CEDAW MONITORING REPORT FOR CAMBODIA 2025

NGO-CEDAW

Acknowledgments

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Brot für die Welt

DCA actalliance

HEINRICH BÖLL STIFTUNG PHNOM PENH Cambodia

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Acronyms

CamboJA	Cambodian Journalists Alliance Association
CCIM	Cambodian Center for Independent Media
CDRI	Cambodia Development Resource Institute
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CENTRAL	Center for Alliance of Labor and Human Rights
COWS	Cambodian Organization for Women Support
CSE	Comprehensive sexuality education
CWCC	Cambodian Women's Crisis Center
IDEA	Independent Democracy of Informal Economy Association
LGBTIQ+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer
LICADHO	Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights
LRSU	Labor Rights Supported Union of Khmer Employees of NagaWorld
NGO-CEDAW	Cambodian NGO Committee on CEDAW
NSAF	National Social Assistance Fund
NSSF	National Social Security Fund
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
RHAC	Reproductive Health Association of Cambodia
TFGBV	Technology-facilitated gender-based violence
WELL	Wellbeing Advancement Organization
WNU	Women's Network for Unity
WPM	Women Peace Makers
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

Overview of 2025

The rights of women, girls, and non-binary people in Cambodia faced significant setbacks in 2025 amid armed conflict, displacement, economic shocks, restricted civic space, and persistent gender-based discrimination and violence. Cambodia has yet to fully realize its obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and sustained progress remains necessary to implement the CEDAW Committee's 2019 Concluding Observations.[1]

644,000+
people internally displaced.

910,000
Cambodian migrant workers returned from Thailand.

Conflict along the Cambodia–Thailand border had far-reaching gendered impacts, yet emergency responses largely lacked gender analyses. Large-scale displacement of over 644,000 people disrupted women's and girls' access to healthcare, education, livelihoods, and basic necessities, while increasing risks of gender-based violence and sexual harassment. The mass return of approximately 910,000 Cambodian migrant workers from Thailand further strained livelihoods and reduced remittances, with women reportedly unable to secure employment aligned with their skills upon returning. These developments underscored the relevance of the Women, Peace, and Security agenda, yet Cambodia had not adopted a National Action Plan by the end of 2025.

At least
14
women activists remained imprisoned at the end of 2025.

Women remained significantly underrepresented in leadership and decision-making at all levels, while civic space continued to be repressed. Women activists faced systemic harassment and surveillance, with at least 14 women activists remaining imprisoned at the end of the year. Constitutional and nationality law amendments heightened the risk of arbitrary deprivation of citizenship and statelessness, particularly for women and girls who voice dissent.

Land grabbing, forced evictions, and predatory microfinance lending persisted across the country, disproportionately affecting women and Indigenous peoples. Climate change similarly compounds gender inequalities by undermining food security, health, and livelihoods and increasing unpaid care work. Despite this, gender-responsive climate policies were not fully implemented, and environmental activists remained imprisoned.

1 CEDAW Committee, "Concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of Cambodia", CEDAW/C/KHM/CO/6, November 12, 2019, para. 15(b), online: <https://docs.un.org/en/CEDAW/C/KHM/CO/6>.

Gender-based violence remained widespread, including domestic and sexual violence, technology-facilitated abuse, trafficking, and violence against sex workers and entertainment workers. Survivor-centred justice and services remained insufficient, and reform of the Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and the Protection of Victims remained stalled.

Human trafficking and exploitation in scam compounds continued with near-total impunity, as people were subjected to forced labor, torture, and sexual violence with no prosecutions of traffickers in Cambodia.

Economic insecurity and labor rights violations persisted for many women, while informal workers faced arbitrary exclusion from social protection mechanisms. Sex workers and entertainment workers continued to lack labor rights protections, underscoring the need for sex work to be decriminalized.

Access to health services remained uneven. Sexual and reproductive health services, including safe abortion, were constrained by stigma and limited awareness, while comprehensive sexuality education was inconsistently implemented.

26%

Increase in women and girls in detention.

Cambodia's prison overcrowding crisis deepened, with a 26% increase in the number of women and girls in detention. Most were held in pre-trial detention under inadequate conditions.

0.14%

Share of Cambodia's national budget allocated to the Ministry of Women's Affairs.

Despite Cambodia's numerous gender-related policies and strategies, implementation remained limited, uneven, and under-resourced. The Ministry of Women's Affairs remained among the lowest-funded ministries, receiving 51,979 million riel (about US $12.99 million) – equivalent to about 0.14% of the national budget – while gender mainstreaming across other ministries lacked consistent resources and accountability.[2]

Alongside these challenges, civil society and women's rights movements faced unprecedented funding cuts by international development actors. The abrupt termination of US foreign aid from January 2025 left many in a survival crisis. Sustainable funding for feminist and women's rights movements is critical in 2026.

