector are presently not working due to closure of some establishments. This has been unavailable as an option for many LGBTIQ Cambodians since the outbreak of the pandemic, due to border and travel restrictions. LGBTIQ individuals also faced heightened mental health challenges during the outbreak, as many had to isolate with their family who may not be accepting of their SOGIESC.

B.2.6 Children and Youths

In 2011, the Cambodian government developed the National Policy on Youth Development (NPYD) by designing a holistic approach across all concerned sectors to work together to improve youth's capacity and provide them with opportunity to develop their potential in education, employment, health and decision-making, and participation in development of their families, communities, nation and the worlds. Cambodia's youth is particularly exposed to vulnerabilities, primarily in the context of poverty, physical and mental weakness, violence and abuse, and migration.

After cases of Covid-19 were discovered, schools in Cambodia have been closed periodically since Mid-March, 2020. Students have been forced to study from home with classes conducted online. All children have the right to learn, whatever their circumstances. Adequate support to learning is crucial for them to develop their full potential. However, in Cambodia many girls and boys are falling behind, particularly those who live in poor rural and urban areas.

Beyond the profound disruption it has caused to education systems, the Covid-19 pandemic also risks causing a significant increase in child labor as families' livelihoods decline in middle and low-income countries. Poor students face study challenges. A network of child and youth organizations in Cambodia has called on partner organizations to continue assisting government efforts to provide education during the Covid-19 pandemic, warning the dropouts are rising as some children lack resources to access study material online.

Cambodia and the UN step up efforts to promote decent employment for youth. Cambodia's response and recovery from economic and social impact of the Covid-19 pandemic to unleash digital transformation with a skilled, empowered and resilient young population. Over 170,000 young women and men will directly benefit from the industry-driven skills and competencies development initiatives; basic education equivalency and literacy in factory programmes; entrepreneurship and enterprise development training and support initiative; employment service; and youth rights at work awareness raising programmes.

B.3 Impact of Covid-19 on Civic Space and Democracy

Cambodia has gone, and is going through a turbulent period. This has seen civic space shrink dramatically, and a return to autocratic practices by the government. Rights, advocacy groups, critics of the government and the media have been targeted, resulting in a number of groups/firms being forced to close, and individual being prosecuted.

B.3.1 Measure and states of emergency

The Government of Cambodia adopted the Law on the Management of the Nation in State of Emergency which mandates unfettered power to the executive to safeguard national security and public order, to protect citizens' lives and public health, and to protect properties and environment by using restrictive measures including restriction on traveling, freedom of assembly and work, quarantine, information monitoring and other measures deemed necessary. The Cambodian government's new state of emergency law in response to the Covid-19 pandemic risks violating the rights to private, silencing free speech and criminalizing peaceful assembly. Emergency measures must be necessary and proportionate to the crisis they seek to address.

The Law enables the government to take measures for monitoring and surveillance, by all means. With its broadly worded language under the Law for protection of national security and public order, aimed at addressing the pandemic, it can potentially be used to infringe on the fundamental rights such as: rights to privacy and unnecessarily restrict freedoms of expression, association and peaceful assembly. Cambodia government should ensure fundamental freedom, the freedom of expression in particular, to strengthen active participation of its citizen and democratic culture in the society, even in the period of Covid-19 pandemic. Within this regard, the Law on the Management of the Nation in State of Emergency should not be implemented but to be amended as soon as possible within the spirit of the Cambodian Constitution and CCPR to guarantee the right of citizens to have freedom of expression, press, publication and assembly freely without interference from the government.

Civil society organizations, especially media organizations, reporters, editors and rights group, etc., have expressed serious concern over the restriction environment and curtailment of freedom of expression for Cambodian citizens. Fundamental freedom, especially the freedom of expression, is a key principle to foster important roles of citizen and the functioning of democratic society. Within this regard, everyone shall have the right to freely express their concern and opinions without interference from the government. As explicitly guaranteed in article 41 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia, Cambodia citizens has had freedom of expression, press, publication and assembly.

B.3.2 Access to Information

Cambodia is considered an information communication telecommunication (ICT) savvy country with the rapid uptake of internet usage and mobile phone penetration. With internet usage jumping from 300,000 in 2010 to over 4 million users four years later. While mobile phone ownership is reported to be 92 per

100 persons. So mobile devices have enable users to access the internet, which has become one of the main sources of information for the public, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Cambodia continues to lack an Access to Information (A2I) Law which has been drafted but remains unapproved (as of September 2019). This sets out a possible framework to enable citizen to access information they need. The country also lacks a cybercrimes law. The CSO survey for the study found that, over a third of CSOs (36%) believe access to information from state at national levels was difficult and relied more on personal contacts than from an open access system.

However, it has been observed, that since 2015 internet users have been targeted by government for being critical of government with at least 13 individuals charged with offences including under the recently adopted (2018) Lese-Majesties Law. While most were charged under the very ambiguous defamation and incitement article of the criminal code, which has often been arbitrarily used to suppress critics of freedom of speech.

B.3.3 Respect to Freedom of Expression

The Cambodian authorities has arrested and called for education a number of people allegations that they had spread “fake news” about the Covid-19 pandemic. The Ministry of Information claimed that 47 Facebook account and pages had spread misinformation about the virus with the intention to causing fear in the country and damaging the government’s reputation. Similarly, the Minister of Interior warned that anyone who spreads misinformation about the Covid-19 “to stir chaos” would face legal action. The recently promulgated Law on the Management of the Nation in State of Emergency is vaguely worded and open for interpretation, as stipulated in Article 5, subsection 11, that: “Prohibition or limitation of the distribution or dissemination of information that could cause fear,” which pave way for the government to curtail press freedom and freedom of expression.

The Chief Executive Officer of the digital media network TVFB, Mr. Sovann Rithy, was arrested at night in early 2020 by the Cambodian authorities for having accurately quoted comments made in a speech by Prime Minister Hun Sen in relation to the official response to the COVID-19 pandemic. On his personal Facebook page, Mr. Sovann Rithy used an excerpt from the Prime Minister’s speech: “If motorbike-taxi drivers go bankrupt, sell your motorbikes for spending money. The government does not have the ability to help.” The Prime Minister admitted that the government was unable to help informal workers, but the police claimed that the words of the Prime Minister were intended as a joke. Mr. Rithy remains in jail for pre-trial detention for being accused of “inciting to commit crimes” under article 494 and 495 of the Penal Code by Phnom Penh Municipal Court. In addition, the Ministry of Information revoked the online TVFB’s media license because Mr. Sovann Rithy’s broadcast information “generate(d) an adverse effect on the security, public order and safety of society.” Mr. Sovann Rithy was awarded the 2020 Deutsche Welle (DW) Freedom of Speech Award along with 17 journalists from 14 countries. The award he received represents all journalists worldwide who have been arrested or threatened because of their reporting on the Covid-19 pandemic.

B.3.4 Protection for Civil Society, including human rights defenders

The Law on Associations and Non-Governmental Organizations (LANGO) cause challenges on civic space and democratic development in Cambodia. It holds direct implication on the ability of civil society organizations (CSOs) to act in advocating for human rights and to promote transparency and accountability. CSOs summarize our concerns on the LANGO as the following:

- 1). The law has pre-assumption that CSOs harm national security, stability, public order, culture and good traditions of Cambodian society, and enable the government to denial of registration of association and organizations;
- 2). The law required bank account information which could possibly violates the rights and privacy of the legal entities;
- 3). In practices, the local authorities require CSOs to notify or to ask for approval for activities, whereas the law itself has not required; and
- 4). The law sets more severe conditions for foreign associations and non-governmental organizations to obtain and renew Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), based on the origin of funding and the approach/type of their activities, etc.

On paper the registration (the approval component) process is meant to be completed within 45 days, if all required documentation can be submitted or within an additional 60 days if additional information is sought. However, it frequently takes far longer with six months to one year being mentioned by CSOs who have gone through the process. Officials involved in previewing applications, often require applicant organizations to reformat and rephrase documents including organizational statutes in a particular way, and these demands have to be adhered to before formal submission for approval, and these demands apparently causes delays. It was also reported that “fast tracking” of applications can be achieved on payment of unofficially fees. Over half of surveyed CSOs (50%) believed the CSO registration process is difficult.

In terms of CSO operations, the scope of the LANGO is quite limited; it imposes requirements to submit annual activity and financial reports or copies of reports submitted to donors, as well as copies of project agreements. Non-compliance with these requirements could result in suspension or closure. LANGO also states that domestic associations or NGOs (and similar clauses apply to registered foreign organizations) that conducts activities that endanger the security, stability, and public order, or jeopardize the national security, culture, tradition, and custom of Cambodian national society, regardless of other criminal punishments” can be closed. But how these are and can be interpreted remain unclear, however, it does state that if accuse of breaches of these, there is a right of appeal.

Therefore, the provisions of the LANGO itself and implementation of the authority seriously undermine the rights and freedoms of associations and non-governmental organizations, as well as their activities

and cooperation to promote democracy, human rights and economic and social development in Cambodia.

B.3.5 Freedom of Assembly

While protected by international Law and the Constitution the ability to freely express one view is now considered to be curtailed. As there are now numerous examples of people being prosecuted for expressing dissenting views.

