



**NGO-CEDAW**

**2022**

# **CEDAW MONITORING REPORT FOR CAMBODIA**

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# Overview of 2022

2022 brought a continuation of many of the challenges documented by NGO-CEDAW and its partners in previous monitoring reports. It also saw a concerning escalation of the crackdowns on peaceful women-led strikes, the most prominent case remaining that of the NagaWorld casino which stands accused of disproportionately dismissing pregnant and nursing women, as well as women unionists (Sections 1.6; 3.1).

New research emerged addressing several issues, from government, INGO, civil society, and academic sources. For instance, local women's rights NGO Women Peace Makers published research documenting the human rights challenges faced by Indigenous and Ethnic Minority women and girls in Cambodia (Section 2). This research highlighted urgent issues pertaining to statelessness that are shown to have been inadequately addressed by the state despite calls by the CEDAW Committee to prioritize the facilitation of access to identity documentation and birth registration.

Journalists, too, published important new evidence pertaining to violations of women's rights in 2022. For instance, independent media in Cambodia investigated the impacts of an alarming rise in scam compounds and modern slavery in the country (Section 1.2), while other outlets followed up with women who continue to be affected by the surrogacy crackdown imposed by the Cambodian government during the late 2010s (Section 6).

While lockdown measures were lifted, the economic fallout from the pandemic continued throughout 2022, coupled with alarming new evidence showing the present-day impacts of climate change on women garment workers (Section 3.2). Finally, a mid-year commune election failed to bring about more than a 0.2% increase in women councilors from the previous mandate in 2017 (Section 5).

This report is a summary of key concerns and events which occurred in the calendar year 2022. **It does not attempt to comprehensively address all issues facing women, girls, and non-binary persons living in Cambodia, but rather focuses on those which were new or of particular concern in 2022.**

# 1. Gender-Based Violence

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a broad term, encompassing rape and sexual assault, sexual harassment (in the world of work, in schools, and in public spaces), domestic violence (including child abuse, abuse of household members, and intimate partner violence), human trafficking and sexual exploitation, and state-sponsored violence. Many girls and women including nonbinary and transgender individuals in Cambodia not only consistently endure various forms of GBV but also face great barriers in accessing services and justice either through the formal justice system or alternative dispute resolution mechanisms.

## 1.1 Statistics on GBV for 2022

A September 2022 news\_article [1] cited Ministry for Women's Affairs (MoWA) Secretary of State of MoWA Kem Sophat as stating that in the previous year, the level of violence against women remained static. However, she noted that there were 2,553 cases where MoWA, in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice, police, and other officials "legally intervened to improve" women's lives. It is unclear in what manner the cases were resolved (arrests made, cases that made it to court, or cases that were diverted from the formal court system and proceeded to alternative dispute resolution at the local level).

According to the Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey (CDHS) 2021-2022 [2], lifetime prevalence of physical, sexual, or emotional intimate partner violence (IPV) by either a current or past partner was 22%. Also, 24.4% reported controlling behavior by a partner such as a limiting her contact with family or female friends. Yet, there was an apparent decrease in the prevalence of physical violence against women in Cambodia, from 20% in 2014 to 10% in 2022 for violence after age 15. Most of this violence was perpetrated by current or former intimate partners. Other trends remain particularly concerning. For instance, the findings indicated that "53% of women who experienced any physical or sexual violence neither sought help nor told anyone about the violence" and "43% of women who have experienced physical or sexual violence committed by their current or most recent husband/intimate partner have sustained injuries."

Cambodian Women’s Crisis Centre (CWCC), a national NGO providing services and shelter access for survivors of GBV, reported in May 2022 that “violence against women in Cambodia has not decreased in the past two years, in fact, it has been increasing daily.”[3] According to CWCC’s records, in 2022 there were 442 cases in which they provided legal assistance to women survivors of violence, across the four provinces in which they work. The previous year, there had been 410 cases.

GBV cases (CWCC)	Phnom Penh	Banteay Meanchey	Siem Reap	Kampong Thom	Total
Domestic violence	46	35	94	70	245
Sexual abuse	11	36	47	9	103
Trafficking	93	1	0	0	94
<b>Total</b>	150	72	141	79	442

Similarly, Cambodian Health and Education for Community (CHEC), a local NGO providing community education and awareness raising in order to prevent violence against women, children and LGBT individuals, recorded 833 cases of domestic violence in 2022, compared with 557 in 2021. While the data is limited to figures provided by two organizations, the increase in caseload shows that gender-based violence continues to be an urgent issue post-pandemic.

In 2022, CHEC also completed a study on the GBV-related impacts of the pandemic-era lockdown and social distancing measures.[4] Of the GBV survivors interviewed as part of the study, around two-thirds (68%) had reported their cases to the local authorities. Among those survivors who chose not to report the case, reasons offered for this decision included wanting to keep the experience of violence to themselves (89%); being fearful of the perpetrator (27%); and wanting to avoid possible infection with the COVID-19 virus (16%).

ActionAid Cambodia (AAC) monitored five local online media outlets that reported on 119 specific cases of violence against women throughout 2022. The cases reported on ranged from sexual harassment, IPV, sexual assault, rape and murder. The objective of the monitoring was to determine whether reporting from these outlets conformed to the Media Code of Conduct for Reporting on Violence Against Women, which was finalized as a joint ministerial proclamation or *prakas* by the Ministries of Women's Affairs and Information in 2017.

Of the reports monitored by AAC, none were found to be fully compliant with the Code of Conduct. The most frequent issues included revealing the identities of the victims/survivors, including their names and addresses, blaming the victims/survivors and their families, making assumptions about the case, and "making fun" of the case facts.

Finally, human rights organization LICADHO investigated a total of 93 new women's rights cases and 144 new children's rights cases involving violations of girls' rights across 12 provinces and Phnom Penh throughout 2022. Most of the cases perpetrated against adult women involved domestic violence (55 cases) and rape or attempted rape (33 cases), while most of the cases perpetrated against girls involved rape or attempted rape (121 cases). Of these cases, roughly half of girls' rights violations were perpetrated by a family member, while more than half of women's rights violations were perpetrated by their current or former intimate partners.

The cases documented by these organisations are not indicative of the total prevalence or nature of GBV in Cambodia due to barriers to reporting violence as well as CSOs' limited capacity to open new cases and the locations of their work. However, these cases demonstrate that GBV is prevalent and women and girls still too often encounter significant obstacles to obtaining justice through the legal system.

## 1.2 Human trafficking

2022 saw the further escalation of a human trafficking and modern slavery crisis within the country. The victims, primarily from the People's Republic of China (PRC), Vietnam and other countries across Southeast Asia, are tricked into traveling to the country with the promise of well-paid work only to find themselves trapped in razor-wired compounds and forced to work long hours performing online scams.

In August 2022, Vitit Muntarbhorn, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia published an end of mission statement [5] including a section describing trafficking victims in Cambodia as enduring a "living hell." He noted that scam-victims are forced to scam others and if "the scammer fails to deliver the goods or refuses to comply with the orders, the person might be tortured or locked in various compounds surrounded by barbed wire and iron fencing to prevent escape." [6]

Since the crisis emerged in the late 2010s and throughout its escalation during the pandemic, the Cambodian government and authorities have been criticized both for playing down the situation and failing to take action, with some reports emerging of authorities tipping off gangs about raids. [7]

In July 2022, following increasingly frequent exposés by local independent media and calls for action by volunteer networks and civil society organizations, the United States State Department's Trafficking in Persons report downgraded Cambodia to Tier 3 – the lowest rating.[8] The report stated that:

*"The Government of Cambodia does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and is not making significant efforts to do so... endemic corruption continued to impede overall law enforcement operations, holding traffickers accountable, and victim service provision. Authorities did not investigate or hold criminally accountable any officials involved in the large majority of credible reports of complicity, in particular with unscrupulous business owners who subjected thousands of men, women, and children throughout the country to human trafficking in entertainment establishments, brick kilns, and online scam operations.*

*Therefore, officials also failed to proactively identify trafficking victims among these highly vulnerable populations. The government did not provide adequate protection services for victims domestically or overseas and relied heavily on foreign donors and NGOs to provide much-needed care."*

Following the downgrading, a series of large scale raids took place in late 2022, including on well-known hotels in central Phnom Penh that had been shuttered during the pandemic. However, it is widely acknowledged that sustained, well-resourced and urgent action is needed to more aggressively combat the issue and prevent operations from simply moving to other locations across the country. [9]



Reports exist that up to 10% of victims are women, and some have been coerced into "sex work at the compounds or made to perform pornographic shows on webcams." [10]

As well as the ongoing cyber-slavery issue, other human trafficking concerns remain. The US State Department report recommends that the government "increase or start unannounced labor inspections in high-vulnerability professions, especially at brick kilns, entertainment venues, construction sites, and plantations, with a focus on identifying debt bondage and holding business owners accountable to the law." Another issue singled out in the State Department report is that of women from rural areas who travel to the PRC under false pretenses to enter into marriages with PRC-national men. These women then "incur thousands of dollars of debt to brokers facilitating the transaction; the men force some of these women to work in factories or exploit them in sex trafficking to repay this debt."

Trafficking of women for forced sex within Cambodia also remains an issue. According to the State Department report, "Cambodian and ethnic Vietnamese women and girls move from rural areas to cities and tourist destinations, where criminals exploit them in sex trafficking in brothels and, more frequently, clandestine sex establishments at beer gardens, massage parlors, salons, karaoke bars, retail spaces, and non-commercial sites." It should be noted however, that not all women in these establishments have been trafficked. Some are sex workers consensually providing services. These women, including transgender women, should be afforded better access to labour rights and safe working conditions, which can be accelerated by the decriminalisation of sex work.

### 1.3 Online harassment & abuse

2022 brought further concern over the issues of harassment in the internet environment, particularly against children, as a new report entitled "*Disrupting Harm in Cambodia*" by ECPAT, INTERPOL and UNICEF Cambodia found that more than 1 in 10 children had been subjected to online sexual abuse and exploitation. [11] The report stated that "In the past year alone, 11% of internet users aged 12–17 in Cambodia were subjected to clear examples of online sexual exploitation and abuse that included blackmailing children into engaging in sexual activities, sharing sexual images without permission or coercing them into engaging in sexual activities through promises of money or gifts."