Amid a rapidly shifting national and global context, meaningful progress towards gender equality in Cambodia depends on the government implementing urgent, sustained, and well-resourced reforms that center the voices, priorities, and lived realities of women, girls, and non-binary people to ensure the full enjoyment of their human rights.

2 Ministry of Economy and Finance, "Budget in Brief: Fiscal Year 2025", online: https://mef.gov.kh/documents/budget-in-brief-2025/.

Methods

The Cambodian NGO Committee on CEDAW (NGO-CEDAW) developed this report using participatory methods in collaboration with its civil society members, partners, and other allies. Thirty-two people representing 27 civil society organizations and associations participated in a full-day consultative workshop in Phnom Penh to identify priorities, topics, and events for inclusion in the report.

Civil society partners formed eight thematic working groups during the workshop. These groups and individual partners were invited to share information, including summary reports, primary data documented by their organizations, and secondary sources. Partners were invited to share information verbally or in writing in Khmer or English. NGO-CEDAW also conducted a desk review of additional sources for inclusion in the report. A second consultative workshop brought together 38 participants representing 28 civil society partners to validate the findings and jointly develop key recommendations.

This report summarizes key developments and events from 2025. It does not aim to comprehensively address all issues affecting women, girls, and non-binary people in Cambodia but focuses on issues that were new or of particular concern in 2025.

01.

Cambodia-Thailand Border Conflict

A longstanding demarcation dispute along the Cambodian-Thai border escalated in May 2025. Cambodia suspended electricity, internet, fuel, and gas imports from Thailand, and the closure of the land border soon halted the movement of people and goods. The conflict intensified on 24 July, with both sides exchanging heavy fire at multiple border points, until a ceasefire was reached on 28 July. Tensions remained high in the following months. Fighting resumed on 7 December and continued until a ceasefire was again reached on 27 December.

The conflict included the use of heavy artillery, air strikes, anti-personnel mines, naval patrols, and drone attacks in and near civilian areas, extending far into Cambodian territory. Cambodia reported the deaths of five military personnel and eight civilians—as well as 71 people injured—during the July conflict. At least 110 military and police personnel and 31 civilians were documented as having been killed during the December conflict.[3]

In November, reports emerged that a Cambodian migrant worker experienced sexual violence perpetrated by a group of seven Thai soldiers while she was attempting to return to Cambodia.[4] Despite Thailand's obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law, no thorough, independent, and transparent investigation had been conducted by the end of the year.

3 Danielle Keeton-Olsen and Vantha Phoung, "Cambodian deaths exceed 110 in December border conflict with Thailand", Nikkei Asia, January 13, 2026, online: https://asia.nikkei.com/politics/international-relations/thailand-cambodia-conflict/cambodian-deaths-exceed-110-in-december-border-conflict-with-thailand.

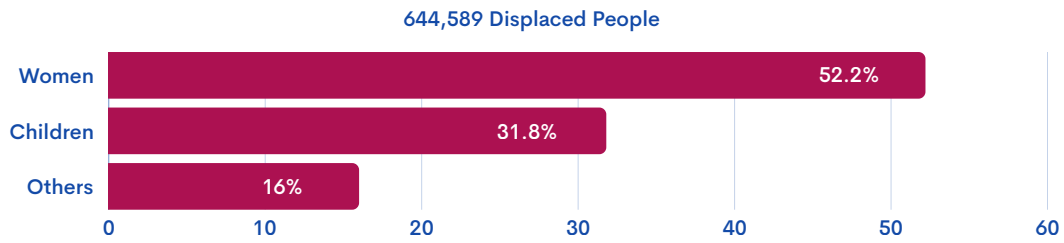
4 Joint Statement, "Joint Statement by Cambodian Civil Society on Civilian Protection and Women's Security Amid Border Tensions", November 19, 2025, online: https://ngocedaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/ENG_Joint_Statement_by_Cambodian_Civil_Society_on_Thai_Military.pdf.

1.1 Internal Displacement

The Cambodia-Thailand border conflict resulted in the internal displacement of hundreds of thousands of Cambodians. Forced displacement is widely documented to disproportionately restrict women's and girls' access to education, livelihoods, and essential services, while increasing unpaid care responsibilities and heightening safety risks, including the risks of gender-based and intimate partner violence.[5] Despite this, government humanitarian and emergency response plans in Cambodia largely lacked gender analyses and detailed, disaggregated information on the situation of women, girls, and non-binary people.

The Cambodia National Committee for Disaster Management reported that the July conflict displaced over 172,000 people in Cambodia, most of whom returned home in August.[6] Renewed fighting in December saw the mass displacement of 644,589 people, including 336,302 women and 204,922 children.[7] Most displaced people relocated to 234 sites across Banteay Meanchey, Battambang, Oddar Meanchey, Preah Vihear, Pursat, and Siem Reap provinces, while others stayed with family or friends.[8]

Displaced communities experienced severe disruptions to livelihoods and access to essential goods and services, including shelter, healthcare, food, education, protection, nutrition, electricity, safe drinking water, menstrual products, and other water, sanitation, and hygiene needs.[9] The closure of over 1,300 schools impacted around 322,103 students – 90% of whom had no access to education –[10] likely increasing the risk of girls dropping out. At least 51 healthcare facilities were also closed as of mid-December[11] – a figure that likely increased in the following weeks as fighting continued.