In October 2017, Ministry of Interior issued a statutory instruction requiring NGOs to “notify” local authorities in advance of activities and this notification was more often than not interpreted by local authorities as requiring their permission. While this was considered an administrative restriction, most CSOs worked around it, though it had sector implications. CSOs working on social issues/services, livelihoods etc., had no problems in undertaking activities or organizing events in communities. Those working on right and advocacy issues or identified (by authorities) as being critical, often could not get the “permissions”, or they would not be given the go ahead, so couldn’t or wouldn’t go ahead with activities in communities for fear of confrontations or reprisals.

B.3.6 Freedom of Movement (Lockdown, shutdown, travel ban, etc.)

Freedom of movement has been restricted, following the government’s decision to cancel the Cambodian New Year celebration to prevent individuals from travelling on mass to their home provinces and limit the spread of Covid-19 into local communities. The government institutions and private firms, especially garment workers continued to work as usual. The government also put in place a number of measures for foreigners and returning travelers entering the country. Foreign traveler must pay a \$3,000 deposit for “Covid-19 service charges,” and travel insurance covering for medical treatment at the airport upon arrival. If one passenger on their flight test positive for Covid-19, everyone on the same flight is quarantined in government-approved accommodation for two weeks, at a cost of \$1,176 including meals, laundry and “sanitary services.”

B.3.7 Summary of the International Monitoring Reports on Democracy and Civic Space in Cambodia

B.3.7.1. IDEA

Cambodia is considered as an authoritarian regime since 2018 after being classified as a hybrid regime between 1993 and 2017. A state of emergency has not been declared. However, the government has promulgated a national emergency law that provide increasing power if a state of emergency is declared. The report summarizes the Covid-19, democracy and human rights as the following: After initially denying the dangers of the virus, the government has used the sweeping powers of the emergency law to crack down on dissent (journalists, civil society activists and opposition politicians) in the name of “fighting disinformation”. This is likely to lead to deepening authorization in a country that was already severely

strained before the pandemic, with a weakened opposition in exile and severely curtailed civic and media space.

For further information: <https://www.idea.int/gsod-indices//#/indices/countries-regions-profile?rsc=%5B811%5D&covid19=1>

Regarding the freedom of expression, Cambodia was classified as concerning development by the report. Some prominent journalists have been under arrest since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic for allegedly causing chaos by posting comments critical of the Government on social media, or for spreading 'fake news'. COVID-19 has tightened restrictions on public communication. Reported by several online media outlets - such as The Diplomat, Khmer Times and Bangkok Post, and Human Rights Watch - Article 222 of the Cambodian constitution used as a basis for establishing emergency conditions has led to the arrest of civilians and opposition activists for expressing their concerns about COVID-19 on social media. ARTICLE 19 and the Cambodian Center for Human Rights have condemned the arrest of journalists, a majority of whom were charged with the offence of 'incitement' during the pandemic. They further condemned the Government's aggressive attitude towards the independent media during the pandemic. In early October, the Phnom Penh Court convicted Sovann Rithy, one of the many journalists who were arrested during the pandemic. Although he was convicted and sentenced to 18 months, the Court suspended his sentence and released him from detention. He was charged with incitement for publishing a statement made by the Prime Minister in relation to the pandemic in April. Media groups, while commending his release, are concerned that the conviction will have a chilling effect on the freedom of the press.



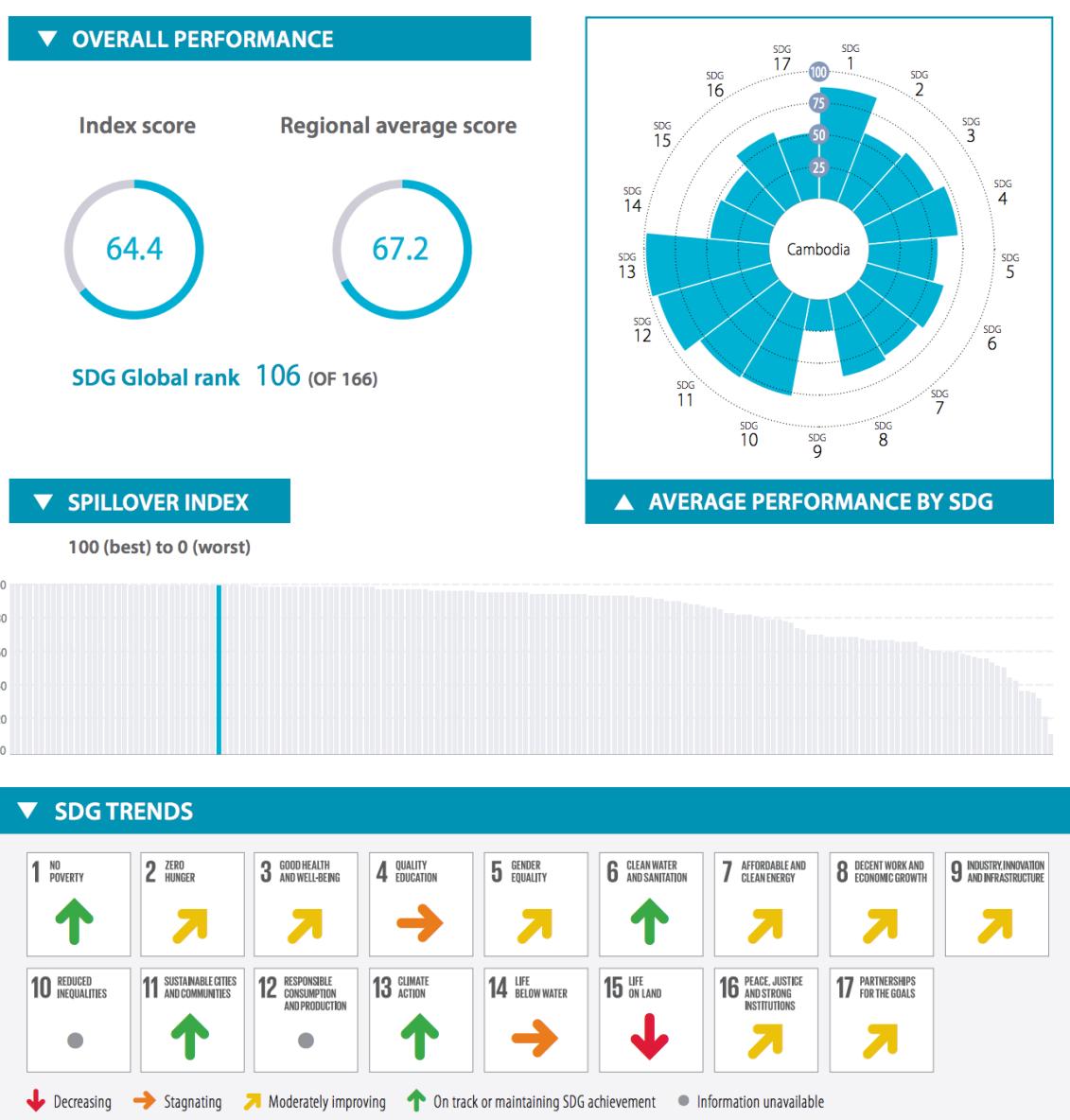
B.3.7.2 Democracy Index (EIU)

The Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index 2017 downgraded Cambodia from a hybrid regime to an authoritarian one, and ranked it at 124 out of 167 countries. The report dropped the status of Cambodia due to the elimination of the Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) – the ruling party's only real competitor in the national election. In addition, Cambodia scored poorly in electoral process and pluralism following the forced dissolution of the main opposition party which turned the country into a de facto one party state.

For further information: <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/hun-sen-rejects-democracy-indexs-authoritarian-label>

B.3.7.3 SDGs Indicators 2020

Cambodia is ranked No. 106 of 193 countries, and its score is 64.39. Cambodia is bellowed the regional score by approximately 3 points.



Notes: The full title of Goal 2 "Zero Hunger" is "End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture".

The full title of each SDG is available here: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics/sustainabledevelopmentgoals>

B.3.7.4. CIVICUS Civic Space Monitoring

Civic space in Cambodia is rated “Repressed” by the CIVICUS Monitor. It calls for Cambodia government to drop charges and unconstitutionally release all journalists jailed for exercising their rights to freedom of expression, end harassment of journalists and media outlets, repeal or significantly amend repressive laws so as to allow for a vibrant and free media landscape in line with its international human rights obligations, and reverse revocations of media licenses to facilitate media freedom and the right to freedom of expression and information.

For further information: <https://monitor.civicus.org/country/cambodia/>
<https://www.civicus.org/index.php/media-resources/news/4719-cambodia-s-government-should-stop-silencing-journalists-media-outlets>

B.3.7.5. Human Freedom Index

As for personal freedom, Cambodia scores 6.82 or ranking 86 off 162 countries. Additionally, regarding economic freedom ranks 43 off 162 countries. However, Cambodia received low status on rule of law as its scores only 2.6.

For further information: <https://www.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/human-freedom-index-files/cato-human-freedom-index-update-3.pdf>

B.3.7.6 Rule of Law Index

Cambodia has come second to bottom in an index of 128 countries ranked according to rule of law. In the East Asia and the Pacific Region, Cambodia came in the last place out of 15 countries included in the report, and the last in the group of 30 lower-middle income countries.

For further information: <https://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/country/2020/Cambodia>

B.3.7.7 Freedom House – Political Rights and Civil Liberties

Cambodia is a Not Free country. Political rights score only 5 off 40 while the civil liberties score 20 off 60. Cambodia’s political system has been dominated by Prime Minister Hun Sen and the Cambodian People’s Party (CPP) for more than three decades. While the country conducted semi competitive elections in the past, the 2018 polls were held in a severely repressive environment. Since then, Hun Sen’s government has maintained pressure on opposition party members, independent press outlets, and demonstrators with intimidation, politically motivated prosecutions, and violence.