"Scaled to the population of internet-using children in Cambodia, [the study] represents an estimated 160,000 children" subjected to online abuse nationwide. Very few children formally report the cases, with a key barrier being that most do not know how to report or who they should talk to.

While the study found that online harassment and abuse was reported more frequently by boys than girls in the survey data, more reports to the Cambodian CSAM (Child Sexual Abuse Material) hotline from 2017-2019 concerned only girls (38%) versus only boys (27%). "Among pubescent children, girls were [again] over-represented, comprising 77% of reports."

While there is a need for laws and regulations to specifically and effectively monitor and address online harassment, social media companies should also take into account their roles and responsibilities and act to ensure the safety of their users worldwide. For example, as one internet safety specialist told local media outlet VoD, Facebook's report mechanism does not work effectively among Cambodian users as a result of language barriers that prevent effective content moderation.[12]

In October 2022, concerned by the high levels of online sexual harassment against children and the loopholes in existing laws and regulations, civil society organizations urged for there to be more serious punishment for online sexual harassment cases.[13,14]

Finally, in August 2022 local rights group LICADHO documented how online money lending networks are "targeting Cambodian women on Facebook and Telegram, trapping them into growing debts and extorting them using naked photographs and videos." [15] LICADHO asserts that social media companies and Cambodian authorities are failing to act, allowing these predatory groups to exploit women with impunity.

In the preceding year, LICADHO provided services to three women who had been harassed by informal online lenders. Each with similar experiences, the women first borrowed sums as small as \$50 to pay for daily expenses or medical care from groups advertising on Facebook, but when they needed more loans, the predators first demanded that they send naked photos of themselves. The lenders then blackmailed and extorted the women, threatening to release the photos and making harassing phone calls to the women, their families, and colleagues.

As LICADHO highlights, these targeted attacks comprise GBV. They exploit gendered expectations of women and cause psychological and economic harm. Furthermore, both extortion and blackmail are illegal under Cambodia's Criminal Code and the three women have filed official complaints, providing extensive evidence. As of August 2022, the Ministry of Interior's Anti-Cyber Crime Department had not held anyone to account. While the mobile application through which women were being targeted no longer appears to be available, online loan groups continue to similarly target and harass Cambodians on Facebook and Telegram. As one woman harassed by online lenders emphasized to LICADHO, these cases should be processed urgently, with meaningful access to justice provided to affected women: "I would like to request the Anti-Cyber Crime Department to help speed up my complaint and other victims' complaints."

## 1.4 Access to justice and misuse of ADR in GBV cases

Alternative dispute resolution (ADR) has long been used as a means to deal with domestic violence cases in Cambodia outside of the country's formal court system, despite this practice attracting criticism from the CEDAW Committee as well as women's rights advocates in recent years.[16] In January 2022, Kampong Chhnang provincial administration held a press conference revealing that the authorities had received 716 cases, including domestic violence cases in the past year.[17] Of these 716 cases, 589 of them were reportedly resolved using two variations of ADR.

Performing ADR himself, the Provincial Council chairperson reported holding public meetings to resolve some disputes. However, in most cases, the Kampong Chhnang provincial governor and the provincial council chairperson went to people's homes to meet the families involved in the disputes. This is similar to a traditional practice referred to by the term 'somroh somruol,' which is frequently mistranslated into English as 'mediation' and often misused in both its meaning and practice. [18] The current practice, especially when used in IPV cases, almost always constitutes conciliation and/or arbitration in violation of women's rights, and urgent reform is therefore needed.

It is good that the provincial council chair recognized that it is crucial that cases involving abuse of women and children are not diverted to mediation, conciliation or any other form of ADR, but are instead dealt with through legal channels that provide support and access to justice for survivors. He stated that he referred six such cases to the court because they were criminal matters.

However it is not known how many of the other resolved cases may have involved domestic violence and should also have been referred to court. Likewise it is unclear whether any of the domestic violence cases that involved ADR were “resolved” in public. If so, this would constitute a continuation of a practice that NGO-CEDAW has previously identified as inappropriate and failing to provide gender-responsive and survivor-centered settings, such as when the Pursat governor in 2020 conciliated a couple in a public forum to remain in their marriage despite the woman and her mother reporting that her husband used physical violence against her and she wished to obtain a divorce. [19]

All domestic violence cases should be dealt with through legal channels that provide support and access to justice for survivors. This is especially important given that ‘*mediation*’ performed between couples in Cambodia very often constitutes conciliation or reconciliation in practice: this distinction is important, given that ‘*mediation*’ aims to provide a way forward that is satisfactory to both parties, while ‘*conciliation*’ is performed with the express purpose of encouraging a couple to remain married.

In July 2021 the Technical Working Group on Gender-Gender Based Violence (TWGG-GBV) voted to adopt Guidelines on the Limited Use of Mediation as a Response to Violence Against Women (Guidelines). The Guidelines advise against the performance of conciliation, reconciliation or arbitration by the local authorities including police as a response to any forms of VAW. While ADR in the form of mediation is technically allowed in the Guidelines, the Guidelines require strict ethical standards including repeated safety screenings which would not permit any mediation to be conducted unless it is not only permissible by existing law, but also appropriate in adherence to human rights standards and procedures. Any situation in which a woman or child is at risk of violence shall result in halting any ADR, issuing protection orders and/or administrative decisions to prevent violence, and referring the matter to court and any other appropriate service providers.

In 2022, the Ministries of Women's Affairs, Justice, and Interior began drafting an inter-ministerial prakas (regulation) and publicly announced their plan to disseminate and implement of the mediation guidelines. The government must also ensure that dedicated funding from the national budget is devoted to effective dissemination and implementation of the prakas and Guidelines, so that unethical practices in the community end.

It is important to note that the Mediation Guidelines as adopted are only a temporary means of improving women's safety in the current legal context. Implementation of the Guidelines will be difficult in a context where there is a lack of legal and physical infrastructure to ensure survivor-centered practices and universal access to the court system. The guidelines are not a substitute for amending and improving the laws, such as updating the criminal law and law on domestic violence to comply with international standards. The Guidelines are also not a substitute for prosecuting criminal cases and expanding access to the formal legal system so that mediation is never the only practical option.

Notably, the current context is one where local authorities including police are long-accustomed to using conciliation mixed with arbitration methods in addressing all types of domestic disputes including VAW, for the ostensible 'protection of harmony' in the community – often at the cost of women's rights and autonomy.

In October 2022, the Ministry of Justice also announced a plan to establish an expert mediator unit to resolve out-of-court disputes with a focus on civil cases and petty offences.[20] A working group is reportedly drafting the relevant policies, laws and regulations, with the unit set to be launched in 2024. The purpose of this establishment is to improve the accessibility of mediation services, with Justice Minister, Koeut Rith, saying this will "bring justice services closer to people living in rural areas... reduce case backlog in courts, provide greater harmony among the great Khmer family, where the parties to the conflicts achieve win-win solutions." While these aims may be commendable, it should be made clear in both policy and practice that any such 'family disputes' that the unit will set out to handle do not include cases where domestic violence has been reported.[21]

In addition, while rape cases must never be conciliated or mediated, this practice continued in many parts of the country in 2022, as one case in section 1.7.3 of this report (women living with disabilities) demonstrates. LICADHO, too, found evidence of this practice in the cases it investigated throughout 2022.

Sexual violence cases continued to be settled by out-of-court payments facilitated by authorities including police, who then ensure criminal proceedings are dropped or stalled. Further, in a small but concerning number of rape cases, girls were married to perpetrators in a complete absence of justice.

LICADHO documented that the requirements to access forensic examinations and medical evidence were inconsistent across provinces in 2022, and risk blocking women and girls from obtaining evidence. Courts often place excessive value on forensic evidence in sexual violence cases, without which it can be difficult to secure justice. Yet in multiple provinces examinations were reportedly only accessible with the approval or presence of police or other authorities. This can block women and girls from obtaining evidence at authorities' discretion.

## 1.5 Killings by intimate partners

LICADHO investigated the killings of 11 women by current or former intimate partners during 2022. In a report published in March 2023, LICADHO reviewed 26 cases of killings perpetrated by intimate partners from January 2020 to June 2022.[22] At least half of the women killed had experienced prior physical violence, yet the report finds that entrenched gender norms and lack of trust in authorities are still preventing women from seeking assistance. LICADHO first documented these 26 cases after the women's deaths; information about their prior experiences of violence and other types of violence faced is therefore missing in some cases.

Social, legal and financial barriers to divorce and separation – and the heavy preference given to conciliation in domestic violence cases – left some women unable to leave violent partners. In multiple cases, authorities were aware of ongoing violence but it was either ignored or they attempted to conciliate couples. In these cases, authorities’ failure to facilitate divorce, pursue criminal charges or offer other protections enabled women’s deaths. The impacts on children in these cases were also severe: not only were five children killed, but at least eight children also witnessed killings.

## 1.6 Violence & harassment against women workers

GBV in the workplace continued in 2022. LICADHO interviewed six women union leaders and labor rights activists in October 2022, together representing factory workers, sex workers, entertainment workers, casino workers, teachers, tuk tuk drivers, domestic workers and others. Despite representing diverse sectors, each activist reported that their members face sexual harassment or other forms of gender-based violence at work, with authorities and employers often failing to act and allowing violence to continue with impunity.[23]

Further, from late 2021 and throughout 2022, state-sanctioned violence and harassment of women workers and labor rights activists has intensified. This is most visible in the crackdowns on peaceful women-led strikes against NagaWorld Casino. In 2021, the casino laid off many of its workers, disproportionately affecting pregnant and nursing women and women unionists. The violence and intimidation of women workers, as well as the arbitrary detention/imprisonment of women human rights defenders, is outlined in greater detail in Section 3.1 of this report. However it is important to also raise this issue here, given that the gendered nature of the intimidation comprises and should be recognised as specifically gender-based violence:

*“Authorities shoved and dragged protesters, and were accused of sexual harassment. City Hall blamed the protesters, saying they were acting and their behavior was “not suitable as Khmer women.”[24]*



Local health NGO Reproductive Health Association of Cambodia (RHAC) also conducted research into harassment against women workers in 2022, releasing a study entitled "Harassment and VAW in the workplace: Situational analysis of sexual harassment among garment factories' workers in 2022".[25] Interviews with 1,180 garment factory workers (85% of whom were women, and 15% men) revealed that just 6.35% had never heard or witnessed sexual harassment in the factory, while a total of 93.65% reported having heard or witnessed sexual harassment: either rarely (31.06%), occasionally (48.24%), or often (14.35%). Of these respondents, an overwhelming 96.47% reported that there was usually 'no intervention' following these incidents of sexual harassment, while 2.59% reported that internal mediation usually took place, and just 0.94% indicated that the police were usually reported to.