5 World Bank (2022) "The Gender Dimensions of Forced Displacement: A Synthesis of New Research", online: https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/895601643214591612/the-gender-dimensions-of-forced-displacement-a-synthesis-of-new-research.

6 Humanitarian Response Forum, "Situation Report 2: Cambodia-Thailand Border Situation", August 8, 2025, online: https://reliefweb.int/report/cambodia/humanitarian-response-forum-hrf-situation-report-2-cambodia-thailand-border-situation-8-august-2025.

7 Humanitarian Response Forum, "Situation Report 12: Cambodia-Thailand Border Situation", December 27, 2025, online: https://reliefweb.int/report/cambodia/humanitarian-response-forum-hrf-situation-report-12-cambodia-thailand-border-situation-27-december-2025.

8 Humanitarian Response Forum, "Situation Report 11: Cambodia-Thailand Border Situation", December 12, 2025, online: https://reliefweb.int/report/cambodia/humanitarian-response-forum-hrf-situation-report-11-cambodia-thailand-border-situation-12-december-2025.

9 World Health Organization, "Public Health Situation Analysis (PHSA)", August 19, 2025, online: https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/2021-dha-docs/phsa-cambodia-190825.pdf?sfvrsn=526877e2_1&download=true.

10 Humanitarian Response Forum, above n 8.

11 Ibid.

Relocation sites often lacked gender-segregated, child-friendly, and accessible facilities. Overcrowding, with multiple families sharing sleeping spaces with minimal privacy, increased gender-based violence risks.[12] CamboJA News documented incidents of sexual harassment against women and girls at a relocation site in Preah Vihear province in July.[13] Toilets and bathing areas lacked sufficient privacy and security, with displaced people arriving to find toilets without doors. Insufficient bamboo fences were only later installed. Men and women also shared shower facilities, with reports of men bathing unnecessarily close to women and girls. Some reported unwelcome looks and being touched or photographed without consent. The lack of safe spaces resulted in some women and girls being reluctant to shower or use restrooms, particularly unaccompanied.

World Vision Cambodia conducted a rapid Psychological Safety Assessment in late July 2025,[14] as forced relocation, separation and loss of family members, exposure to the sound of explosions, and the loss of livelihoods and access to essential needs posed significant psychological risks. The assessment interviewed 274 people, including 118 women and 37 girls, across 43 relocation sites. Among respondents, two-thirds (66%) reported experiencing feelings of very strong shock related to evacuation, loss of a family member, or witnessing a shooting or bombing. More than half (52%) reported strong feelings of fear and anger, including a desire for revenge. Only 35% knew where to seek help, with most citing relatives as their primary source of support. Children were reported to most urgently need education and play materials, while adults identified basic food, tents, mattresses, soap, and sustainable access to healthcare as their most pressing needs. Psychological distress and trauma likely intensified significantly during renewed heavy fighting and mass displacement in December.

Although most people were able to return home in August 2025 and again from January 2026, many who returned continued to face significant risks, including ongoing border insecurity, unexploded ordnance, damaged housing and civilian infrastructure, and ongoing service disruptions.[15] Multiple areas where Cambodian communities lived also remained under Thai control following the December ceasefire, leaving entire villages unable to return. Satellite imagery indicates that homes and structures in Thai-controlled areas were razed following the ceasefire.[16]

The large-scale displacement also severely disrupted livelihoods, trade, and tourism, compounding the economic pressures faced by many. These pressures were already intensified by high rates of microfinance debt across the Cambodian population and a sharp decline in remittances following the return of Cambodian migrant workers from Thailand.

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12 World Health Organization, about n 9; Humanitarian Response Forum, about n 6.

13 Phon Sothyroth and Pa Tongchen, "Young Girls, Women Sexually Harassed At Preah Vihear War Shelter", September 23, 2025, CamboJA News, online: https://cambojanews.com/young-girls-women-sexually-harassed-at-preah-vihear-war-shelter/.

14 World Vision Cambodia (2025) "Psychological Safety Assessment Report: Internally Displaced People", online: https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/2025-08/Psychological%20Safety%20Assessment%20Report%208%20August%202025%20FINAL.pdf.

15 Humanitarian Response Forum, above n 6.

16 LICADHO, "Post-Ceasefire Razing of Cambodian Villages Likely Violates International Law", January 20, 2026, online: https://www.licadho-cambodia.org/articles/20260120/205/index.html.