For more information: <https://freedomhouse.org/country/cambodia/freedom-world/2020>

B.3.7.8. World Freedom Index

Cambodia was ranked 130th out of 168 countries, and its total freedom score was 50.98 out of 100. Cambodia received low score 32.37 on political freedom while the economic freedom gains the highest score 64.67.

For further information: <https://www.worldfreedomindex.com/>

B.3.7.9 RSF – World Press Freedom

Cambodia ranked 144th out of 180 countries, one rank down from 2019. Worried by the prospect of losing the July 2018 general elections after 30 years in power, Prime Minister Hun Sen launched a pre-emptive war against the media in which around 30 radio stations were silenced and Cambodia Daily, an English-language newspaper that had helped to nurture Cambodia's fragile democracy, was forced to close. The last bastion of the independent press, the Phnom Penh Post, was bought by a Malaysian businessman with ties to the Cambodian government in May 2018. The pro-government editorial policies that he subsequently imposed were such that many of its journalists resigned. As a result of this clean sweep, Cambodians now only have access to news provided by major media groups directly linked to Hun Sen, such as the online news agency Fresh News, which pumps out pro-government propaganda. Only the Voice of Democracy network, whose radio station was closed, tries to resist on social media.

For further information: <https://rsf.org/en/cambodia>

B.3.7.10 Transparency International – Corruption Perception Index

Cambodia continued to rank lowest compared to other Southeast Asia countries, raking at 162 of 180 countries. The corruption index, now in its 25th year, have frequently shown that Cambodia continues to remain plagued with corruption, ranking close to countries, like Iraq, Zimbabwe and Libya.

For further information: <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi#>

B.3.7.11 Global Peace Index

Cambodia is ranked as 78th out of 163 countries with overall score 2.011 in the Global Peace Index 2020 by the Institute for Economic & Peace.

For further information: <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/maps/#/>

B.3.7.12 UN-UPR-32nd

30 January – 01 February 2019, Cambodia delegation presented¹ to 73 delegations made statements with 198 recommendations including 173 accepted and 25 noted. There are 173 accepted recommendation. All 198 recommendation² is the most related to SDGs 16 focus on applying international human rights instruments, statelessness, the law on association and NGOs, rebuilding democracy, political opposition rights, freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, free civic space and protect human rights defender, and justice system. The next is SDGs 17 focus on standing invitation to UN special procedure-special rapporteur OHCHR. The following SDGs 5 mention about gender recognition law and LGBT. SDGs 4 mention about promote access to free education. SDGs 3 mentioned about improving the quality and access to health-care. SDGs 15 focus on land reform, granting communal land title, allocate community land concession to indigenous people. SDGs 1 to combat poverty reduction. SDGs 8 To promote economic growth and social inclusion. And last recommendation 110.150 focus on SDGs 6 facilitate the supply of clean water to poor citizen.

In addition, there are 25 noted recommendations. Over 80% of 25 recommendations in relation to SDGs 16 in which focus on rebuilding democracy to reinstate the rights of member of the political opposition, freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, statelessness, free civic space and protect human rights defender, and justice system. And Over 10% of 25 recommendations are related to SDGs 17 focus on standing invitation to UN special procedure-special rapporteur on human rights, Ms. Rhona Smith, the United Nations Special Rapporteur, hold this position who visit Cambodia twice times a year.

C. Response to the Covid-19 including recovery, mitigation and preparedness

C.1 Major Policies and Programs Carried Out by the Government

C.1.1 Overall Covid-19's Response by the Government

Cambodia government has established the National Committee to combat COVID-19 on 18 March 2020, a decision signed and led by prime minister, Hun Sen. The National Committee comprises key officials from different ministries including the army, the national police, the national military police, and governors of all cities, and provinces across the country. This national committee is responsible to design the national policy and strategy to prevent the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact to the stability of politics, economy, and society in terms of national and international levels.

In addition, this national committee also has duties to direct the implementation of the strategic plan in preventing, containing, and controlling the spread of the virus at the grassroots level. To strongly support

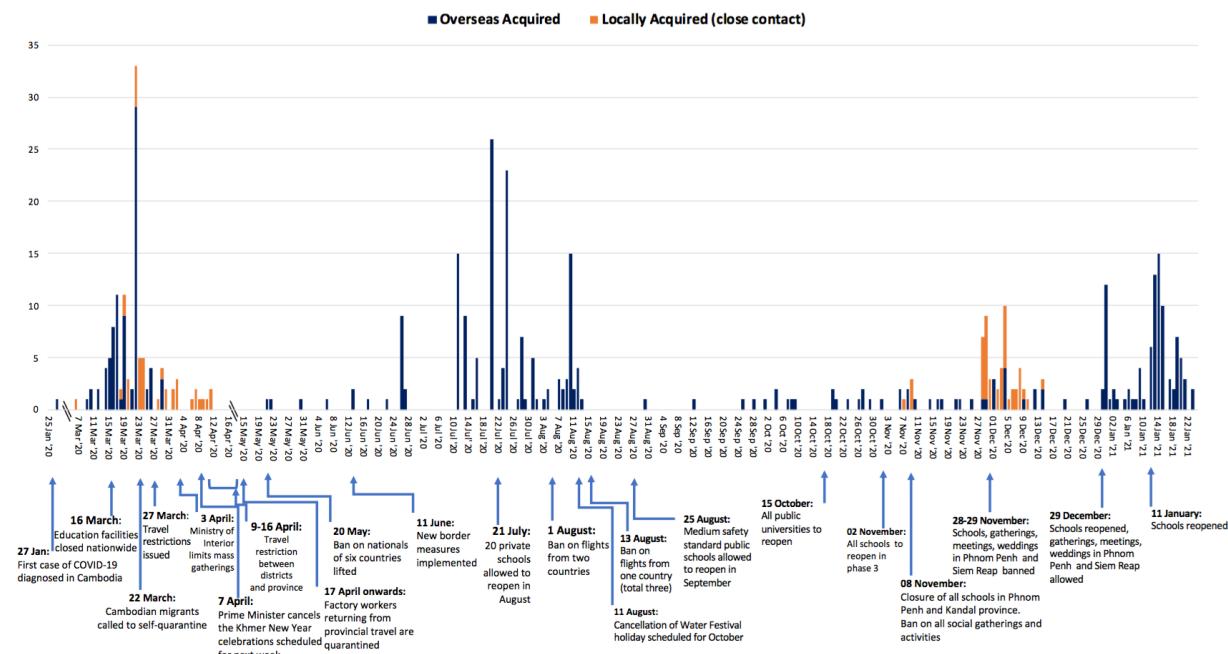
¹ <http://webtv.un.org/search/cambodia-upr-report-consideration-28th-meeting-41st-regular-session-human-rights-council/6055891180001/?term=&lan=english&page=3>

² Report of the working group final: <https://www.upr-info.org/en/review/Cambodia/Session-32---January-2019/Adoption-in-the-Plenary-session#top> and recommendation made by Cambodia: <https://www.upr-info.org/en/review/Cambodia/Session-32---January-2019>

and show solidarity among Cambodian people to the pandemic, in early April, prime minister Hun Sen pledged to contribute his seven months' worth of salary (approximately \$17,000) to support the National Committee in fighting COVID-19 and following by King Norodom Sihanouk and the Queen Mother have donated \$2.3 million and many other civil servants and civil society groups and tycoons. Importantly, Cambodia government has cut the national expenses to save roughly \$400 millions of national budget for coping with COVID-19.

Cambodia has imposed strict measures in three different fronts: 1) preventing imported cases into Cambodia, 2) preventing local transmission within Cambodia, and 3) treating Covid-19 infected patients. The strategic response of Cambodia to COVID-19 is liaison with local and international organization cooperation. For development partners like Australia, China, the European Union, France, Germany, Japan, South Korea, the United States, and Vietnam, and for International organization aid like WHO, ADB, the World Bank, UNICEF, the Asian Development Bank help both technical and financial supports and also medical equipment.

While local transmission is not active, most of new cases are found mainly in people coming from overseas. All schools, universities, KTV, sport clubs, theatres, concerts, etc., are closed. Cambodia's authorities have been tightening steps to limit "imported" channel of transmission. Cambodia's land borders have been shut since late March, but it does not impose a total ban on international commercial flights. Travel restriction – suspension of visa exemption policy, e-visa and visa on arrival to national from Iran, the U.S. Italy, Germany, Spain, and France. In addition, the foreigners who travel to Cambodia required medical certificate and insurance. Cambodia has decided to postpone the celebration of the Cambodian New Year, and imposed ban on inter-provincial movement of people.



Cambodia strengthens public health measures at international airports and provision of health information and advice to international travelers. It requires all inbound passengers to have health insurance of at least 50,000 US\$ and a fit-to-fly certificate, issued less than 72 hours before, that says they are free of Covid-19. All arriving passengers, regardless of nationality, undergo a swab test, and must do a 14-day quarantine should a fellow passenger test positive. In addition, the government shoulders the cost of mandatory quarantine and Covid-19 treatment, which it says costs 2,000 to 2,500 US\$ per person.