Some 14.06% of respondents reported personally experiencing harassment taking place in the factory during the past 12 months, while, alarmingly, 41% of respondents were also reported to have experienced or witnessed IPV or VAW among garment factory workers (GFWs), usually outside the workplace (87.7%) rather than in the factory (12.3%).

Despite the fact that 80.42% of respondents reported that their factory has policies for reporting sexual harassment, only 24.75% of those who had experienced or witnessed sexual harassment went on to report it. Of those, just 16% reported that an investigation was or would be conducted, and the same number (16%) reported the belief that "there was/would be an adequate punishment for the perpetrator." Contrastingly, 20% reported that nothing happened after they reported the case of sexual harassment.

In its 2019 concluding observations, the Committee noted that Cambodia lacks "a comprehensive law that defines and effectively prohibits violence and harassment, including sexual harassment, in the workplace, which is reportedly prevalent... particularly in the garment industry and while commuting to and from work" [para. 36]. The Committee recommended that the RGC should adopt and implement comprehensive legislation to prevent and respond to violence and harassment, including sexual harassment, in the workplace, and establish an independent complaints mechanism to ensure that victims have effective access to redress and that perpetrators are held accountable. The Committee further recommended that the government should ratify the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190).



While it is positive to note that the RGC voted to adopt ILO C190 in Geneva in June 2019, the convention has still not yet been ratified in Cambodia. RGC representatives have publicly stated that the government is considering steps toward ratification, and is committed to eliminating violence in the workplace, however it is not yet apparent and no further information has been provided about what those steps would be. Given that ILO C190 provides a clear framework and recommendations for addressing gender in the world of work and importantly, would extend protections to all workers, it is crucial that the government ratifies the Convention without further delay.

## 1.7 GBV against marginalised groups

### 1.7.1 LBT+ Persons

In March 2022, a joint civil society report on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) rights and sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) was published for the voluntary mid-term reporting period of Cambodia's third Universal Periodic Review (UPR).[26] In this report, civil society has noticed with appreciation that the RGC has made progress related to the promotion and protection of equal rights of Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender (LBT+) persons in Cambodia, including progress towards achieving SOGIESC-inclusive Comprehensive Sexuality Education in Schools, and public statements by high level Cambodian government officials encouraging government officials at national and local levels, parents and families of LGBT+, media as well as the general public to not discriminate.

Local Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT+) rights organization Rainbow Community Kampuchea (RoCK) conducted regular consultations with LBT+ persons throughout 2022, who shared their lived experiences with staff from the organization. Through these consultations, RoCK found that various forms of violence against LBT+ persons in Cambodia previously documented in publications (including emotional violence in the family sphere) have continued to occur in 2022 even if not formally reported upon for the year 2022 specifically.[27] During regular consultations with LBT+ persons held by RoCK throughout 2022, LBTQ+ persons shared the situations of “discrimination” and “rejection” faced in the family spheres (rejection of “who they are,” “how they dress,” and “who they love,”) as well as experiences of discrimination faced in the workplace, especially for transgender persons.

The civil society third-cycle UPR mid-term report on SOGIESC-SRHR contained the following specific recommendations to ensure effective protection of LBT+ persons from gender-based violence, including address remaining gaps in the National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women III (NAPVAW III):

- *Develop effective implementation and strategic interventions, accompanied by adequate resource allocation, notably regarding education, awareness raising, and protection for LBT persons from gender-based violence and discrimination, including making available and accessible comprehensive health and legal services for LBT survivors. This should be carried out through strengthening the work of the Technical Working Group on Gender – Gender Based Violence (TWGG-GBV), and in consultation with civil society working on the rights of LGBT+ persons.*
- *[The Ministry of Women’s Affairs (MoWA)], through the work of the TWGG-GBV should also consider studying necessary legal reforms to protect LBT persons from gender-based violence and discrimination.*

Among a number of recommendations to ensure equal rights for LGBT+ persons in Cambodia, the civil society report also included the recommendation to take concrete steps working with all stakeholders to enable legal marriage equality for LGBT+ couples based on the commitment in the third cycle UPR, which has been continuously identified by Cambodian LGBT+ community members as a priority to protect their equal marriage and family rights, as well as to reduce and ultimately eliminate the high levels of discrimination they face.

## 1.7.2 Indigenous and Ethnic Minority women and girls

In 2022, a report on GBV against Indigenous Women in three provinces (Mondulkiri, Ratanakiri and Stung Treng) was published by three organizations: Cambodia Indigenous Peoples Organisation (CIPO), Cambodia Indigenous Women Association (CIWA) and Klahaan.[28] According to the report, domestic violence “is common among the Indigenous community, with local authorities reporting multiple cases in their villages. Survivors and their families are reporting to local authorities cases of rape, including incestuous rape, attempted rape, rape followed by the killing of the victim, as well as cases of sexual harassment.”

The report found an apparent increase in cases of GBV against Indigenous women compared to the period prior to 2015; however, it also noted that it is impossible to confirm trends and patterns of GBV against Indigenous women due to a lack of consistent, comprehensive and disaggregated data on GBV. For example, between the years 2015 and 2020, the Ratanakiri Provincial Department of Women’s Affairs reported that they received and documented 492 cases of GBV of which 450 were domestic violence cases and 42 were rape cases. However, the data was not disaggregated by sex, age, or ethnicity.

The interview data with female survivors, relatives of survivors, local authorities, male traditional leaders, provincial authorities, and CSOs documented 23 specific cases of GBV in the three provinces. Most of the perpetrators were relatives or friends of the survivors or their families.

The report details that “interviews with survivors suggest that stigma has negative effects on survivors’ mental health and hinders their education and social life.” Access to justice is reportedly limited for Indigenous women by the fact that local authorities including police fail to fulfil their legal mandate to refer cases to court, instead handling the majority of GBV cases through ADR at the local, commune or district level (as discussed earlier in section 1.4): “The documented cases demonstrate that traditional dispute resolution measures do not use a victim/survivor-centered approach, and instead focus on what is believed to be for the good of the community.”

A 2022 report from local women's rights organization Women Peace Makers (WPM) again found that the prevalence of GBV is exacerbated in Indigenous (and other Minority) communities.[29] The report, discussed in greater detail throughout section 2, contained data gathered over a three year period from 268 girls and women from four target minority groups (Indigenous, Khmer Krom, ethnic Vietnamese and Cham Muslim communities).

The study found that to many Minority girls, violence is a normal part of life. Most do not seek help from authorities, and many experience self-blame, shame and stigma. The report describes a “devastating” culture of violence against women in Minority communities, where perpetrators live with impunity.

The report also identified the following concerns in relation to GBV:

#### **Indigenous women and girls:**

- 25% of Indigenous girls reported having experienced physical violence, while 58% reported economic violence, and 88% reported emotional violence.
- Despite the high rates of violence, 70% of Indigenous women and girls living with violence said they did not seek any form of help or support outside the home.

#### **Ethnic Vietnamese women and girls:**

- 85% of ethnic Vietnamese girls reported experiencing emotional, physical and/or economic violence and 38% believed it was their own fault.
- 48% of ethnic Vietnamese girls experienced sexual harassment at least once.

#### **Cham Muslim women and girls:**

- 36% of Cham Muslim girls reported experiencing physical violence, 9% reported economic violence, and 86% reported emotional or psychological violence.
- 23% of Cambodian Muslim girls experienced sexual harassment at least once

### 1.7.3 Women living with disabilities

Women and girls with disabilities are at particular risk of violence in Cambodia. In 2022, local women's rights CSO Banteay Srei provided services to seven women living with disabilities through their Safe House programme (out of a total of 158 women to whom they provided services that year). Among the seven women, four cases took place in Siem Reap and involved domestic violence. The other three cases happened in Battambang, of which two involved domestic violence and the other one involved rape. All of the domestic violence cases included the use of physical violence, psychological violence and economic violence. Of the women survivors, Banteay Srei reported that two women live with disabilities affecting their feet, one woman lives with a spinal condition, three women have autism and one woman is blind.

Each woman received counseling and support through the court process from Banteay Srei. Each woman and/or her family had first sought help from their respective local authorities before approaching the organization, but either no action was taken or an inadequate resolution was proposed. Each woman had found it difficult to answer questions from local authorities, some because of their disabilities. Some reported to Banteay Srei that the local authorities asked them repeatedly to resolve or 'finish' their case via informal mediation and compensation, but that even this was a slow form of intervention. The women believe that the local authorities did not pay attention to them or prioritize their cases because they are women with disabilities.

Once seeking access to justice through the formal court system, other challenges raised by the women included difficulties in traveling long distances (despite volunteers accompanying them to Banteay Srei and the courts); their limited knowledge in terms of laws and procedures related to violence; communication with people; and a lack of money to support themselves with food and accommodation throughout lengthy court proceedings.

In Siem Reap, one of the domestic violence cases also involved an application for divorce at the commune level citing grounds of violence. The three other domestic violence cases reportedly involved disputes that stemmed from adultery, with husbands becoming involved with able-bodied women and getting violent when confronted.

In one of these cases, the husband refused to agree to a divorce because he did not want to lose access to property, claiming that all property belonged to him by default due to his wife's disability and inability to earn an income. In this case, the woman survivor ultimately decided not to divorce and to stay in the relationship.