1.2 Returned Migrant Workers

A large proportion of the Cambodian migrants who were living and working in Thailand rapidly returned to Cambodia as political and military tensions escalated from May 2025. Approximately 910,000 Cambodian migrant workers – out of an estimated 1.1 million Cambodians living in Thailand – returned within several weeks, driven by fears of discrimination, harassment, arrest, violence, family pressure, and unpredictable border closures. The rapid return depleted migrant workers' income and savings, reduced remittances to Cambodia, and increased pressure on essential services, including healthcare, education, and housing.[17] Remittances from Thailand to Cambodia had totaled nearly US$3 billion in 2024, underscoring the extensive impact of their decline.[18]

The Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training reported that about 190,000 jobs were available for returned migrants, predominantly in manufacturing and service industries. However, the Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI) found that these opportunities were largely located outside migrants' home provinces and not aligned with their skills and experience.[19]

The Center for Alliance of Labor and Human Rights (CENTRAL) conducted a needs assessment of over 800 returned migrants, just over half of whom were women, in August 2025. The assessment found that migrants had predominantly returned to rural border provinces and needed food and income opportunities. Many women – who had worked as domestic workers, caregivers, or in seafood processing in Thailand – did not have skills aligned with Cambodia's prevailing labor market. For example, a returned migrant worker reported to Human Rights Watch that she sought employment at a garment factory but was denied due to a lack of necessary experience.[20] Despite these pressures, most participants reported to CENTRAL that they did not intend to return to Thailand, with women more likely than men to plan to remain in Cambodia if they could secure safe and decent employment.

A joint statement by 18 civil society organizations underscored the need for comprehensive, targeted measures to ensure women's access to sustainable income opportunities and to reduce pressure to migrate through unsafe or irregular channels, particularly as the land border remained closed through the remainder of the year.[21]

17 Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI), "Navigating the Economic Transition of Cambodia's Returning Workforce: Suggested Policy Approaches", August 2025, online: https://cdri.org.kh/storage/pdf/RPN_Final_1756201887.pdf; World Vision International, "Situation Report #16: Displacement Crisis as a Result of the Cambodia-Thailand Border Conflict", August 26, 2025, online: https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/2025-08/World%20Vision_16th%20Sitrep_Cambodia%20Border%20Displacement_26th%20August_0.pdf.

18 Joint Statement, "Strengthen Services, Protections for Returned Migrant Workers", October 7, 2025, online: https://ngocedaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Eng-FINAL_Labour_JointStatement_EN_061025.pdf.

19 Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI), "Demographic and Economic Profile of Returned Migrant Labourers", August 2025, online: https://cdri.org.kh/storage/pdf/RPN2_v2_1757326478.pdf.

20 Human Rights Watch, "Cambodia: Returned Migrant Workers Face Hunger, Joblessness", November 25, 2025, online: https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/11/25/cambodia-returned-migrant-workers-face-hunger-joblessness.

21 Joint Statement, above n 18.

02.

Women, Peace & Security

The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda – established by UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and structured around the pillars of prevention, protection, relief and recovery, and participation – has longstanding relevance for building and sustaining peace in Cambodia. Its relevance became further pronounced during the 2025 border conflict. The CEDAW Committee recommended in 2019 that Cambodia adopt a comprehensive National Action Plan for the agenda's implementation and ensure that women are fully involved at all stages of peacebuilding, conflict prevention, and conflict resolution.[22]

Cambodia has played an active role in advancing the WPS agenda within the ASEAN region.[23] The country contributed significantly to developing the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Women, Peace and Security, adopted in 2022, as well as its complementary "Localization Toolkit and Guidelines". However, Cambodia had not developed or enacted a National Action P lan by 2025.

A Situation Analysis on WPS in Cambodia, published by the Ministry of Women's Affairs and UN Women in October 2025, identified key security issues in Cambodia, mapped existing policies and mechanisms, highlighted lessons learned, and proposed next steps for developing a National Action Plan.[24] Among its broader recommendations, the analysis suggested that Cambodia establish a clear timeline for developing a National Action Plan.

22 CEDAW Committee, above n 1, para. 13(a)-(b).

23 Women Peace Makers (2025) "Foundations of Women, Peace & Security: Lessons and Opportunities for Transformative Peace in Cambodia", online: https://wpmcambodia.org/project/foundations-of-women-peace-security/.

24 UN Women and Ministry of Women's Affairs, "Situation Analysis Report on Women, Peace and Security in Cambodia", October 2025, online: https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2025-11/kh-20250438381-situation-analysis-report-on-wps-in-cambodia_en-s.pdf

Research by Women Peace Makers (WPM) also identified that the disproportionate amount of unpaid care work done by Cambodian women is a key factor driving their underrepresentation in peace and security roles.[25] On average, Cambodian women perform over 90% of unpaid care work[26] – responsibilities that tend to increase during periods of conflict or crisis. WPM found that these care burdens, combined with prevailing gender norms, undermine women's full and meaningful participation in peace and security work, including their ability to assume security roles and leadership positions that may require irregular work hours or deployment far from home.