On top of these measures, on 24 June 2020 Cambodia launched a cash relief program for 562,686 poor and vulnerable families of nearly 2.3 million people, with the government spending around \$25 million per month. The government stated that it has withdrawn \$1 billion from its reserves to support spending against COVID-19 and to sustain, boost and restore the economy. The Cambodian Government and the National Bank of Cambodia have announced measures to relieve the burden on banks, micro-finance institutions (MFIs) and affected borrowers by providing low-interest rate loans to banks and MFIs to enable them to pass on low-interest loans, delay due date payment and refrain from seizing borrowers' property. The National Bank of Cambodia (NBC) has provided more liquidity to Cambodian banks and finance institutions to help mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 on Cambodia's economy. Since early March, the Government has prepared special loans of \$50 million for the agriculture sector through the Agriculture Rural Development Bank (ARDB), and has also injected \$50 million into the SME Bank's Co-Financing Scheme together with another \$50 million from 33 participating financial institutions (PFIs).

The Government has also reserved another \$500 million to support the SME sector by providing \$200 million as credit guarantee schemes (CGSs) and another \$300 million to further assist SMEs with loans and the Government's special loan to the ARDB. On 26 May 2020, the Government continued to set out the fourth round of measures to alleviate the COVID-19 impact faced by businesses which includes extending the validity of the measures previously set out by the Government and setting out new measures. On top of existing measures, the Government has decided to set out a fifth round of measures representing the combination of new and existing measures which will further support:

1. Garment, textile, footwear, travel products & bags sectors
2. Hotels, guesthouses, restaurants & travel agents
3. Tourism & aviation sectors
4. Financial support program for poor & vulnerable families.

The Government has made efforts to widen social distancing practices to curb the transmission. For instance, the authorities ordered schools across the country to have an early small summer vacation, decided to postpone the 2019–2020 grade 9 and grade 12 national examinations and suspend all educational institutions from operating from the 16th of March. This affected approximately 13,300 schools. In addition, entertainment places like casinos, cinemas and public gyms were also ordered to

temporarily close. The Government also postponed Khmer New Year 2020 festivities (traditionally held in mid-April) to prevent social contact and cut down the risk of COVID-19 infection. Despite public criticism, the Government has also drafted and enacted a law on state of emergency in case COVID-19 gets out of control. On top of that, travel restrictions from various high-risk countries have been imposed to stop any potential COVID-19 infections in the country.

The practice of social distancing to minimize the risk of a COVID-19 outbreak has posed negative consequences for the education sector as students will not be able to learn in school. The Ministry of Education has recognized this problem and has responded with various online educational programs. The Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Ministry of Information has initiated distance learning and e-learning programs to provide basic education to all students at all levels in Cambodia, especially those in rural areas where they cannot get access to internet connection. The Government has also partnered with civil society and NGOs such as Asia Foundation and UNESCO to implement e-learning programs and establish ICT initiatives to facilitate students' learning at home.

To response any bad consequences that could trigger from the COVID-19 pandemic, the National Committee to combat with COVID-19 pandemic took actions as the following:

No.	Key Goals of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Actions Taken
1	SDG 1: Eradicating poverty in all its forms everywhere.	The Cash Transfer Program for Poor and Vulnerable Household to assist approximately 560,000 (around 2.3 million people) most affected and vulnerable household for the first round. They are eligible to receive a cash-based transfer per household of USD20 in rural area and USD30 in Phnom Penh, with more benefits for additional household members, families with the elderly, people with disabilities, HIV positive, pregnant women and kids under five years old.
2	SDGS 8: Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all. Particularly on 8.1: Sustain per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances and, in particular, at least 7 per cent gross domestic product growth per annum in Cambodia.	During the Covid-19 pandemic, there are some considerable measurements of economic stimulus from Royal Government of Cambodia: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - On 03 April, the Ministry of Economy and Finance issue decision No. 028 a working group establishment named "the Multidisciplinary Working Group" to study and plan monetary and banking measures. This working group is co-chaired by representative from the Ministry of Economy and Finance, and National Bank of Cambodia; its aim to manage the impact of COVID-19 and EBA (Everything but Arm) withdrawal of the European Union. - The government has also provided monthly tax exemptions to business impacted by the Covid-19 crisis

		<p>especially in the tourism industry whereby many informal workers are being employed. Particularly on February 25, 2020, the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF) exempted registered entities that operate business activities related to hospitality and accommodation in Siem Reap from paying all monthly taxes for four months from February to May 2030.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - On 03 April, the Ministry of Economy and Finance released decision No. 024 on the establishment of a task force to control supply, quality and prices of strategic goods like salt, rice, vegetable, fish, meat, hygiene products, and medical equipment so on. It ensures that these strategic goods are available on the market without any interruptions. - On 03 April, the Ministry of Economy and Finance released decision No. 027 on the establishment of a task force to plan the budget policy on financing and social assistance. This task force will study and determine the required budget on three priorities: preventing COVID-19 outbreak, stabilizes livelihoods of poor and vulnerable people, and recover and stabilize businesses; moreover, fund mobilization from abroad and development partners. - On 07 April, the ministry of tourism issued a letter No.168 to city and provincial governors to temporarily suspend all massage, spa, and wellness businesses from 07 April 2020 until further notice. - On 2 April, the ministry of commerce notification to fuel station or depots that sell fuel for unreasonably high prices, or misrepresent the quality or quantity of fuel, that the ministry will take action by fines, suspending business operations or submitting a complaint to the court. - The Royal government will pay \$40, and factories will pay \$30 to employees whose jobs have been suspended and closed factories.
3	SDG 3: Ensure Healthy lives and promote well-being for all ages.	During the Covid-19 pandemic, there government imposes some measurements as the following:

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - On 5 April, the ministry of health issued an instruction on preventive measures for vehicle transportation owners and passengers like to regularly clean their vehicles and provide alcohol gel to passengers who are encouraged to wear masks and to stop temporarily if passengers have symptoms of cold. - One April, the ministry of health issues an instruction to public in using the services of barbers, beauty shops and other related services to minimize their use and protect themselves by following ministry's measures by wearing masks, washing hands, maintaining physical distance, avoiding close communication and other practices.
4	SDG 4: ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.	On 07 April, the ministry of education, youth and sport issued a letter No. 1890 to temporarily suspend all sports activities and exercises which require gathering in public and private sport clubs from 7 April until further notice.
5	SDG17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.	Development partners like Australia, China, the European Union, France, Germany, Japan, South Korea, the United States, and Vietnam, and for International organization aid like WHO, ADB, the World Bank, UNICEF, the Asian Development Bank help both technical and financial supports and also medical equipment.

C.1.2 Major Government Institutions

C.1.2.1 Executive Body

Cambodia has managed the first phase of Covid-19 effectively under the government, especially the Ministry of Health. The executive right of the government is exercised by the Executive Branch headed by the Prime Minister. Samdach Hun Sen has been the Prime Minister since 1985. The candidate for the office of Prime Minister, chosen by the chairman of the National Assembly from the winning party, as well as candidates for the government, requires a vote of confidence from the National Assembly.

The particular strength of the office of the Prime Minister is not apparent from the constitutional provision, but it has a clear legal basis in the Law on the Organization and Functioning of the Council of Ministers, which stipulates in Article 09 that the Prime Minister “manages and gives out commands on all activities of the executive in all fields.” Generally, the government is comparatively strong as many laws regulating their conduct are either not in place. Legislation itself is proposed almost exclusively by the government and parliament rarely questions, rejects or modified proposed legislation in the process.

The government needs to be well-prepared for further outbreaks and community transmission. Within this regard, surveillance and laboratory capacity will be further expanded, reflecting the government's proposals in its Master Plan to build on the rapid progress already achieved. In addition, following the establishment of health services at hospitals for Covid-19, there is a need to scale up the readiness of the entire health system for Covid-19 in the event of widespread community transmission, especially at health centers and in the private sector.

C.1.2.3 Parliament – National Assembly and Senate

Cambodia's parliament approved the "state emergency" law amid the Covid-19 pandemic. The Law provides the government power to monitor communication, control media and prohibit or limit the distribution of information deems to trigger public fear and damage national security. Parliament has legislative power. The bi-cameral Cambodian parliament consists of a National Assembly and Senate. The current 125 members of the National Assembly are elected in a national election for a five-year mandate, whereas the current 62 Senators are mostly indirectly elected by Commune/Sangkat and National Assembly members for a six-year mandate. The Cambodian People's Party holds all seats in the National Assembly and absolute majority seats of the Senate.

Laws can be proposed by parliament, but in practice nearly all laws are drafted within the government and then sent to parliament for adoption. Draft laws are first discussed and adopted in the National Assembly and are then reviewed by the Senate. The Senate cannot finally veto any law, but only send it back to the National Assembly with recommendations, which can than either change the draft law or simple overrule the Senate's objection.

National Assembly and Senate have some legal possibilities to monitor government activities and they are involved in some appointments of other public officials. National Assembly and Senate have 10 various commissions as well as influential permanent committees.

C.1.2.4 The Judiciary

The government issued warning, stated that anyone who spread "fake news" regarding the Covid-19 in Cambodia is "terrorist." On March 09, 2020, two people were arrested for allegedly spreading fake news related to Covid-19 on social media. The judicial system is composed of courts of First Instance, Appeal Court and a Supreme Court. The judiciary is independent, guaranteeing and upholding impartiality and protecting the rights and freedoms of the citizens.

Only judges have the right to adjudicate. A judge must fulfill this duty with strict respect of laws, wholeheartedly and conscientiously. Fair trial rights are embedded in a wide range of laws and procedural rules. The presumption of innocence, burden of proof, and rules governing the admissibility and exclusion of evidence, such as coerced confessions, are codified. While legal representation is a right afforded all

Cambodian citizens under the constitution, the country's legal aid has been criticized for its lack of funding and ineffectiveness.