In Battambang, one domestic violence case remains in alternative dispute resolution (ADR) and has not proceeded to the court despite this case involving physical violence against a disabled woman. Banteay Srei also continues to provide support to survivors whose cases are diverted to ADR. Of the rape cases in Battambang, all three proceeded to the formal court system. One case remains ongoing while the other two resulted in convictions, with the perpetrators receiving jail time and the survivors receiving compensation.

In all three of these cases, the women live with severe autism and were raped by their neighbours. The cases proceeded to court despite the local authorities persistently encouraging the families to undergo informal alternative dispute resolution (ADR). According to interviews by the Banteay Srei team with the women and their families, because these women live in remote areas and are autistic, the perpetrators had thought that they would not be able to report the crimes. As one staff member from the organization put it, "We are aware that unless their family had recognized [the violence being perpetrated in] this case, reported it and found their way to support, the survivors would not have reported that it was a case of violent crime."

In conclusion, discriminatory perceptions that women and girls with disabilities are less valuable and more burdensome than those without disabilities present additional obstacles for women and girls seeking justice. Local authorities also reportedly show less understanding and commitment to supporting these survivors, particularly women living with autism.

Primary preventive programs so far have not completely addressed the issue of preventing violence against women and girls with disabilities, usually lacking the intersectionality needed to address the multiple forms of vulnerability that disabled women and girls live with. There is a need to create strategies for connecting with women and girls with disabilities and to support women-led disabled people's organizations who are able to speak out for women and girls with disabilities' rights to live free from violence.

## 2. Indigenous and Ethnic Minority women and girls

As mentioned in section 1.7.2, new research on the rights-related experiences of Indigenous and Ethnic Minority women and girls was produced by Women Peace Makers in 2022.[30] The study found that Minority girls and women are at higher risk of exposure to gender-based violence, have more problems accessing public services such as health, education and justice, and are likely to be more economically disadvantaged or at higher risk of poverty and health issues. However, the majority population is “often unaware of the acute problems that Minority women and girls face, resulting in their continued marginalization,” a fact which is in turn exacerbated by a gap in information available on the situation of Minority girls and women in the country.

### 2.1 Access to sexual reproductive health education & services

According to the study, many Minority girls feel they experience puberty alone, without support or information from family, communities, or the government. A lack of sexual education is especially challenging for Indigenous and Cham girls who are often married very young and bear children during their adolescence. One of the main barriers is the stigma around these topics, which makes girls reluctant to or forbidden from discussing them with family or elders. 52% of girls said that they are afraid of being viewed as a ‘bad girl’ if they raise these issues.

Girls from Indigenous and Minority groups involved in the study also reported feeling uncomfortable during menstruation. Many do not buy menstrual products because they are embarrassed to purchase them or tell other people about their physical changes. They also often lack the finances needed to purchase disposable menstrual products. Menstrual hygiene in general is a major concern for some Minority girls who do not have access to private toilets. All of these factors reportedly lead to an unhealthy relationship with their own bodies’ natural processes, and can also contribute to some dropping out of school.

A lack of access to sexual and reproductive health education and services is particularly harmful for Indigenous girls and young women, given the high rates of child marriage in these communities. 10.5% of Indigenous girls in the study under the age of 15 identified as married, and 55% between 15-19 years old identified as married. When asked how much they knew about sexual and reproductive health, 97.5% of Ethnic Vietnamese girls answered either not much, very little, or not at all. 60% of these girls also reported seeing sexual and reproductive health and rights related topics as taboo.

Similarly, almost half (48%) of Cham Muslim girls felt that talking about sexual and reproductive health was taboo. When asked if they had ever had a sexual or reproductive health problem, 30% of the girls responded that they did not know whether they had or not.

All of the above evidence points to an urgent need for better sexual and reproductive education and access to information for Indigenous and Minority groups. The report recommends that the government should take steps to lower the cost of feminine hygiene products, reducing taxes on these products to zero. In addition, comprehensive sex education classes should be integrated into public and private school curriculums starting at a young age, and should be taught in Indigenous and Minority languages where appropriate.

## 2.2 Experiences of discrimination

Indigenous and Minority girls participating in WPM's study reported experiences of discrimination. Broadly speaking, 69% of participating girls said they have felt discriminated against in their lifetimes. 25% for their accent, 23% for their religious practices, 33% for their ethnicity, 28% for their clothing, 30% for speaking their language, and 23% for their culture and traditions.

While concerns about statelessness and discrimination were highlighted by the CEDAW Committee in their concluding observations from their 2013 and 2019 reviews of Cambodia and by the Human Rights Committee in the CCPR process, the situation has not improved in recent years for the Khmer Krom and ethnic Vietnamese girls/young women from the floating communities whose parents already possess the new permanent residency cards. [31]



The failure to facilitate access to birth certificates, not to mention the Cambodian nationality for those who meet the conditions for acquiring nationality, particularly those of Vietnamese origin and Khmer Krom descent, has continued to lead to extreme political, educational, financial, and interpersonal discrimination. While the Cambodian government recognises the Khmer Krom in principle as Cambodian citizens, many long-term residents and more recent arrivals face obstacles when trying to formalise their Cambodian citizenship, especially with regards to applying for a Cambodian national identity card. [32] This impact is highlighted in the following findings:

- 45% of the Khmer Krom girls and young women surveyed reported being discriminated against, with 33% indicating they had dropped out of school because of this discrimination.
- 60% of Ethnic Vietnamese girls also reported discrimination on the basis of their ethnicity.

When discrimination robs girls of their education, it also robs them of their confidence and makes them feel valued less in society. The study found that this discrimination has caused 69% of girls to feel devalued, 29% to lose confidence, 15% to feel isolated and to not want to engage with strangers, and 14% to drop out of school.

### **Recommendations:**

- Create a culture that celebrates diversity, for example, by adding minority culture into school curriculums in order to teach children about others and dispel rumors about indigenous and minority groups.
- Ensure local government and health officials are properly educated as to the nationality and citizenship laws as well as other related policies and guidelines aiming to increase the rate of birth registration for ethnic minorities and the provision of related certification in conjunction with SDG 16.9. which states “by 2030 provide legal identity for all including free birth registrations”.
- Clarify the legal rights afforded by permanent residency cards and ensure that their distribution does not override or eliminate pre-existing rights and opportunities to access education, employment, health care and other basic services. Such efforts should aim to mitigate racially motivated or prejudicial disenfranchisement efforts.

## 2.3 Lack of prospects for higher education

WPM's study revealed concerning findings about minority girls' ability to access secondary and tertiary education. Many are encouraged to drop out of school by family members who do not place the same value on a girl's education as a boy's. Unfortunately, even when a family desires to send girls to school, there is a lack of resources to support them in going.

Girls from different Minority communities tend to drop out of school at different levels. Many Indigenous Bunong girls stop studying early, at primary or early secondary school level. They shift to doing housework full-time or farming or get married.

Many ethnic Vietnamese girls face complex legal identity issues and often never get to attend school at all. For ethnic Vietnamese girls from the floating villages, it is extremely difficult for them to attend school, but of the few that do attend, many must drop out to work in the fishing sector in order to support their family financially.

Cambodian Muslim girls usually attend school until high school, but many then drop out in order to begin working at nearby factories or to help with their family business. Khmer Krom girls reportedly frequently stop their studies by the time they reach lower- or upper-secondary school to help their parents sell food or in their small businesses.

For those that manage to graduate from high school, many Minority girls do not have access to information to encourage them to study at an undergraduate level. For those who dream of higher education, they are discouraged by many barriers, including; cost, lack of transportation, language barriers, social norms, or fears about safety and discrimination.

When asked about the specific barriers that may prevent them from acquiring higher education, 90% of girl respondents said a lack of money, 48% said a lack of family support, and 22% said a lack of infrastructure.

For Ethnic Vietnamese girls, a lack of legal documentation remains the most pressing concern. Out of the 40 girls from this community, only 27.5% of them identified as being a student. For most of the ethnic Vietnamese children in the floating communities, they could only attend private schools, which are often make-shift gathering places on other houseboats with community members providing tutoring. These informal schools only teach children basic literacy and numeracy, but very little beyond that. Students reported having no opportunities to continue to study beyond lower-secondary school.

WPM's study showed that 74% of Minority girls reported the belief that education for girls is very important, and 42% reported having a personal desire to attain a bachelor's degree. This evidence shows that Minority girls want to go to school and consider it important, but that most lack the resources and support to do so.

### **Recommendations:**

- Eliminate any (systematic) barriers in accessing education among indigenous and minority girls including the lack of quality teachers who speak indigenous and minority languages, the lack of school infrastructure close to home, the lack of more sanitary schools accessible for girls from minority girls, etc.
- Special measures should then be developed and implemented, such as scholarship, dorms, quality teachers speaking the indigenous and minority languages, awareness raising on the importance of education to the caregivers, waiver of birth certificates, etc. so as to ensure that Indigenous and Minority girls and young women can equally have access to quality education as stated in SDG 4 "Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all".
- Provide teachers with clear guidance and education on eliminating racial discrimination and towards Indigenous and Minority students in the classroom by peers and promote a culture of celebrating the differences and diversity.

## 3. Labor

### 3.1 Discrimination and crackdowns against union members/organisers

Throughout 2022, the crackdowns on striking women workers that had intensified towards the end of the previous year continued. In December 2021, the Labor Rights Supported Union of Khmer Employees of NagaWorld (LRSU), whose members are predominantly women, had launched a strike and demonstrations near the NagaWorld casino in central Phnom Penh following layoffs of 1,329 workers by NagaWorld in 2021. 82% of workers who were dismissed were union members, including the entire local union leadership. Union leaders also noted that the layoffs targeted women who were pregnant or had recently given birth.

By February 2022, the government faced heavy criticism for using public health quarantine measures to target, forcibly relocate and detain striking workers. On February 16, five key UN human rights experts released a statement from Geneva criticizing the ongoing COVID-19 quarantine that had been imposed on the striking casino workers, saying “authorities must not disguise a crackdown on peaceful and lawful labor action as a public health response.”[33] The experts also argued that “There is a general inconsistency and lack of transparency in Cambodia’s COVID-19 protocols,” and that “in this case, authorities appear to have dressed up efforts to stifle peaceful and lawful labor action as public health measures. There cannot be one rule for striking workers and another rule entirely for the general public.”