Although Cambodia has demonstrated leadership in supporting women's participation in peacekeeping missions, women remain significantly underrepresented in leadership positions. Women accounted for 8% of the 9,197 peacekeepers deployed by Cambodia between 2006 and February 2024,[27] and 17% of Cambodian peacekeepers as of 2024.[28] This exceeded the UN's global target of 15% women in military troop contingents by 2028.[29] Despite this, Cambodian women held just 13% of leadership positions as of 2023.[30] A National Action Plan remains crucial to ensure women's full and meaningful participation in all stages of the WPS agenda.

A National Action Plan remains crucial to ensure women's full and meaningful participation in all stages of the WPS agenda.

25 Women Peace Makers (2025) "Peace, Gender & Care in Cambodia", online: https://wpmcambodia.org/project/peace-gender-and-care-in-cambodia/.

26 ILO (2018) "Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work", online: https://www.ilo.org/publications/major-publications/care-work-and-care-jobs-future-decent-work.

27 Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (RCAF) and the National Center for Peacekeeping Force, Mine and ERW Clearance (NPMEC), "2023 Report on Results of the Measuring Opportunities for Women in Peace Operations (MOWIP) Assessment", online: https://elsiefund.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/kh-c1062-mowip-assessement-report_royal_cambodian_armed-en.pdf.

28 Ministry of Women's Affairs, "Cambodia National Report on the occasion of the Thirtieth Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)", June 2024, online: https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/b30_report_cambodia_en.pdf.

29 UN Department of Peace Operations, "Uniformed Gender Parity Strategy 2018 – 2028", online: https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/uniformed-gender-parity-2018-2028.pdf.

30 RCAF and NPMEC, above n 27.

03.

Statelessness

Statelessness threatens a broad range of women's, girls', and non-binary people's rights protected under the CEDAW Convention, including the rights to nationality, participation in political and public life, education, employment, healthcare, and housing. The CEDAW Committee recommended that Cambodia ensure access to Cambodian nationality for all eligible ethnic minority women and girls – particularly those of Vietnamese origin and Khmer Krom women and girls – and ratify the two international conventions related to statelessness.[31]

In contrast, Cambodia enacted rapid amendments to the Constitution and Law on Nationality in 2025, enabling Cambodians to be stripped of their citizenship and potentially rendered stateless. Amid growing border tensions, Senate President Hun Sen called on the Minister of Justice in June 2025 to consider amending the Constitution to allow for the revocation of Cambodian citizenship. Article 33 of the Constitution was rapidly amended the following month, removing the prohibition on depriving citizens of their nationality. This change paved the way for amendments to Cambodia's Law on Nationality, which were rapidly drafted, approved, and signed into law in September 2025, without any public consultation.[32] A sub-decree made public in January 2026, dated 1 December 2025, brought the amendments into effect.[33]

The new Article 29 of the Nationality Law establishes grounds for revoking citizenship including in response to a person committing acts of treason or acts that harm national sovereignty, territorial integrity, or national security, conspiring with foreigners, or being convicted of a felony or misdemeanor related to abuse of the King, security of the state, or acts of terrorism. These broad and vague provisions lack clear standards of necessity, proportionality, and predictability, and provide no safeguards against discrimination.

31 CEDAW Committee, above n 1, para. 13(a)-(c).

32 Joint Statement, "Repeal the Nationality Law Amendments: How Revoking Cambodian Nationality Fails to Meet International Standards", September 9, 2025, online: https://ngocedaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Final_-JointStatementOnNationalityLaw-_EN.pdf.

33 Sub-Decree No. 225 on the Implementation of Law on Nationality, 1 December 2025, online: https://data.opendevelopmentcambodia.net/laws_record/sub-decree-no-225-on-the-implementation-of-law-on-nationality.

The amendments also fail to provide adequate protection against statelessness. Citizenship may be revoked where "there is a reliable basis to believe that the Cambodian national can obtain another nationality or protection from a foreign state." There is no definition of what constitutes a "reliable basis to believe" a person can obtain another nationality, leaving the standard open to wide and subjective interpretation.

The amendments risk being misused to target women human rights defenders and to undermine women's, girls', and non-binary people's rights to freedom of association, assembly, and expression. Fifty civil society groups warned against passing the amendments, citing their potential for misuse and their chilling effect on fundamental freedoms in a context where activists, political opponents, and other critical voices have increasingly been convicted of treason on charges of plotting and insulting the King.[34]

Human Rights Watch labelled the amendments "a dangerous tool to silence dissent" in disregard of Cambodia's international human rights commitments.[35] Amnesty International expressed concern that the Cambodian government would "misuse [the amendments] to crackdown on its critics and make them stateless".[36]

34 Joint Statement, "Drop Amendments to Nationality Law, Don't Strip Citizenship of Cambodians", August 24, 2025, online: https://ngocedaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/ENG-Joint-Statement-Drop-Amend-nationality-law.pdf.