As of April 16, 2020 Cambodian police arrested over 40 individuals for spreading "fake news," (20 were reportedly charged with crimes, while another 22 were released by the police after being "educated.") Moreover, journalists perceived to be harassed by having their broadcasting license revoked and to be arbitrarily arrested on incitement charges for reasons such as "exaggerated news reporting" or causing "social insecurity and chaos."

The Ministry of Justice is responsible for "protecting the independence of the judiciary", along with civil affairs, criminal affairs and amnesty, prosecution of criminals and international affairs.

C.1.2.5 Local Government/Governance

The same approach which engage the national government in the fight against Covid-19, is also being replicated at the provincial level bed by provincial governor. Informing the decision-making of these national and provincial duties are the critical function of disease surveillance and risk assessment including use multiple sources of information, and dissemination of technical support on risk assessment and epidemiological surveillance to the Ministry of Health.

The Kingdom of Cambodia is an indivisible state. The country's administration at all levels and in all sectors falls under the same *national government*. The provincial and local governments do not have any significant autonomy from the national government. The provincial and local governments are overseen by the national government through institutional and legal frameworks. In each level of territorial administration, provincial and municipal departments and branches of each governmental ministry cohabit with governors, and both of them represent the governmental ministries and the central government, the *executive*.

Authorities at any level of the territorial administration may perform their duties within jurisdiction and finance. In general, sectors of the provincial and local governments may not surpass those of the national government. For example, councils at the capital city, provinces, municipality, districts and Khans cannot decide on complaints of divorces, serious domestic violence, any felony and misdemeanor, and disputes at the courts. Incomes of the sub-national administration may come from their own revenues of provided services, taxation and allocation of the national budget approved by the parliament.

Since the late 1990s, the national government has gradually delegated its centralized powers to the local governments. With a promulgation of the Law on Administration of Commune/Sangkat in 2002, the lowest level of the local administration, commune/Sangkat, became a legal entity independent from the national government. This means that communes and Sangkats have their own resources, budget and property, and administration. Most importantly, the Commune/Sangkat Council is a governing body composed of members who are directly elected by local people.

Since 2008, local administration has gradually gained more autonomy from the national government. According to the Law on Administration of Capital, Province, Municipality, District and Khan, each level of local administration has become a legal entity that has some independence in both finance and administration. Some services and tasks that governmental ministries usually perform are steadily being mandated to the capital city, provinces, municipalities, districts and khan. In return, the national government's resources are also allocated to the local administration in proportion of the delegated tasks.

To effectively combat the Covid-19 pandemic, building the capacity of health facilities to be able to provide the necessary clinical care is a priority for provincial official level. The Ministry of Health provided direct technical support and guidance to health facilities in Phnom Penh and in several provinces in managing the case of Covid-19 in Cambodia.

C.1.2.6 Election Body

The government has set June 05 for 2022 commune election, and the national election in 2023. The National Election Committee (NEC) is an organization whose jurisdiction is to organize, prepare, and manage the Election of Members of the Senate, and the Election of Members of the National Assembly as well as other elections as determined by laws. The NEC shall independently and neutrally implement its jurisdiction to ensure a free, fair and just election in accordance with the principles of multi-party, liberal democracy. The NEC is composed of nine members. Four members shall be selected by the party leading the Royal Government, four other members shall be selected by the parties having seats in the National Assembly but do not join the Royal Government, and one member is chosen upon the approval between all parties having seats in the National Assembly.

C.1.2.7 Anti-Corruption Unit (ACU)

The ACU is seized with the mandate to conduct anti-corruption in every aspect, level, and sectors in Cambodia nationwide through the means of education, prevention, obstruction, law enforcement and crackdown all corrupt offences with strong and active participation and cooperation from the public. Since ACU is newly established, there are a lot of tasks need to be fulfilled in order to achieve its mission. The government has introduced the National Strategic Development Plan 2019-2023 which focus on increasing awareness and reinforcing precautionary measures and strategies to crack down and combat corruption.

C.1.2.8 National Human Rights Institute

Rights groups concern over arrests and harassment of activists and journalists during Covid-19 pandemic. The Cambodian Human Rights Committee performs the role of respecting and realizing the dignity and values of human beings as sovereign individuals by protecting and promoting their basic rights.

As the Constitution dictates all law in Cambodia, the Constitutional Council of Cambodia (CCC) rules on any questions raised about the constitutionality of existing laws, proposed draft laws and administrative

acts, including the human rights issue. While the decision of the CCC is final and binding, it cannot itself question a law or act, but can only respond to referrals from authorized bodies and individuals. The CCC has nine members appointed by the King, the National Assembly and the Supreme Council of Magistracy for a term of nine years. The Council cannot amend the Constitution, but advises the National Assembly of amendments.

C.1.2.9 Gender Equality Commission

Cambodia push for gender equality amid Covid-19 outbreak. Although Cambodia ratified CEDAW in 1992, implementation has remained slow until recently. The Ministry of Women's Affairs (WoWA) and the Cambodia National Council for Women make up the national machinery for promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women. MoWA launched its strategic plan focusing on economic empowerment of women, gender equality in education, legal protections, public health issues, including HIV/AIDS prevention and care, and women's political participation.

C.1.2.10 Information and Communication Institutions

Professional media and relevant institutions have played a crucial role in combating fake news and disinformation, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. On the Covid-19 response, the government delivers authority to spokesperson of the Ministry of Health to disseminate official information to the public. Professional media contributed not only to fighting fake news and disinformation, but also helping prevent the spread of Covid-19.

C.1.2.11 Public Health Agencies

Cambodia has activated national and provincial public health emergency management mechanisms to provide coordinated management of the Covid-19 response. This includes the formation of the National Committee for Covid-19 led directly by the Prime Minister. The Committee is responsible for setting national policies and strategies for the Covid-19 response; leading the implementation of the strategic plan for the prevention, control and management of Covid-19; and responding to the associated political, economic and social impacts at all levels. In early April, the government announced the creation of the Inter-Ministerial Committee to Combat Covid-19, headed by the Minister of Health.

C.2 Major Activities and Programs Carried Out by CSOs

Civil society expresses solidarity with survivors and the affected, and offer encouragement to all individuals, communities, civil society, private sector and government authorities at all level who are struggling day and night to keep the virus through the guidelines of the Ministry of Health and WHO and practices of combating Covid-19. With the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in Cambodia, CSOs have followed the preventive approach and guidance issued by the Ministry of Health (MOH) and World Health Organization for preventing Covid-19 including avoiding any kinds of meetings or gathering, applying social distancing and hand washing regularly. In addition, CSOs have contributed hygiene and sanitation

kits available for their staff and other beneficiaries including facemasks, hand sanitizers, banner, posters, leaflets on Covid-19 prevention and protection mechanism.

CSOs advocates the government to provide educational outreach to all communities, on a nationwide basis by for example using of Facebook messaging, TV sports, mobile community campaigns, so that community members are fully aware of and participating in protecting themselves from Covid-19 infection especially the most vulnerable ones including disabled persons of both gender and ages.

During the pandemic, many international and local civil societies are tirelessly cooperating with Cambodia government to curb with COVID-19. Even though many of their projects are stopped most of activities to prevent the outbreak of the virus, they change their project to raise awareness or any activity to make people safe. Regarding health and well-being of the people, the Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) team was asked by Cambodia's Communicable Disease Control to help to the tracing of contact of patients testing positive for COVID-19. Moreover, MSF in collaboration with the Ministry of health to design guideline on COVID-19 infection prevention and control. MSF also trained over 300 medical staff on how to apply new guidelines, and measures around protective equipment for both suspected cases and hospital cares staff, ambulance drivers, cleaners, laboratory technicians, nurses, and doctors. In addition, to contribute to the prevention of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Cooperation Committee for Cambodia (CCC) distributes personal protective equipment such as facial masks and hand soap to civil society official at local and provincial level. The CSOs response to COVID-19 in terms of human rights by issuing a joint statement by a group CSOs to voice concerns over children's right and negative effect on children's well-being.

CSOs play a key role to support the government to develop an economic stimulus package which would include social assistance in the form of living allowance to those who have lost their job and income as a result of the crisis. This includes but not limited to those working in the tourism industry, factor workers, tuk tuk drivers and those without direct social protection.

Cambodian hold the world's highest average amount of microfinance institution loans, totaling US\$3,804 per capita. While the National Bank of Cambodia is the licensing and regulating authority of micro-loan providers, it should issue a strong consumer protection regulation to protect borrowers from unethical lending practices. CSOs advocate and support the government and the National Bank of Cambodia to suspend debt collection and interest accruals for micro-loan borrowers who are no longer able to meet their debt payments due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Civil society organizations play a crucial role in reflecting the progress and achievement as well as challenges of SDGs implementation through public feedback and Voluntary National Reviews in Cambodia. CSOs gained some spaces to work in partnership with the government and other stakeholders on SDGs localization, specifically through the National Technical Working Groups (TWGs) mechanisms, and the voluntary national reviews. One of the four of its engaged TWGs is the TWG on Planning and Poverty Reduction (PPR) which is co-chaired by the Ministry of Planning and UNDP in Cambodia, and this TWG plays an important role in developing key development agenda for the country, including the

localization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). CSOs gained some spaces to work in partnership with the government and other stakeholders on SDGs localization, specifically through the TWGs mechanisms, and the voluntary national reviews.