By March, at least 35 LRSU strikers had been arrested for “incitement”, pursuant to Articles 494 and 495 of the Criminal Code or for obstruction of enforcement measures under COVID-19 laws. Strikers were subsequently released on bail or following signed contracts with police, however 11 union leaders and members – seven of whom were women, including LRSU leader Chhim Sithar – spent up to two and a half months in pre-trial detention before being released on bail.[34]

The 11 were each charged with incitement to commit a felony under Articles 494 and 495 of the Criminal Code or obstruction of COVID-19 measures under Article 11 of the Law on Measures to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19 and other Highly Contagious Diseases (COVID-19 Law), despite the fact that the right to strike is enshrined within the Cambodian Constitution, Cambodia's Labor Law, and the Law on Trade Unions. Foreign governments, the International Labour Organization (ILO), and international union federations condemned the activists' prosecution and detention.[35]

Workers were routinely forced onto buses away from the strike site throughout 2022. During this time, several security forces sexually harassed unionists, including one incident in which a male officer grabbed and squeezed the breast of one woman striker as she was being forced onto a bus.

In November 2022, Human Rights Watch, released a 97-page report titled "Only 'Instant Noodle' Unions Survive," documenting how authorities in Cambodia were allowing employers to bypass labor regulations and commit unfair practices that it alleged are illegal under both Cambodian and international law.[36] The report contained interviews with 30 independent union leaders and members in Cambodia's garment and tourism sector. In a press release sent to VOA and other media outlets, the deputy director of the organization's Asia division accused both the Cambodian government and what it called "unscrupulous employers" of "using the COVID-19 pandemic as an excuse to further restrict independent unions instead of protecting worker welfare and rights at a desperate time." [37]

On November 26, police re-arrested the prominent leader of the LRSU, Chhim Sithar. According to a statement from local rights group LICADHO, Sithar was arrested at the Phnom Penh International Airport after returning from Australia, where she had attended a 12-day trade union conference.[38]

On November 28, around 70 local civil society organizations signed a joint statement calling for the "immediate and unconditional release from prison and an end to the judicial harassment of the union's leader and members." [39] A US State Department spokesperson repeated this call, urging the Cambodian government to end its prosecution of union leaders and striking workers, and "move to constructively resolve their disputes." [40, 41]

Sithar remained in prison, enduring conditions that human rights INGO Frontline Defenders (FLD) describes as “extremely poor... [with] overcrowding and little or no access to adequate sanitary conditions.” FLD also says that “The right to peaceful protest and advocate for labor rights must be ensured under national and international human rights commitments,” and calls on the authorities in Cambodia to immediately and unconditionally release woman human rights defender Chhim Sithar and quash the charges against her.[42]

### 3.2 Impacts of climate change on women workers

In April 2022, leading UK and Cambodian academic researchers, working with the labor rights organization Solidarity Center, released a new report investigating the impacts of climate change on the working conditions, health and wellbeing of Cambodia’s almost one million garment workers.[43] The report found there to be “critical links between climate and environment-related impacts and worsening labor conditions in Cambodia’s garment sector.”

The report alleges that climate change is “not a future problem for garment workers, but one which is already impacting garment workers’ lives, with over two thirds (67%) currently experiencing climate change impacts.” A rise in the average number of hot days, observed by more than half of the sample (55%), was shown to be the most significant climate change impact perceived by the sector’s workforce. This is felt foremost within the factory environment, where 26% of the surveyed garment sector workforce reported extreme heat as a workplace impact of the changing climate. Other reported impacts within the factory environment included increased air pollution, flooding, fires, pests, and water pollution.

The report also explored how worker livelihoods are being affected *outside* the workplace. In total, 29% of workers reported experiencing extreme weather or other disasters at their accommodation in the last 12 months. Of those who did, the most commonly reported issues were flooding at 63%, and extreme heat at 42% of workers. More than a third (38%) of workers who reported flooding in their accommodation also reported associated health problems, while over two thirds (67%) of the workers experiencing excess heat in their accommodation stated that it had affected their health.

According to its authors, the findings of the report call for a renewed focus within disaster risk response (DRR) programs in Cambodia on supporting low-income urban residents and communities to build resilience to disaster risk to protect the health and safety of workers at home as well as in the workplace. Specifically, DRR should be mainstreamed into holistic urban planning strategies by integrating comprehensive, DRR-orientated planning regulations, including zoning and building codes, into urban master plans for permitted development. Drainage and flood protection infrastructure should be extended to peri-urban areas by investing to upgrade drainage and other core infrastructure, such as paved, raised roads, piped water, and flood defenses.

Further, the government should “improve social protection for marginalized groups who are often particularly vulnerable to climate change and may have little recourse to alternative livelihoods.” Reducing the reliance of elderly populations on subsistence or cash-crop production to self-finance old-age income and health care, for example, would relieve some of the burden on garment industry workers to continue to subsidize extended household farm production. Finally, the government should involve workers and their unions in the “development of national environmental and regulatory frameworks and the necessary monitoring and enforcement to encourage transformative investment in long-term environmental sustainability.”

### **Impacts of climate change-related disasters on women’s health**

In 2021, local health NGO RHAC also conducted qualitative research to identify the impacts of climate change on women’s health. [44] The results indicated that these impacts are disproportionately more serious for women than men, due to women’s limited knowledge and awareness of climate change, and their capacity to adapt. Further, the research found that services for responding to the health-related impacts of climate change remain limited. The relevant authorities acknowledged that these limitations are partially due to the fact that health outreach in the context of disasters continues to focus on the promotion of health generally, without linking disasters to sexual health, reproductive health and rights (SRHR).

RHAC recommends that a joint mechanism should be established to address SRHR during disasters as a priority task for government and other relevant stakeholders. Further, channels of raising awareness and knowledge of the links between SRHR and climate change/disasters should be established and well-resourced, and multi-sectoral efforts should be increased to strengthen SRHR services during the response stage of disaster management.

## 4. Education

### 4.1 Access to gender-responsive pedagogy

Traditional gender norms in Cambodia continue to be a major issue and encourage violence against girls and women. The formation of gender identities and relationships based on socioeconomic inequities takes place in environments such as schools, households, and larger communities. Gender equality is seriously hampered by school-related gender-based violence and has become a significant barrier to achieving gender equality.

The educational system offers chances for creative, successful, and long-lasting interventions to stop violence against and among children as well as for a shift in attitudes and ideas about gender roles. Research from the University of Leuven, Royal University of Phnom Penh and NGO VVOB published in 2021 showed that effective teacher professional development in gender-responsive teaching has positive effects on the occurrence of violence experienced by students in schools.[45]

After 480 teachers from primary and lower secondary schools in Battambang province underwent professional development with VVOB and CSO partners, along with financial and capacity building support, students reported a decrease in emotional, physical and sexual abuse experienced at or on the way to school.[46]

Additionally, 105 members of the Battambang Teacher Education College's faculty received training in gender-responsive pedagogy, ensuring that these student teachers have the capacity to apply its principles from the beginning of their careers.[47] While the RGC authorized its implementation, there was no funding available to scale up the EU-financed project upon its completion. Given that the research findings demonstrate the potential for such programmes to create gender-responsive and violence-free learning environments for students, it is recommended that the RGC takes steps to integrate and promote gender-responsive pedagogy for student teachers as well as professional development initiatives for existing teachers (see section 4.4 for more detailed recommendations).



This is especially important considering the fact that the CEDAW Committee's 2019 concluding observations Paragraph 42 contained specific concerns about the country's "inadequate gender sensitivity in technical education, vocational training and life skills programmes, which reinforces discriminatory gender stereotypes and leads to the underrepresentation of girls and women in non-traditional fields of study and career paths." [48]

## 4.2 Gender-based stereotypes and barriers to education

One study published in 2022 involved a survey of 580 students in grades 7-12 from schools in and near Siem Reap, Cambodia. The report separated participants into categories based on their aspirations, low in all areas, high in one area such as having a family, professional (career success and/or college education), and serving the community/country; and high expectations in all areas. [49]

The report noted that "there are many barriers to girls' education in Cambodia, including disproportionately high engagement in domestic chores, lack of parental support, pressure to marry early, insufficient positive female role models, and constraining discourse surrounding girlhood/womanhood." The study results suggested that girls/women were less likely than boys/men to be in the low or high expectancy profiles, and more likely to be in the profile of high expectations in terms of professional/service goals. The authors suggested that it "may be that girls are more likely than boys to have educational and career expectations that are inextricably linked to helping others" and that a high care burden now might "promote continued achievement if educations and careers are viewed as means by which girls can provide additional support in the future." However, it is important to note that life goals do not necessarily lead to life achievements if sufficient barriers exist.

