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CARE Cambodia Country context

OVERVIEW CARE Cambodia focuses on the empowerment of particularly marginalised and vulnerable women in Cambodia. By working to empower women and their communities to understand and use their rights, and breaking down deeply-rooted, social and structural barriers to equality, CARE Cambodia is addressing the underlying causes of poverty and social injustice.

CAMBODIA TODAY

Since emerging from war and conflict, Cambodia has experienced high levels of growth and development. Over the last decade, the poverty rate has dropped from 53% to 21%, despite a raise in the poverty line¹. Economic growth has taken advantage of Cambodia's abundant natural resources and centred on the agricultural, tourism, garment manufacturing and construction sectors.

However, the lack of diversification has rendered the economy vulnerable to external shocks, and resulted in limited income opportunities for a large proportion of the population; growth has not translated into sufficient employment. Inequality is increasing between the rich and the poor, between urban and rural areas, and for socially

excluded groups. Whilst progress in some development indicators such as increases in primary school enrolment has been noted, overall, human development indicators remain low relative to the region. Great disparity also exists within Cambodia itself, with health indicators, education outcomes, and employment opportunities varying wildly across different regions of the country.

Cambodia also ranks poorly in international measures of gender equality; women are severely under-represented in national and local governance, maternal mortality rates are amongst the highest in the region, and girls have low levels of participation in secondary schools. Gender-based violence continues to be widely accepted and survivors of GBV have little access to support services.

The growth of urban-based industries in Cambodia has resulted in considerable rural to urban migration, especially by young women seeking work in the garment industry. Whilst this means that women are increasingly participating in the formal labour market, there remains considerable disparity in wages and women continue to lack access to higher-status occupations². The majority of women's work, especially in rural areas, still lies in the informal sector and is thus both underpaid and frequently unrecognised.

CARE Cambodia works at all levels - from influencing national policymakers to providing training to young women - to ensure that women have a legitimate voice and benefit equitably from social change.

¹ Royal Government of Cambodia, *National Strategic Development Plan 2014-2018*. (Phnom Penh, Cambodia: Royal Government of Cambodia, 2014), 6.

² David Williams, Phu Huynh, Sophorn Tun, *Decent Work Country Profile: CAMBODIA*. (Geneva, Switzerland: ILO, 2012), ix.