C.3 Major Activities and Programs Carried Out by other Stakeholder Groups (Government, DP, CSOs & Private Sector)

The United Nations, through WHO, play a key role to support Cambodia government. WHO continues to provide support to the Ministry of Health to sustain routine essential health services to ensure they continue to function even as the country focuses on Covid-19. Example include malaria elimination, routine immunization services and measles outbreak response, HIV/AIDs and TB treatment, material and child health, and NCD management.

In addition, the Inter-Ministerial Committee to Combat Covid-19 and the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) reviewed progress in implementing the Cambodia Master Plan on Covid-19 and identified future priorities including key areas with possible UN support in the health response, as well as the social and economic response. The future priorities which are complementary to the priority areas in the Master Plan include:

- Update and continue implementing the Cambodia Master Plan to fight against Covid-19
- Make the core public health system even strong
- Plan for introducing, easing and lifting public health and social measures including physical distancing
- Update and test the Cambodia pandemic response plan
- Continue strengthening health care system readiness for pandemic response
- Build on existing efforts to mitigate the socio-economic impacts of Covid-19
- Protect vulnerable populations from Covid-19 through a multi-sectoral approach
- Strengthen local government leadership and coordination, resource investment and operational capacities
- Strengthen risk communication, and identify and implement local solutions through community engagement in fighting against Covid-19.

False information, rumors and fabricated news have been spreading like wildfire in social media since the Covid-19 pandemic hit the world. Professional journalism at the forefront of the fight against disinformation. Reporters and media houses are among the frontline workers that have been protecting the life of citizens, through their reporting on the pandemic. Promoting access to truthful and timely information, supporting independent journalism and journalism education and building the capacities of the public to consume and share media content critically, are at the core of media response during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Just one month after Covid-19 risk communication and community engagement activities began, UNICEF, government, CSOs and private sector jointly produce multiple video, social media posts, posters, radio

bulletins, and more into inform Cambodians about risk awareness and reduction. These communication and community engagement activities proved to have strong effectiveness. The study was based on a combination of online surveys and telephone calls that reached 750 people suggested that approximately 99% of respondents reported that they received messages of Covid-19 and 80% agreed that public messaging was their main reason for practicing precautionary behavior.

The technical working group is another approach to jointly response to the Covid-19 pandemic in Cambodia. This mainly emphasizes the complementarity and inclusive participation among stakeholders who were engaged in the process. Some CSOs work with 19 Technical Working Groups (TWGs), but some TWGs are not. We observe that the Ministry of Planning is lack of mechanisms to ensure that reflections of CSO and other stakeholders' inputs in the whole VNR report process of the government. CSOs continue to work with UNESCAP and UNDP. Through the engagement so far, with CSOs was not yet inclusive and there was no clear measure to ensure that inputs from CSOs are taken into account. They should have more chance to discuss, share efforts, and complement each other.

Inclusive partnership between the government and CSOs and other stakeholder during the Covid-19 pandemic through consultation. This dimension was difficult to qualify, as CSO responses to it were so diverse, also there are multiple factors that influence this dimension. Most CSOs have some operational relationship with authorities, this is frequently at commune and district levels, where CSOs often engaged and involved representatives of local authorities. As they are often the designated focal points for multiple development activities for example women and children committees, disaster management committees, etc., most frequently at commune and district levels but also at provincial levels.

However, many consulted CSO personnel believed that there was often 'a cooling' in relations with engaged local authorities and official during the period of the review, which they associated with the increased apprehensive political environment between 2016-2018.

The SDGs have been well-integrated into key national policy of Cambodia. However, the awareness on SDGs in general, and CSDGs is extremely low amongst the general public and a vast majority have not even heard about it. The budget to do public engagement and awareness for the CSDGs process was limited. The attention and commitment to private sector operating in the country were rather weak. The Royal Government of Cambodia approved the Development Cooperation and Partnerships Strategy (DCPS) 2019-2023 through the Decision no 03 SSR dated on 11 January 2019. The DCPS is designed to ensure that Cambodia, by working together with all development actors. The RGC is committed to leading a multi-stakeholder partnership that maximizes resource mobilization opportunities and, in line with other RGC reforms, promotes the achievement of development results.

In addition, the RGC's Rectangular Strategy – Phase IV records several impressive achievements that guide the next phase of the DCPS. These include maintenance of macroeconomic stability and continued broad-based economic growth, an unwavering commitment to governance reforms and the rule of law, socioeconomic progress underlined by important advances in health and education, and encouraging

trends in economic transformation, industrialization, and diversification. The Cambodia government is committed to leading a multi-stakeholder partnership.

D. Challenges and Assessment About Covid-19 and Civic Space

D.1 SWOT Analysis and Assessment

The awareness on SDGs in general, and CSDGs in particular is extremely low amongst the general public and a vast majority have not even heard about it. These are attributed to two main reasons: resources availability and coordination among stakeholders. 1) Resource availability: CSDGs is the ambitious development agenda. Country like Cambodia who just entered the Low middle income status will still need to rely on support from international community while the capacity for domestic resource mobilization remains poor. At the same time, budget allocation for the government to do public engagement and awareness for the CSDGs process was limited. Last but not least, the attention and engagement with private sector operating in the country was rather poor. 2) Coordination among stakeholders: this mainly emphasizes the complementarity and inclusive participation among stakeholders who were engaged in the process. They should have more chance to discuss, share efforts, and complement each other.

Through the engagement so far, the engagement with civil society was not yet inclusive and there was no clear measure to ensure that inputs from CSOs are taken into account.

Identification of key challenges and opportunities (SWOT analysis) about Cambodian SDGs:

Strength: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- It achieved 60% of the targets above in goals 4, 8,10,13,16,17.- Economic growth from 0.087% to 7.05% in 10 years- With solidarity among development actors, Civil society organizations working on SDGs in Cambodia are able to provide policy recommendation and advocate for better improvement through our channel.	Weakness: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Identification of unfinished CSDGs all 12 goals which will need to be prioritized- CSOs have insufficient knowledge on health issues, and other technical skills on rural development, taxation and finance, environmental matter, etc.- planning, data and M&E issues- Lack of Human resource- Oversight and delivery lessons.
Opportunity <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Developing new statistical surveys.- Work more with stakeholders.- CSDG Visions 2030 and 2050 aim of becoming a high-income nation.- Active citizens are rising, especially on social media responding to social challenges such as	Thread <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The economic uncertainty caused by the trade dispute.- Environmental risks one major challenge is growing vulnerability, both economic and environmental.

<p>gender-equality, climate change, human rights, and other social issues.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Covid-19 pandemic disrupts NGOs' activities and funding opportunities, especially those NGOs located at sub-national level. - Due to economic decreasing caused by Covid-19, people are becoming less concerned about human rights issues.
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In addition, Cambodia's integration has 4 guiding frameworks: 1. Coherence and consistency, 2. Prioritization due to limited human and financial resources, 3. Realistic resourcing, and 4. M&E and Policy Feedback. This is where Cambodia can choose to adopt priorities from SDGs or integrate its priorities into the CSDGs.

1. Coherence and consistency

Coherence has been delivered at NSDP process and during line ministries/agencies performance review and feedback, including during the adoption of multi-year programme-based budget under Budget Strategy Planning process.

2. Prioritization of goals, targets, and indicators

Prioritization is the second consideration given the limited financial and human resources. Due to context and the needs defined by the Government, the Ministry of Planning extracted priorities from NSDP and agreed with multi-ministry consultation on three key principles: leaving no one behind principles, fitting in government's identified during the National Strategic Development Plan's development process and unfinished business from the Cambodian Millennium Development Goals; and lastly drawing from the global 'accelerators' programme, which emphasis on gender equality, children, rural infrastructure, and social protection reform.

3. Realistic resourcing

Another importance substance to enable the goals is resources required to deliver the CSDGs. The commitment was based on the projections from the Development Finance Assessment undertaken by the Council for the Development of Cambodia (CDC) in 2017 and the economy outlook 2050. The Government also consider the fundability from the Official Development Assistance (ODA), CSO funds, remittance and climate finance, etc.

4. M&E and Policy Feedback

Understanding that the issues to be resolves and progress monitoring go beyond the Government, indicators were set based on their evaluability and opportunity drawn from the progress of technology, based on which the Ministry of Planning had discussed improvement of the M&E ecosystems between CSDGs and NSDP. The evaluation/tracking set out three monitoring rating:

- Ahead of track, being ahead of the milestone value by at least 10%;

- On-track, being within plus or minus by 10% of the given value;
- Off-track, being below the milestone by at least 10%.

D.2 Assessment of civic space according to the human rights indicators on SDG 16+

The Parliament of Cambodia does not have official procedure to monitoring and evaluate the SDGs implementation. SDGs was regulated by the Executive Branch. Parliament has legislative power. The bicameral Cambodian parliament consists of a National Assembly and Senate. The current 125 members of the National Assembly are elected in a national election for a five-year mandate, whereas the current 62 Senators are mostly indirectly elected by Commune/Sangkat and National Assembly members for a six-year mandate. The Cambodian People's Party holds all seats in the National Assembly and absolute majority seats of the Senate. However, the Cambodia Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Framework was regulated by Prime Minister at Executive Branch in 2018.