Another researcher who interviewed students and social workers at an NGO-run girls' school in rural Cambodia noted that some parents were beginning to challenge gender roles to encourage their daughters to pursue higher education, but "this additional responsibility is also a source of pressure for them, given their parents' increasing expectations for their daughters to pull them out of poverty." [50]

Some government officials noted in 2022 that while many teenagers who become pregnant leave school due to bullying or feelings of embarrassment or being unwelcome, they should continue to go to school, and authorities should work to prevent bullying. [51]

A 2022 analysis of Cambodia's gender policies in education found that while the written policies appeared sufficient, lack of funding remained "a substantial obstacle to policy enforcement in advancing women's education." The study also noted weak commitment to implementing policies due to traditional gender norms and an ineffective system to enforce the policies. [52]

NGO-CEDAW member Klahan published a report in 2022 on unpaid care work and gender roles based on 60 qualitative interviews, focus group discussions, and 250 responses to an online survey. Most survey respondents felt that women were responsible for most or all of the unpaid care work in the home. Several of the interviewees expressed concern that boys were allowed to study in the evening, but girls had to do chores. The results of the study showed that many participants were concerned that this unpaid care work burden not only posed an obstacle to girls' education, but also served as a barrier to career opportunities. [53]

Finally, female students endure sexual harassment, particularly when the power imbalance between instructors and students causes some victims to be fearful of reporting abuse. One case of note publicized in 2022 concerned several female student filmmakers who were harassed by two trainers during a yearlong program at Bophana Audiovisual Resource Center. Some of the students were warned that if they quit the program, they would have to repay the stipends they had received, creating a financial barrier to escaping the cycle of violence. [54]

### **4.3 Student drop-out rates**

Cambodia has greatly improved its enrollment rates at all levels of education over recent years; however, the school dropout rate remains very high. The primary school dropout rate was over 7% from 2019-2021. [55] According to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport's (MoEYS) public education statistics and indicators of 2020-2021, approximately 17 percent of female students at the lower secondary level (grades 7-9) drop out of school, while the rate of male dropouts is over 19 percent. [56]

However, a new study published in 2022 by academics Gehrke, Lehnell and Schupp showed the rates of dropouts for both genders to be potentially higher because there are additional students who complete middle school but fail to transition to high school. [57] Additional students drop out of high school each year, so that over half of all students fail to complete their secondary education by age 17. [58]

Thus overall, the data indicates that male students are more likely to drop out. However, the study also identified clear differences regarding the reasons behind dropping out. While male students are much more likely to leave school to take on paid employment (often involving migrating to Thailand) or to start vocational training, female students are more likely to drop out because they are getting married (which the study showed to be the primary reason that female students drop out) or because they are required to help their family at home. Female students thus become more dependent once they drop out, while male students seem to become more independent by earning their own money.

## 4.4 Education Recommendations

In order to both accelerate policy objective (1) of the MoEYS' 2020-2024 Capacity Development Master Plan (CDMP), which seeks to ensure inclusive, equitable & quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all, and respond adequately to the CEDAW Committee's recommendation in their 2019 concluding observations paragraph 35, that the RGC should ensure teachers "receive regular and comprehensive training on gender equality to eliminate gender bias and discriminatory gender stereotypes" [59] it is recommended that the government should:

- Integrate a Gender Equality Curriculum in both formal and non-formal learning in schools, for instance in the following potential curriculum areas:
  - a. Gender roles and division of household chores;
  - b. Academic tutorials and time management skills;
  - c. Gender norms and girls' harassment at school;
  - d. Dealing with conflict and violence at home, and;
  - e. Mental health and emotional disclosure.

Relevant stakeholders including CSOs and technical working groups should be engaged in the curriculum design process to ensure its contents are transformative, age-appropriate, diverse, inclusive, and intersectional.

- Strengthen the capacity of all relevant stakeholders at both institutional and individual levels, including officials, teachers, parents and guardians to deliver the Gender Equality Curriculum equipped with ongoing coaching and mentoring, and support gender-responsive pedagogy through the nationwide provision of teaching and learning materials in teacher education colleges. This would accelerate outcomes (5) and (6) of the MoEYS' 2020-2024 CDMP.
- Ensure that all initiatives to drive systemic capacity development and promote gender-responsive pedagogy among pre- and in-service educators and school administrators are methodically implemented across all provinces, as opposed to short-lived and project based initiatives.
- Ensure that focused interventions such as gender-sensitive school assessments for emotional, physical, and sexual abuse are designed to track changes over time at the individual and institutional level, and add data to the body of knowledge regarding prevention of school-related GBV.
- Promote and encourage girls and women to enroll in non-traditional fields of study, such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Relevant ministries should continue collaborating with one another and with external stakeholders from the public and private sectors to scale up existing work in this area, to address implementation challenges, and to change perceptions about gender roles and abilities.

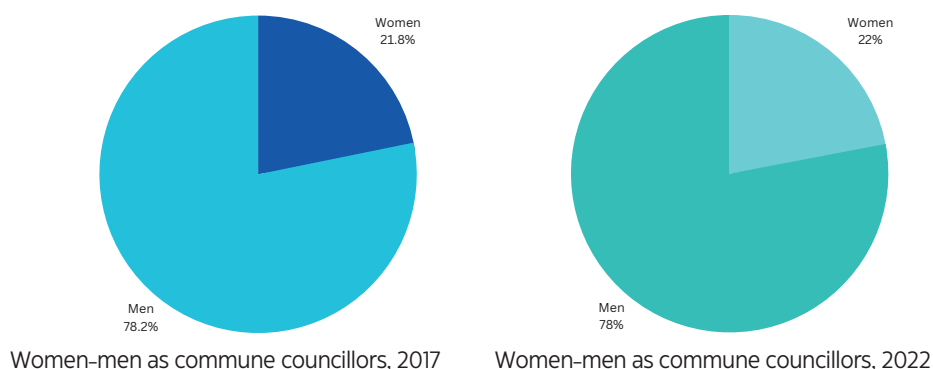
## 5. Women in leadership

### 5.1 Women in political & public affairs

According to a report published in December 2022 by local NGOs Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia (COMFREL), Gender & Development for Cambodia (GADC), SILAKA, Banteay Srei and Building Community Voices (BCV), on the 'Empowerment of Women in Politics and the 5th Mandate Commune/Sangkat Council Elections 2022,' the number of women political candidates and representatives in Cambodia remains low. [60] Following the June 2022 commune elections, the total percentage of elected women and men as commune councilors for the 5th Mandate in 2022 is "very uneven between the sexes, [with] 22% elected women and 78% elected men."

Furthermore, only 1 in 10 commune chiefs elected across the country in the same election were women, with a ruling party spokesperson informing the media that what mattered was effective gender-promoting policies and not the gender of candidates [61]. Some 173 women were elected as chiefs of 1,652 communes. While still a small number, this was an increase of 32 women, or two percentage points from 8% to 10%, from the previous 2017 commune election. Analysis from the NGO report shows that from the 4th Mandate in 2017, the figure of elected women in the 5th mandate of 2022 does also represent an increase, albeit a very small one of 0.2%:

### Comparison of Male and Female Commune Councilors in the 4th and 5th Mandate Commune / Sangkat Council Elections



**Source:** NEC, cited in COMFREL et al., 'The Report on Empowerment of Women in Politics and the 5th Mandate Commune/Sangkat Council Elections 2022,' p. 14.

The same NGO report details that women politicians in Cambodia still face many forms of discrimination and violence against them in their political participation and interests, with violence against women in politics becoming a daily experience for women who wish to get involved in politics and be a politician. The report cites an earlier survey from 2020 from COMFREL on women political activists' participation in politics, which revealed that 71% of survey respondents experienced violence against women; 82% faced threats; 70.9% experienced psychological violence; 34.5% suffered from physical abuse; and 9.1% experienced sexual harassment.

As well as risking violence and harassment, women in Cambodia face numerous other challenges engaging in politics and elections: first, the lack of specific written policies to provide temporarily affirmative actions and the lack of specific articles within election laws to support and provide equal opportunities for women and men to participate in politics, including to run as a potential candidate with a likelihood of being elected.

Second, the ongoing discrimination against women, especially occurring during the candidate selection process and nominee elections within political parties. Third, the lack of political will of political parties and commitment of leaders in promoting gender equality in politics and decision-making levels; and lastly, cultural and social norms that hinder the promotion of women's leadership and present barriers to women politicians' participation. The 2022 report contends that for these reasons, "Cambodia continues to have a pronounced inequality of representation and exercise of rights between women and men in politics."

Recommendations from the report related to women in leadership in political and public affairs:

- The National Assembly and Senate should take affirmative action to promote gender equality and provide opportunities for women's equal participation in politics, including by amending the laws on the election of the National Assembly, Senate, and Commune/Sangkat Council stipulating that a sandwich system be used for registering candidate lists of each political party. Such a system would alternate female candidates and male candidates from the top to bottom ranking and must also require women to begin at the top of half of the lists, so that women are not only deputy leaders, but the highest ranking official in half of jurisdictions.
- The RCG should coordinate action – in consultation with CSOs including women's rights organizations, private sector actors and media agencies – to transform the gender norms that limit women's leadership opportunities. Media, social media and community forums should be used to challenge gender stereotypes and showcase both positive role models of women leaders and male advocates for women's rights and leadership.
- The RGC should introduce legal and practical measures to advance the goal of achieving gender equality on Commune Councils beyond the short-term targets in Cambodia's Sustainable Development Goals.
- The RGC should take action to support women in more diverse roles in Commune Councils beyond the Commune Committee for Women and Children (CCWC) and set a target for gender balance across all Commune Clerk positions.
- The RGC should expand initiatives to strengthen the gender responsiveness of Commune Councils to advance gender equality in their function, budgets and activities.
- Political parties should implement policies and enforceable measures to achieve meaningful gender equality on their candidate lists, engaging with RGC and civil society stakeholders as needed to support implementation.

## 5.2 Women in journalism

Only 470 of 5000 Cambodian journalists (9.4%) are women. OHCHR's August 2022 "State of Press Freedom in Cambodia" report documented interviews with seven female journalists, all of whom had been insulted and/or sexually harassed by government representatives in the course of their work. Additionally, all seven have been pressured by family members urging them to leave a field deemed unsafe for women. [62]

On July 15, 2022, the Women Journalists Forum: 'Our Voice' was hosted by Women's Media Centre of Cambodia (WMC). [63] The objectives of the forum included providing opportunities for the 69 participants to share experiences, opinions, and challenges in their careers, and to identify potential strategies to address the challenges of women journalists and encourage more women journalism students to participate in the journalism career.

Participants included women journalists from different independent outlets working at national and sub-national levels as reporters, production supervisors, script writers, media students, and editors, and representatives of civil society organizations.

A summary report developed by WMC provides a synopsis of the key messages that emerged from a panel dialogue, group discussions, group presentations and suggestions from participants during the plenary session. Challenges across the following key areas for women journalists were raised:

### **In relation to family and home-life:**

- Many women journalists resign due to a heavy burden of unpaid care work at home, which has contributed to an underrepresentation of women in the journalism field.
- Most parents don't want their daughters to work as female journalists because of security issues. Young women are discouraged or banned from studying journalism and from working in the media.

### **In relation to the workplace:**

- Most institutions fail to encourage and support female employees to work on key issues related to politics, law and economics.