35 Human Rights Watch, "Cambodia: Revised Law Endangers Citizenship" September 1, 2025, online: https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/09/01/cambodia-revised-law-endangers-citizenship.

36 Amnesty International, "Cambodia: Revocation of citizenship would be heinous violation of international law", July 11, 2025, online: https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/07/cambodia-revocation-of-citizenship-would-be-heinous-violation-of-international-law/.

04.

Women in Leadership

Women remained significantly underrepresented in leadership positions at national and sub-national administrative levels in Cambodia. In the first half of 2025, women made up just 8% of provincial governors (2 out of 25 positions, in Koh Kong and Pailin provinces); 13% of deputy provincial governors (32 out of 248 positions); 3% of governors at municipal, district, and khan levels (6 out of 209 positions); and 20.5% of deputy governors at municipal, district, and khan levels (249 out of 1,214 positions).[37] Koh Kong's outgoing provincial governor, Mithona Phouthong, was promoted to Secretary of State at the Ministry of Women's Affairs in 2025, and Chhi Va was appointed as the new provincial governor.

Meaningful progress towards women's equal participation in political and public life requires stronger temporary special measures, including quotas across leadership roles, as was recommended by the CEDAW Committee.[38]

2 of 25
Provincial governors were women.

32 of 248
Deputy provincial governors were women.

6 of 209
Municipal, district, and khan governors were women.

249 of 1,214
Deputy municipal, district, and khan governors were women.

37 Information provided by COMFREL.

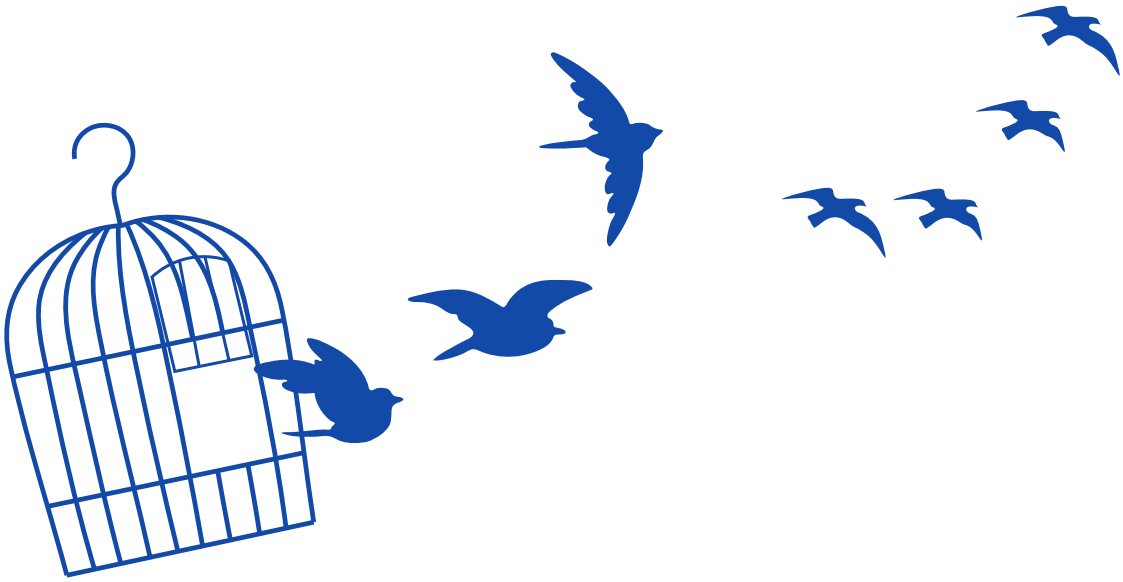
38 CEDAW Committee, above n 1, para. 31(a).

05.

Fundamental Freedoms & Civic Space

Cambodia continued its longstanding repression of women human rights defenders, political opponents, trade unionists, land and environmental defenders, journalists, and citizens expressing dissent throughout 2025. Despite the CEDAW Committee's recommendation to fully guarantee their rights to freedom of expression, assembly, and association without undue restrictions,[39] these groups faced surveillance, threats, and imprisonment.

Charges of incitement to commit a felony or disturb social security and plotting under Articles 494, 495, and 453 of the Criminal Code continued to be arbitrarily levelled against those who spoke out. As of December 2025, at least 14 women were in prison for their speech, activism, or political participation.[40]



39 Ibid, para. 19.

40 LICADHO, "Cambodia's Prisoners of Interest", online: https://www.licadho-cambodia.org/prisoners_of_interest/ [as of December 2025].