Civil society is a crucial actor in monitoring and implementation of SDGs 16, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic on democracy and civic space. There are key challenges on SDG 16 implementation within the context of Cambodia. Out of 12 Targets of the SDG 16's global goal, Cambodia government localized only three targets into its CSDGs. Those targets are: 16.3, 16.5, and 16. 9. Within this regard, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) recommend the Government of Cambodia to further localize the global SDGs by integrating its targets and indicators, especially SDGs 16.10, into the Cambodia Sustainable Development Goals (CSDGs). Within these challenges, civil society organizations (CSOs) engaged with the Ministry of Planning on monitoring and evaluation the implementation of the Cambodia Sustainable Development Goals (CSDGs). We joint in the Inter-Ministerial Meeting on Readjusting Indicators of the CSDGs. We mobilize voices of CSOs to propose for readjusting some key targets on SDGs Goal 16. We advocate the government to accept more targets in Goal 16, especially target 16.1., 16.2, 16.5, 16.6, and 16.10. After this meeting, we will facilitate other related NGOs to jointly submit letter to the Ministry of Planning, and other involved ministries.

	Targets & Indicators	CSDG target			Actual			Progress
		2016	2017	2018	2016	2017	2018	
16.3	Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all							No data
16.7	Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels							On track
16.7.1	Proportion of female government official in ministries/agencies	40	41	42	40	40	41	On track
16.9	By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration							No data

Sources: CSDG Framework and ministries

We are active in holding policy-makers to account for the commitments they have made to meaningful participation, accountability, non-discrimination, empowerment, and to link SDGs 16 to human rights standards/mechanism. The response to the Covid-19 in terms of democracy and civic space as the following:

- Participation: We, the Civil Society Organization, advocate for full engagement and meaningful participation, especially among the most vulnerable affected group (i.e. Islam, Indigenous people, LGBTIQ, etc.) from the Covid-19. Presently, the government has insufficient approach to engage all key stakeholders, like private sector, CSOs and the government itself, in consultation, decision making, and resilience preparedness. We have not had established a platform that people can share their point of view related to government's measurement to Covid-19.
- Accountability: the government should be accountable to its own citizen in term of budgeting, expense, and responsible for their national policy to fight again the Covid-19 pandemic. We still advocate for open government, and our network raise concerns on public procurement and budget expenditure. We call for more transparency and be informed to the public.
- Non-discrimination: We are monitoring the government response and recovery actions, especially the national policy to support the poor and the most vulnerable people of the Covid-19. We suggest the government to provide information about unusual implementation of authorities where ignorance and discriminatory response/recovery are observed. We advocate with government to strengthen the mechanism with zero tolerant on discrimination in providing fund relief.
- Empowerment: During the pandemic, the people needs access to information and engagement opportunity. We observe gap of information, especially those who are living in rural area and could not access to social media; like Facebook, Youtube, etc. Therefore, the local authority should enlarge their works to effectively disseminate information from national level to grassroots, and to conduct public awareness on prevention and protection, especially affected groups, and allow space for their engagement.

The CSOs promotes multi-stakeholder partnership, and through that it well enforces the SDGs Goal 17 and Leave No One Behind principle of this development agenda. The CSOs provide space for participation from youths, Civil society organizations (CSOs), private sector, and the government so that they could work hands in hands to uphold peace, democratic and sustainable development. The Cooperation Committee for Cambodia (CCC), as one of the largest membership based organizations, have created and implemented four strategic plans accelerating implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Cambodia. The strategic plans compose the following: 1). Raising awareness via public sensitization programs, especially among youth of different socioeconomic backgrounds; 2). Building capacity development for integrating SDGs and CSDGs among work programs of youth groups; 3). Promoting inclusive partnership with stakeholders (government, private sector and civil society) on financing for development and SDGs related policies prioritization and coherence; And 4). Reflecting the

progress and achievements as well as challenges of SDGs and CSDGs implementation through public feedback and voluntary national review.

The CSOs is active in holding policy-makers to account for the commitments they have made in an open, transparent and inclusive manner in the implementation of SDGs. CSOs are aligned and closely backed up by the two key umbrella NGOs, including the Cooperation Committee for Cambodia (CCC) and the NGO Forum on Cambodia (NGOF), who are holding space at the Planning and Poverty Reduction Technical Working Group (PPR TWG), the working group that oversights the implementation and monitoring of CSDGs and National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP). The CSOs also extended its collaboration with many more sectoral leading NGOs as NGO Education Partnership (NEP), World Vision Cambodia (WVC), ActionAid Cambodia, Health Action Coordinating Committee (HACC), Child Rights Coalition Cambodia (CRC-Cambodia), Indigenous Community Support Organization (ICSO), Advocacy and Policy Institute (API), Banteay Srei, Transparency International Cambodia (TIC), Coalition for Partnership in Democratic Development (CPDD), and Gender and Development for Cambodia (GADC). Through them, youths and civil society could collectively convey their inputs and recommendations for further improvement to different ministries, government institutions, development partners, and UN agencies in Cambodia.

In order to understand how civil society perceived about the localization and implementation of the SDG 16, the CSOs has conducted regional consultation workshop to collect inputs from CSOs at provincial level engaging 15 provincial NGOs networks to discuss on Goal 16 monitoring and evaluation for providing inputs and recommendation on the Progress Report 2019 on the Achievement of the Cambodia Sustainable Development Goals (CSDGs).

In term of implementation, the Ministry of Planning (MoP) who facilitated the development of the VNR had request the Cambodia Cooperation Committee (CCC), which is an umbrella organization working on CSO capacity building and enabling environment, to coordinate regional and national consultation to provide inputs. CCC had conducted three regional workshop and collecting inputs for MoP; however, feedback was not informed back whether they accepted input or not. It was observed that only positive inputs/results were collated. The consultation had missed all other major key stakeholders such as youth, private sector and women's groups. We observe that there is lack of mechanism to ensure the stakeholders' inputs, especially from CSOs, in the whole VNR report process of the government. Civil society organization wants an open, transparent and inclusive participatory approach in VNR process. The Ministry of Planning does not make a template or format sample for stakeholders to submit the VNR report. To response to this challenge, the Ministry of Planning should develop knowledge management hub for CSOs and other line ministries to do research studies, stoke take reports, and disseminate information through all channels. So, the quality of data will be circulated by line ministries and CSOs engaging in their relevant field of CSDGs goals and processes.

The Voluntary National Review (VNR) was done for the first time by the Cambodian Government in June 2019. SDG 4 (quality education), SDG 8 (economic growth), and SDG 10 (reduced Inequality), SDG 13 (climate action), and SDG 16 (peace and strong institutions), plus SDG 17 (partnerships) were reviewed in 2019. Cambodia's VNR also focused on these providing an in-depth review of each goal each. Cambodia

performance on those six goals is very positive, with well over 60% of the targets above or on track. The VNR consists of 7 key sections including:

- Introduction: cover country context, government commitment, nationalization of the global agenda, rationale of the report.
- Methodology and approach: discuss approaches and sources, key milestones and VNR drafting processing.
- Policy and Enabling Environment included creating ownership, incorporating into national planning and policy making framework, matching the three dimensions into development strategy, economic development, sustainability, and inclusion, leaving no one behind principles and securing environmental sustainability.
- Progress on goals and targets is the most important section which report progresses against the milestone indications starting with first the review of 6 prioritizing goals, and the review of 12 non-prioritizing goals.
- Means of Implementation section covers integration of CSDGs within the national policy and planning structure, resourcing and enabling the goals, M&E and policy feedback, awareness raising, capacity building, enhancing multi-stakeholder partnerships.

The VNR 2019 provide 60% of results were on track and ahead of track. The review clustered the 6 prioritized goals separately from other 12 non-prioritized goals. Overall, among the 6 prioritized goals: 29% were ahead of track, 32.3% on track. Among the 12 non-prioritized goals: 29.8% were ahead of track, 12.3% were on track, and 12.3% were below track. Each cluster has over 38% of data were unavailable, presenting the weakness of the M&E system of the CSDGs.

See the charts below which were extracted from the VNR report.

Figure 6: SDG performance priority goals

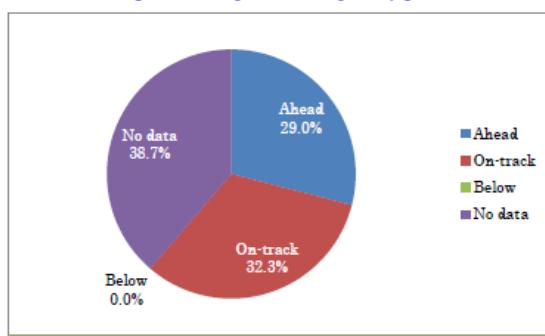
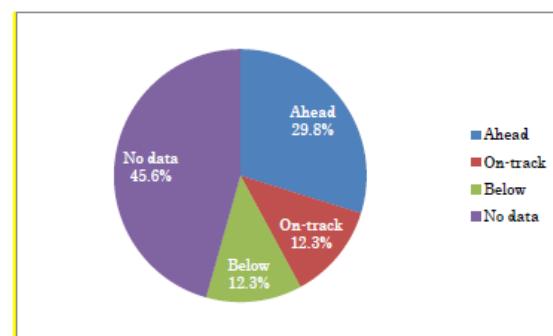


Figure 7: SDG performance (for the non-prioritized 12 goals)



The report also discussed the limitation in ownership by line ministries/agencies, who were not clear about who report what. There are more results which were not reported due to this challenge.