- Most institutions lack commitment to raise the number of women in their organizational structure. As most leaders are men, news content features male voices. Stories that focus on women, violence against women and women's rights remain under-reported.
- Most institutions don't provide training opportunities for women on how to use computers and digital media. As a result, many women journalists lack understanding and skills on how to use the digital media tools.
- Women are under-represented in senior positions in media institutions, and for those who are promoted, their salary often does not match their position and responsibilities.
- Media institutions in Cambodia fail to provide staff with a confidential complaint mechanism internally, and so it is difficult to advocate for workplace improvements.

#### **In relation to the society or public:**

- Women journalists face high levels of sexual harassment and abuse that lead to mental, emotional, and psychological stress.
- Accessing information is difficult for women journalists because of non-cooperation from society (including authorities and other sources). They also face threats and harassment through social media platforms. This is especially the case for those journalists working on sensitive issues such as land conflict. Local authorities sometimes block female journalists when they go to seek information from sources.
- Women journalists face criticism for how they are dressed in public places and receive threats, especially when their photos or videos are published.

## **6. Surrogacy**

Throughout 2022, in-depth news articles and videos followed up with numerous women who in 2018 had been charged with offenses under the country's human trafficking law for acting as surrogates for foreign parents. [64, 65] After serving prolonged periods of detention in a military hospital while pregnant, these women received suspended sentences that were conditional upon the obligation that they must carry the pregnancy to term and raise the children as their own. Additionally, at least one parent who was convicted of human trafficking and sentenced to 15 years in prison for trying to bring his biological son home with him to China appealed his conviction in January 2022. [66]



Media articles from 2022 contain testimonies about the ongoing financial and psychological impact on those women previously arrested for acting as surrogates being forced by the state to raise children who are not biologically their own.

As the Committee noted in its 2019 concluding observations, paragraph 46, such an obligation places a long-term burden on women living in situations so precarious that it led them to act as surrogates in the first place. Some women reported facing ongoing discrimination and stigmatization by their communities, with one describing dyeing the hair of her surrogate son darker to enable him to blend in less conspicuously.[67]

Concerningly, there were also reports of surrogate women being monitored by a US anti-trafficking organization allegedly collaborating with the government to ensure the children were still in their care [68] – a claim consistent with earlier reports from 2020.[69] Other surrogates told the New York Times that they also had to “report to the police station, children in tow,” stating this made them feel “...like we were criminals,” and that “our babies are the crime.” Anti-trafficking charities have no authority to conduct monitoring or any law enforcement activities, and it is also worth noting that it is incumbent on the Cambodian state to ensure the right to privacy and family life is respected and protected.

The draft law on the management of surrogacy, first formulated in late 2016, has yet to be made public. Various government representatives advised in April 2022 that it would soon be finalized, with a Ministry of Women’s Affairs spokesperson advising it would be “put into use in the near future.”[70] The CEDAW Committee’s 2019 concluding observations specifically encouraged the Cambodian government to ensure that any draft law “does not impose criminal liability or administrative sanctions on women who act as surrogates” [para. 47].

However, certain provisions of a September 2019 version of the draft law are ambiguously drafted and may be used to penalize surrogates. For instance, an article stating that *“A person who uses assisted reproductive technology for surrogacy without permission of the National Committee for Surrogacy Management shall be punished by imprisonment ...and by a fine”*

The MoWA spokesperson added that surrogacy is still considered human trafficking if the child “is sold from one person to another and the fate of the child is not known.” Notably, the draft surrogacy law would not legalize commercial or international surrogacy and does not mention movement of a child across borders. The use of the existing human trafficking and criminal laws to criminalize actions of any unauthorized surrogates is set to continue in parallel to the new law on surrogacy. Unless any new regulation or law explicitly states that neither it nor any other law will be used to charge, penalize, or impose restrictions on women acting as unauthorized surrogates, the law will not meet the CEDAW Committee's 2019 recommendation.

Moreover, the restriction in the 2019 draft on who can be surrogacy parents and who can act as a surrogate are blatantly discriminatory and rely on stereotypes of gender roles. For example, in addition to other restrictions, only Cambodian married women who have already had a child, but not been a surrogate before, with their Cambodian husband's permission, can make a decision related to becoming a surrogate or a surrogate parent or making medical decisions about the fetus if a health emergency occurs. Moreover, the biological parents would also need to be Cambodian married couples who never had another child. Finally, a government agency must preapprove any agreement on surrogacy. This means that women have little say about their own reproductive health, deferring to the government and their husband to make decisions for them. Single people and LGBTIQ couples, could not become surrogates or parents. Some sections state that non-citizens cannot participate even if married to Khmer nationals. To comply with CEDAW any regulation must not rely on stereotypes to determine who may act as surrogates and parents.

Additionally in the 2019 draft, commercial surrogacy remains banned. Natural surrogacy rather than that using assisted technology is not mentioned. In fact, the practical effect of the law would be to continue to ban almost any surrogacy arrangement, while creating new ways to penalize anyone who attempts it.

It is recommended that:

- The government and/or police cease all monitoring or surveillance of women who have previously acted as surrogates, in order to protect their right to privacy. Any court ruling that forces a woman who has acted as a surrogate to raise a child until adulthood should be immediately overturned.

- Immediately overturn any convictions of surrogates and any court ruling that forces a woman who has acted as a surrogate to raise a child until adulthood.
- The government should stop any action to move forward with any legislation on surrogacy without first making the draft public and holding meaningful consultations with relevant civil society actors.
- Instead of a new law, it would be more effective to simply issue a prakas on surrogacy that clarifies the government position that no woman will be penalized in any way for acting as a surrogate.

## 7. Access to healthcare

### 7.1 Access to healthcare among returned migrant workers

By 2020, the number of Cambodian migrants seeking employment abroad was estimated at 1.1 million, or about 7% of the total population. Among the migrant population looking for work, about 40% are women. Most of the reasons for emigration are unemployment, low wages compared to those in neighboring countries, and land loss. Most of those seeking employment abroad are considered ‘unskilled,’ and come from rural areas of the country.

Although emigration is recognised as a contributor to the development of livelihoods and the economy of the country as a whole, there remain only limited interventions to protect the rights of returned migrant workers (RMW), including their right to access information and services related to healthcare.

This is despite the fact that RMWs are known to face family economic crises including debt, health issues and a struggle to find decent paid work, and that the pandemic exacerbated these issues significantly for many.

In a 2022 study exploring the state of access to healthcare among Cambodian RMWs [71], local NGO Reproductive Health Association of Cambodia (RHAC) found that:

- 59.54% indicated having knowledge about sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR).
- While only 2.06% of the participants indicated they had never heard of HIV/AIDS, over half (52.32%) felt the disease could be cured, and 6.7% thought it is possible to determine one's HIV status without obtaining an HIV test.
- Just 18% of the participants reported knowing that there is a vaccine against cervical cancer.
- Just 7.06% of respondents were aware that abortion is legal in Cambodia.
- There is still very limited knowledge related to STIs among respondents, and most indicated that they would not consider accessing healthcare services unless they had very serious or severe symptoms.

While in the destination country, respondents reported that they had experienced challenges in seeking care for health issues, for numerous reasons. These included not having sufficient money to be able to afford health treatments, and communication and language barriers.

Those who had worked without documentation reported that they had been unable to access clinics or other public health facilities without being accompanied by their employers. Many respondent RMWs also reported experiencing difficulties when seeking to access healthcare services upon their return to Cambodia.

RGC should take action to increase cooperation with local, international and UN Agencies in destination countries (especially Thailand) to provide supporting documentation for the purposes of migrant worker access to health care, including but not limited to health check-ups and treatment.

## 7.2 Access to holistic healthcare for survivors of gender-based violence (GBV)

In a 2021 study, RHAC found that since the 2016 launch of “A clinical handbook for managing health care for women subjected to intimate partner violence or sexual violence” by the Ministries of Health (MoH) and Women’s Affairs (MoWA), only around 100 health facilities had received relevant training. This constitutes less than 1% of the total health facilities in Cambodia. [72]

RHAC reported that there are numerous challenges for stakeholders for the provision of healthcare for IPV and sexual violence survivors, including limited awareness among healthcare providers as to how to identify the various types of violence among service seekers. Of the clients who are offered GBV-related services, many refuse them as they are afraid this may lead to an increase in violence. Some prefer not to share information because of the shame and stigma associated with being a victim of violence, an issue compounded by a limited awareness of rights among much of the population. In addition, an absence of private and comfortable spaces for counselling is also a constraint.

Other challenges include:

- A turnover of service providers, often through transfer or retirement, reducing local facilities’ institutional knowledge of identifying/responding to GBV.
- Responsibilities for providing services to victims are not clearly defined or delegated, which may cause service providers to not prioritize them.
- There is a limited number of service providers throughout the country dealing with a high demand for health services, making failure to identify GBV more likely.
- Information is normally only provided to those with serious physical injuries.
- There is a lack of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of the health care responses provided to survivors of GBV at all levels.

Recommendations:

Relevant ministries and other stakeholders take steps to:

- Promote a gender transformative approach among service providers.
- Strengthen M&E systems, supervision system and increase levels of financial support for the rollout of referral systems.
- Strengthen community networks to ensure referral services are fully equipped.
- Enhance implementation of the 2016 clinical handbook for managing health care for women subjected to IPV or sexual violence at the local level.