5.1 Political Activism

The space for political activism remained highly restricted in 2025, with opposition figures facing systemic retaliation for efforts to organize. Political activist Seng Theary engaged in a hunger strike in prison in June 2025.[41] The hunger strike – her fourth since being imprisoned in June 2022 – marked the third anniversary of her detention. The action drew attention to her own imprisonment and called for the release of all political activists and human rights defenders unjustly imprisoned in Cambodia.

Theary is serving a six-year prison sentence after being convicted in a mass trial involving dozens of other opposition activists. She ended the hunger strike after nine days due to health concerns.[42] Other women political activists, including Ouk Yoem, Oy Dina, Soeun Kunthea, Sem Sophal, and Nhep Sarom, also spent time in prison in 2025.[43]

5.2 Environmental Activism

Five environmental activists from Mother Nature Cambodia, including women activists Long Kunthea and Phuon Keoraksmey, remained in prison throughout the year. They were sentenced to six to eight years in prison the year prior. The Phnom Penh Appeal Court and the Supreme Court denied their requests for bail pending appeal in February and April, respectively.[44]

In May 2025, a group of UN experts, in a communication to the Cambodian government, expressed serious concern about the arrest of the activists in connection with their work as environmental human rights defenders and their exercise of the right to freedom of expression. The experts stated that the detention was arbitrary and that the individuals "appear to have been targeted simply for belonging to the Mother Nature Cambodia movement, in apparent violation of their right to freedom of association."[45] On the anniversary of their arrest in July 2025, 51 civil society organizations and communities renewed calls for their immediate release and for all charges against them to be dropped.[46]

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41 Perseus Strategies, "U.S.-Cambodian Political Prisoner Theary Seng Launches Hunger Strike to Mark Third Anniversary of Wrongful Detention in Cambodia", June 2, 2025, online: https://perseus-strategies.com/wp-content/uploads/FINAL-Press-Release_Theary-Seng_Hunger-Strike-June-2025-1.pdf; Joint Statement, "Seng Theary's Hunger Strike Highlights Plight of Unjustly Imprisoned", June 11, 2025, online: https://www.licadho-cambodia.org/pressrelease.php?perm=541.

42 Khuon Narim, "Imprisoned Activist Seng Theary Halts Hunger Strike, Her Fourth Since 2022", CamboJA News, June 11, 2025, online: https://cambojanews.com/imprisoned-activist-seng-theary-halts-hunger-strike-her-fourth-since-2022/.

43 LICADHO, above n 40.

44 LICADHO, "Mother Nature Activists Denied Bail; Youth Leaders Face Extended Detention", February 18, 2025, online: https://www.licadho-cambodia.org/flashnews.php?perm=435; LICADHO, "Supreme Court Denies Bail of Mother Nature Activists", April 30, 2025, online: https://www.licadho-cambodia.org/flashnews.php?perm=441.

45 Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia; the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers and the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, AL KHM 3/2025, May 22, 2025, online: https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownLoadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=29950.

46 Joint Statement, "An Ongoing Shame: Mother Nature Convictions, One Year On", July 2, 2025, online: https://ngocedaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/02072025_Final_MN-Statement_EN.pdf.

5.3 Trade Unionists

The space for trade union organizing remained heavily repressed in 2025, with union-busting practices continuing. Women trade unionists reported gender-specific barriers to advancing to leadership roles within unions, even in women-dominated industries such as the garment, footwear, and travel goods sector. Women unionists anecdotally reported expectations to stay out late to organize and to drink alcohol, perceived as barriers to their participation and increasing tensions within their families.

Members of the Labor Rights Supported Union of Khmer Employees of NagaWorld (LRSU) remained on strike throughout 2025. Four years after the strike began, these union members continued to demand a just resolution to the labor dispute despite persistent and all-encompassing harassment.[47]

5.4 Press Freedom & Women in Journalism

Women remained underrepresented among journalists and media professionals in 2025 and continued to face gendered discrimination and harassment, undermining democratic functioning and access to information. The Ministry of Information reported that just 861 of Cambodia's roughly 10,000 journalists were women at the end of 2024.[48]

CamboJA documented 61 violations against journalists in 2025, which affected 57 journalists, including five women.[49] While fewer cases involved women journalists, this does not indicate that women are less exposed to violations. Rather, it is reflective of women's underrepresentation in journalism and barriers to reporting incidents of gender-based harassment and abuse.

Reporter Loses Her Job After Reporting Sexual Harassment

CamboJA documented a case of workplace sexual harassment against a woman journalist employed at a local newspaper. The journalist reported experiencing verbal and physical sexual harassment by her supervisor, including inappropriate sexual comments and non-consensual physical contact. After reporting the incident to management and the human resources department, she was blamed for the incident and informed that no action could be taken because she had not immediately submitted a formal written complaint. The journalist stated that the company had no clear safeguarding policy or complaint mechanism regarding sexual harassment.