In addition, VNR has presented several challenges and can be summarized as follows:

- VNR emphasis the progress of employment in Cambodia was mainly due to limited dynamic young labor workforce and limitation of Cambodian human capital. For instance, young people do not have added-value skill deriving low paid job in the country and cannot attach high technology industry into the country.
- Increasing climate related events and degradation of natural resources are the key threats which obstacle the fast progress of achieving CSDGs.
- Collective actions and M&E remain key constraints to report and monitor the progress. There are more results which were not reported

The report concluded with the Government's commitment to strengthen the linkages of implementation through improvement of the Monitoring and Evaluation ecosystem strengthening. It also hoped that the on-going reforms would accelerate achievement of CSDGs. It also emphasized the importance to improve capacity and system strengthening for resources mobilization.

CCC had conducted three regional workshop and collecting inputs for Ministry of Planning. However, feedback was not informed back whether they accepted input or not. It was observed that only positive inputs/results were collated. The consultation had missed all other major key stakeholders such as youth, private sector and women's groups.

E. Action Plans, Proposal and Recommendation

E.1 Action Plans and Proposals to CSOs (National & International Level)

1. Mobilizing a CSOs Working Group on Cambodia SDGs, especially those who work on enabling environment and civic space, and to engage with the government on thematic focus by conducting joint M & E, especially during and after the pandemic. In addition, CSOs should advocate the public about the national budget allocation to support public sensitization program on public awareness of SDGs to public servants and the general public, especially among younger generation. The awareness on SDGs and CDGs in general, including the SDG 16 in particular is extremely low amongst the general public and a vast majority have not even heard about it.
2. Develop communication strategy and raise public awareness on SDGs and Human Rights for CSOs Working Group and the government institutions. Within this regard, CSOs should work very closely with the government, especially the Ministry of Planning, to establish effective mechanism to ensure that inputs and recommendations from all stakeholders, including CSOs and Development Partners, will be implementing properly on SDGs implementation and the voluntary national review.
3. Lobby the United Nations Resident Coordinator/UNDP in Cambodia and UNESCAP to support developing a "Cambodia CSO Road Map to SDGs 2021-2030." It is also relevant to mobilize CSOs to advocate the government to establish an independent national human rights institution by 2023 (as per UPR recommendation), and monitor the implementation of SDGs recommendations by the government and relevant bodies.

4. Lobby the National Assembly and Senate to establish a monitoring and reviewing mechanism of CSDGs to hold government more accountable to SDGs. We observed that there was lack of mechanism to ensure the stakeholders' inputs, especially from CSOs, in the whole VNR report process of the government in 2019. Civil society organization wanted an open, transparent and inclusive participatory approach in VNR process. The Ministry of Planning did not make a template or format sample for stakeholders to submit the VNR report.

5. Raise CSOs the government awareness and capacity building on SDGs and Human Rights. In addition, it is important for CSOs to lobby the government to review CSDGs' targets and indicators by integrating more global SDGs' targets and indicators into CSDGs, and to engage private sector and CSOs into the government's platform for monitoring and evaluation of SDGs implementation in Cambodia. CSOs advocates the government to ensure that CSDGs and SDGs 16 are well integrated into the National Strategic Development Plan with sufficient resource allocation and financing for those priorities. It is important to enable private sector to finance and support the implementation of SDG 16.

E.2 Proposals and Recommendations to the Government – National and Local Level

1. Legal and social protection. Formalization should be an incentive for informal workers to be legally recognized and protected by certain welfare regimes. In so doing, the Cambodian government may consider designing and piloting a voluntary social protection program to address the “missing middle” problem whereby registered workers are encouraged to pay a trivial sum of the monthly contribution to the National Social Security Fund.

2. Request banks and microfinance institutions to consider supporting their clients who are infected, and directly or indirectly affected by the Covid-19 by lowering interest rates and delaying collection of principle/interest for certain period of time during and after the crisis period.

3. The governments must also recognize and address how traditional gender roles affect how people of all genders and ages experience the Covid-19 crisis, reiterating that as in past epidemics, women's traditional role as caregivers for sick family members is putting more women and girls at greater risk of infection.

4. The government should lobby the United Nations Resident Coordinator/UNDP in Cambodia and UNESCAP to support developing a “Cambodia CSO/Government Road Map to SDGs 2021-2030.” It is also relevant to mobilize resource to ensure that the government will establish an independent national human rights institution by 2023 (as per UPR recommendation), and monitor the implementation of SDGs recommendations by the government and relevant bodies.

5. The government should ensure that the Cambodia Sustainable Development Goals (CSDGs) 16 align with the Global SDGs 16 in order to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all level. In this regards, rather than reporting only three targets under CSDGs 16, Cambodia government should extend the scope of implementation and reporting to be align with the Global SDG 16.

6. The Ministry of Planning should develop knowledge management hub for CSOs and other line ministries to do research studies, stoke take reports, and disseminate information through all channels. So, the quality of data will be circulated by line ministries and CSOs engaging in their relevant field of CSDGs goals and processes.

7. The government seemed to lack of an effective mechanism to localize SDG 16 from the global level to the national and down to the local level. We observe that the national government has limited human resources or understanding on SDG 16. As the result, the local authority has not properly received knowledge about SDG 16 and this will influence the whole implementation of this particular goal. These challenges are attributed to two main reasons: resources availability and coordination among stakeholders.

8. The government, especially the Ministry of Planning, should establish effective mechanism to ensure that inputs and recommendations from all stakeholders, including CSOs and Development Partners, will be implementing properly on SDGs implementation and the voluntary national review. The government should allocate budget to support public sensitization program on public awareness of SDGs to public servants and the general public, especially among younger generation.

9. The government to ensure that CSDGs and SDGs 16 are well integrated into the National Strategic Development Plan with sufficient resource allocation and financing for those priorities. It is important to enable private sector to finance and support the implementation of SDG 16.

10. Develop communication strategy and raise public awareness on SDGs and Human Rights for the government institutions. The government should Involve CSOs and private sectors to engage in the SDGs framework by ensuring inclusive participation in the planning, implementation, feed-backing, monitoring and evaluation. The government should ensure policy and national framework in place to promote full and efficient participation of women, people with disabilities and people living in poverty to have equal opportunity to leadership and benefits at all levels.

11. The government should lobby the National Assembly and Senate to establish a monitoring and reviewing mechanism of CSDGs to hold the government agency to be more accountable to SDGs. We observed that there was lack of mechanism to ensure the stakeholders' inputs, especially from CSOs, in the whole VNR report process of the government in 2019. Civil society organization wanted an open, transparent and inclusive participatory approach in VNR process. The Ministry of Planning did not make a template or format sample for stakeholders to submit the VNR report.

There are some specific recommendations to be addressed shortly for the national government, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, as the following:

- The government should ensure that the Cambodia Sustainable Development Goals (CSDGs) 16 align with the Global SDGs 16 in order to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions

at all level. In this regards, rather than reporting only three targets under CSDGs 16, Cambodia government should extend the scope of implementation and reporting to be align with the Global SDG 16.

- The government should ensure that CSDGs and SDGs 16 are well integrated into the National Strategic Development Plan with sufficient resource allocation and financing for those priorities. It is important to enable private sector to finance and support the implementation of SDG 16.
- The government should consider CSDGs and other targets of Global SDGs 16 16 as the permanent goal to be reviewed.
- The government, especially the Ministry of Planning, should establish effective mechanism to ensure that inputs and recommendations from all stakeholders, including CSOs and Development Partners, will be implementing properly on SDGs implementation and the voluntary national review.
- The government should allocate budget to support public sensitization program on public awareness of SDGs to public servants and the general public, especially among younger generation.

E.3 Proposal and Recommendations International Organizations, Development Partners, and TDF 2021

1. We call immediate debt cancellation, financial burden relief mechanisms and large scale aid investments to fund ongoing universal public health and social care service delivery everywhere across the globe to ensure that healthcare is universal and free for all. We call for daring financial policies, including central banks to provide resources and liquidity to government in a coordinated way, to finance their efforts to response to the crisis in its economic and social dimension.
2. We are concerned that emergency powers are being used indiscriminately to restrict people's fundamental freedoms, reduce the opportunity for public dialogue and lifting the duty of care for citizens who are vulnerable due to age and disability from health and social care providers.
3. We call the UN to connect immediate response and recovery funding directly with local groups which includes a "gender marker" for women, marginalized people, community organizations and social enterprises to ensure we leave no one behind.
- 4." Leave No One Behind" – CSOs in Asia can build solidarity through multi—stakeholder dialogues and international monitoring to exchange good practices and effective response to Covid-19 by using international frameworks such as VNS, UPR or human rights treaties. It is crucial to strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.
5. The principle of leaving no one behind should involve youth to use their potential for transforming our world to sustainable development, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Regional and

International Organizations should consider youth as the driving force to realize this global agenda and Beyond by Investing in youth allow the whole nation to harvest fruitfully in the long run.

6. Should provide a crucial platform to allow CSOs in Asia to monitor target countries' situations on Covid-19. Participants should follow up monitoring and evaluation of SDGs implementation in their perspective country.

7. Suggestions for future strategies to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs for the Decade of Action (2020-2030).

- **Global conversation from a risk-based view of transformational trends towards a positive**, possibility focused perspective that recognizes global megatrends as an engine for advancing socio-economic development.
- **Elaborate a practical and positive approach for businesses and countries** to leverage possibilities associated with ongoing global transformations, many of which will be accelerated by the COVID 19 crisis.
- **Systemic change requires transformational policies -identified a set of characteristics common to countries** that have demonstrated successful growth and increased wellbeing. In this context, successful growth means growth that improves living standards and societal wellbeing and cohesion.

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