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# Progress of Implementation of 2019 CEDAW Concluding Observations

Status is based on the traffic light system: red=little/no progress; yellow=some progress; green=significant progress

CoB para	Topics	Summary	2020 rating	2021 rating	2022 progress	2022 rating
6	SDGs	Recognize women as the driving force of the sustainable development	Green	Green	Already implemented.	Green
9a	Legislative framework	Definition of discrimination in law	Red	Red	Not implemented.	Red
9b	Legislative framework	Systemic gender impact assessments of laws	Red	Red	Not implemented.	Red
11a	Access to justice	Legal aid with long-term state funding; regional appeals courts	Yellow	Yellow	Partially implemented in that there is additional legal aid funding, but it is not enough and not long-term. No new appeal courts have been established since those in Preah Sihanouk, Battambang and Tbong Khmum provinces in 2020.	Yellow
11b	Access to justice	End stigma to reports of rights violations	Yellow	Yellow	The government and development partners continue to implement campaigns to encourage reporting of GBV cases, but there is no support for reporting state-sponsored violence.	Yellow
11c	Access to justice	Disseminate remedy info	Yellow	Yellow	Ministry of Women's Affairs have helped disseminate some information on the limited services available, but there is little help in obtaining effective judicial remedies.	Yellow
11d	Access to justice	Gender-responsive justice system; more women, training on CEDAW	Yellow	Yellow	Training on the new Guideline on the Limited Use of Mediation as a Response to VAW is being piloted, and includes training on CEDAW. However, much more work is needed to make the justice system gender responsive	Yellow

CoB para	Topics	Summary	2020 rating	2021 rating	2022 progress	2022 rating
11e	Access to justice	Impartial, independent judiciary; investigation and punishment of cases, including DV and rape			No progress. The judicial system is not impartial or independent. DV and rape cases are not consistently investigated and are still often met with impunity.	
11f	Access to justice	Hold officials accountable for corruption			No progress.	
13a	Conflict	Redress to Khmer Rouge GBV victims			No progress.	
13b	Conflict	Action Plan on SCR 1325			No action.	
13c	Conflict	Women involved at all stages of peace-building			No change. Cambodia continues to include women at most stages except at the highest level.	
15a	National machinery	Autonomy for CNCW			No change.	
15b	National machinery	National budget for full gender policy implementation			Funding remains limited.	
15c	National machinery	CSO participation in NPGE			No updates in 2022.	
15d	National machinery	Effective M&E for policies, ministry gender activities			No known M&E improvements in 2022	
17	Human Rights institution	Establish national human rights institution per Paris principles			The government is proposing a NHRI, but there is no mechanism to make it consistent with the Paris principles. The current political and human rights environment would prevent any institution from being independent or effective.	

CoB para	Topics	Summary	2020 rating	2021 rating	2022 progress	2022 rating
19	Civil Society	Guarantee freedom of expression, assembly and association			There has been continued regression on this point.	
21a	Temporary Special Measures	Land reallocation for equal women's ownership			No efforts.	
21b	Temporary Special Measures	Housing security for women			Reports of actual and threatened forced evictions continued in 2022, affecting hundreds of families.	
21c	Temporary Special Measures	Improved economic opportunities with quotas			No temporary special measures.	
23a	Stereotypes	Comprehensive strategy to eliminate patriarchal attitudes			No comprehensive strategy. High-ranking officials continue to embrace a traditional attitude towards women's morality.	
23b	Stereotypes	Alternate ways to teach gender without Chbab Srey			No effort. Teachers continue teaching Chbab Srey in class even after it announced of removal from school curriculum.	
23c	Stereotypes	Promote positive attitudes toward gender equality in youth			The government continues to participate in social media campaigns that promote equality in some contexts.	
25a	GBV	Assess impact of measures and address root cause			New public information campaigns to address GBV were launched by MoWA in 2022.	
25b	GBV	Comprehensive review of DV Law; amend to criminalize all DV, facilitate protection orders, effective remedies			No improvement in 2022 on amending the DV Law. There is a plan to develop roadmap to review the law, but it was not yet done.	

CoB para	Topics	Summary	2020 rating	2021 rating	2022 progress	2022 rating
25c	GBV	Improve essential services			Implementation of NAPVAW3 has provided some increased capacity to provide services, but lack of funding kept many from accessing services.	
25d	GBV	Systemically collect GBV data			No progress was made in 2022, but the Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey 2021-22 is to be published in early 2023.	
27a	Trafficking	Address root cause of lack of economic opportunity			No progress.	
27b	Trafficking	Improve identification and referrals for victims			Limited progress. Government agencies continue to engage in multi-sectoral services for survivors, but relies too heavily on NGOs and outside donors and needs to progress more.	
27c	Trafficking	Social reintegration of victims			Limited progress. Government relies too heavily on NGOs and outside donors and has needs to progress more. Survivors remain heavily discriminated against.	
27d	Trafficking	Protect women from liability, witness protection			No new progress. Some policies are in place but are not yet being implemented fully.	
27e	Trafficking	Punish traffickers			The government trained officials, but significant capacity gaps remain especially in rural areas. Prosecutions happen but are not keeping pace with a rise in trafficking.	
27f	Trafficking	Don't misuse antitrafficking law against non-traffickers			No progress.	



CoB para	Topics	Summary	2020 rating	2021 rating	2022 progress	2022 rating
29a	Prostitution	Revise law to decriminalize sex work			No effort.	
29b	Prostitution	Punish exploiters			Some effort. While some cases are brought, many exploiters go unpunished.	
29c	Prostitution	Address root causes such as poverty, demand, inequality			No new efforts.	
29d	Prostitution	Provide rehabilitation			No new efforts.	
31a	Public life	Adopt temporary special measures, such as quotas			No known effort.	
31b	Public life	Create an enabling environment for women			No known effort.	
33a	Nationality	Access to nationality, education, employment, health care and housing for women of Vietnamese and Khmer Krom origin			Reports of forced evictions of ethnic Vietnamese families and destruction of their property continued in 2022.	
33b	Nationality	Facilitate identity documentation and birth registration without confiscating documents			No new efforts. Reports of ethnic minority women and girls being unable to obtain ID cards continued throughout 2022, as did reports of ID confiscation.	
33c	Nationality	Ratify 2 conventions on statelessness			No progress.	
35a	Education	Increase secondary school access; eliminate barriers to girls			Some ongoing efforts.	

CoB para	Topics	Summary	2020 rating	2021 rating	2022 progress	2022 rating
35b	Education	Encourage girls in STEAM			Some programs have been enacted to encourage girls to study STEAM subjects. However, targeted action is needed in rural areas.	
35c	Education	Comprehensive gender training for teachers			Gender Mainstreaming Strategic Plan in Education 2021-2025 lists the CEDAW recommendations and lists teacher training in activities.	
37a	Employment	Workers on FDC enjoy freedom to unionize and maternity benefits; restore AC 2-year cap on FDCs			No effort. Crackdowns by authorities against striking women workers included those on FDCs.	
37b	Employment	Protect informal sector, include domestic workers in Labor Law			An NSSF pilot scheme in 2022 targeted 2050 tuk-tuk drivers and domestic workers to receive NSSF benefits including free medical care and 70% of wages while on paid sick/maternity leave, up to 90 days.	
37c	Employment	Promote sharing of parental duties, paternity leave			No new efforts.	
37d	Employment	Comprehensive legislation on sexual harassment with remedies			No new efforts.	
37e	Employment	Ensure equal pay for work of equal value per ILO C100			No effort to compare different job categories with equal value. No consistent implementation of existing law on equal pay for same job.	
37f	Employment	Protect migrant workers abroad			No new efforts.	
37g	Employment	Ratify ILO Conventions 183, 189, 190			C183, C189 and C190 remain unratified.	

CoB para	Topics	Summary	2020 rating	2021 rating	2022 progress	2022 rating
39a	Health	Universal access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services			In 2022, the NMCH updated & extended the National Strategy for SRHR in Cambodia 2017-2023. However, urgent action to improve access to sexual & reproductive health education and services remains, especially in rural areas and among ethnic minority women/girls.	
39b	Health	Combat stigma against abortion and contraceptive use			The SRHR national strategy contains new indicators such as requiring the integration of Value Clarification & Attitude Transformation (VCAT) into training guidelines, to support the provision of stigma-free services.	
39c	Health	Address women's nutritional needs in strategies			No changes.	
39d	Health	Prevention of cervical cancer			The SRHR national strategy contains indicators on increasing coverage & quality of cervical cancer prevention, screening, and treatment services, including an HPV vaccine program. The roll out will require significant resourcing & coordination.	
41	Rural women	Regulate microfinancing institutions and improve access to low-interest loans, support women-owned businesses			Serious issues with the MFI sector continued to impact women in 2022.	
43a	Climate change	Include women in policy formation			Limited inclusion of women's voices in policy formation, but no comprehensive gender analyses being performed.	
43b	Climate change	Take explicit gender perspective in policies			Efforts ongoing, including a Gender Mainstreaming Strategic Plan in the Environment Sector. However, state targeting of EHRDs continued in 2022.	

CoB para	Topics	Summary	2020 rating	2021 rating	2022 progress	2022 rating
45a	Women in detention	Use alternatives to detention			No progress; alternative measures to detention such as pre-trial release and the use of suspended sentences are not adequately considered or applied, including for pregnant women and mothers with young children.	
45b	Women in detention	Address root causes, and effect on children of sentencing			No progress.	
45c	Women in detention	Reduce overcrowding, ensure services, per Bangkok rules and Nelson Mandela rules			Despite the creation of regional appeals courts to reduce case backlog, prisons continue to far exceed official capacity rates and fail to ensure access to essential services.	
47a	Surrogacy	Repeal October 2016 decision to require surrogates to raise children as their own			No plan to reverse.	
47b	Surrogacy	Address the root cause by improving income opportunities			No action.	
47c	Surrogacy	Ensure laws, policies address power imbalance of surrogates			No effort in 2022.	
47d	Surrogacy	Law should not criminalize surrogates			No effort. While the draft law may not explicitly criminalise surrogates, it does not preclude the use of other laws against them.	
49a	Marriage	Targeted measures to reduce child marriage rates			Actions taken but limited to specific provinces. Plan announced in Dec 2022 to develop national plan.	
49b	Marriage	Repeal article 950 of the Civil Code			No effort to repeal.	









**NGO-CEDAW is Cambodia’s leading coalition dedicated to monitoring and promoting the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Founded in 1995, by Cambodian women activists energized by their participation in the Beijing World Conference on Women. NGO-CEDAW has grown from 9 founding organizational members to a coalition of 35 local member CSOs. Working with a wider network of 30 additional organizations, NGO-CEDAW gives voice to other wise underrepresented groups of women and LGBTIQ.**

The work of NGO-CEDAW includes: research; advocacy and lobbying; awareness-raising and capacity-building; and information exchange among its members. Specific activities include an annual university debate, original art exhibitions, in-person advocacy at the UN, and workshops for local officials and community groups.

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