Following her complaint, the alleged perpetrator initially submitted a resignation letter, although it was later withdrawn. The journalist reported experiencing anxiety and sleeplessness as a result of the situation. Without providing justification, the company suspended her for one month without pay for alleged "serious misconduct". Her employment was terminated without prior warning or clear explanation the following month. No known action was taken against the alleged perpetrator.

47 Joint Statement, "Four Years of Strikes at NagaWorld: "We Unite the Nation Beginning with Resolving the Dispute at NagaWorld", January 13, 2026, online: https://ngocedaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/EN_JS-Four-Years-of-Strikes-at-NagaWorld.pdf.

48 សើ ដារ៉ី, "កម្ពុជាមានអ្នកសារព័ត៌មានប្រមាណ ១ម៉ឺននាក់កំពុងបម្រើការក្នុងស្ថាប័នសារព័ត៌មានជាង ១ពាន់កន្លែង", RFI, 2025, online: https://tinyurl.com/32bw9x3t.

49 CamboJA, "Cambodian Journalism Situation Report 2025", online: https://www.camboja.net/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/Cambodian-Journalism-Situation-Report-2025-Final.pdf

A report by the Cambodian Center for Independent Media (CCIM) documented gender-based discrimination across the media sector, including the scarcity of women in leadership roles, discriminatory promotion practices, and assignment of women to "light" topics and assignment of men to investigative reporting.[50] Women journalists reported professional and social undervaluation; safety concerns related to questioning by authorities, working in remote areas, and barriers to obtaining press cards; and online and offline gendered harassment and verbal abuse. Family concerns about women's safety further limited the number of women who entered and remained in the profession.

Journalist Ordered to Remove Hijab at a Government Ministry

CamboJA documented that a women journalist working for a local television station was denied entry to a government ministry in Phnom Penh because of her religious attire. When she arrived to cover a news event, a security guard demanded she remove her hijab. She explained that wearing a hijab is a requirement of her faith, but the guard refused to allow her to proceed unless she complied. "This incident reflects a lack of awareness and understanding about Muslim practices," she said in a statement. The journalist described the experience as discriminatory and called for greater awareness and respect for religious diversity, especially within public institutions.[51]

Citizen Journalist Sexually Harassed While Reporting

CCIM documented that a woman citizen journalist was sexually harassed while on a reporting assignment in September 2025. She had travelled about 30 kilometers from her home to conduct an interview. Upon arriving at the source's house, a man approached her and behaved inappropriately. She filed a complaint with the commune authorities, but they failed to identify or hold the perpetrator accountable.[52]

The broader media environment remained severely constrained following a years-long government crackdown. Cambodia ranked 161 out of 180 countries in the Reporters Without Borders 2025 World Press Freedom Index, a drop of 10 places from the previous year.[53] Journalists reporting on topics such as land and environmental issues, local governance, and the Cambodian-Thai border conflict faced judicial harassment, with the application of charges of incitement and defamation discouraging critical reporting.

50 Cambodian Center for Independent Media (CCIM), "Challenges for Independent Media Report 2024", online: https://ccimcambodia.org/?page_id=6232.

51 Information provided by CamboJA.

52 Information provided by CCIM.

53 Reporters Without Borders, "2025 World Press Freedom Index", online: https://rsf.org/en/country/cambodia.

Cambodia ranked 161st of 180 countries in press freedom in 2025, falling 10 places in one year.

CCIM's report found that print and online outlets faced mounting legal and financial pressures, while broadcast media remained under government control. Citizen and online journalism expanded as traditional media spaces narrowed, bringing both benefits and risks. Among 100 journalists surveyed by CCIM, 91% reported concerns about their safety, particularly in relation to legal action, verbal harassment, surveillance, and physical violence. Forty-four percent reported experiencing safety issues in 2024, primarily linked to reporting on topics considered sensitive. Most journalists surveyed reported occasionally (59%) or frequently (32%) experiencing adverse mental health impacts, such as anxiety, stress, burnout, and depression.

These risks intensified following the Ministry of Information's issuance of a new prakas on "qualifications and journalistic professionalism" on 27 November 2025, alongside additional changes to requirements for obtaining a press card. The prakas introduced extensive and restrictive requirements for newsrooms, independent journalists, content creators, and others, while the press card requirements further undermined access to this form of documentation. A joint statement by 21 civil society actors warned that "these measures will make reporting more difficult, more dangerous, and further constrict an already fragile media landscape".[54]

CCIM survey of 100 journalists

91%
of journalists expressed concerns about their safety

44%
experienced safety issues in 2024

91%
experienced adverse mental-health impacts
59% occasionally | 32% frequently

54 Joint Statement, "New Prakas Lacks Consultation, Further Restricts Media Freedom", December 15, 2025, online: https://ngocedaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Final-EN_Statement-on-Cambodia-New-Media-Regulations.pdf

06.

Land Grabbing & Forced Evictions

Land grabbing and forced evictions continued to disproportionately affect women across Cambodia in 2025. Longstanding Economic Land Concessions, alongside new land giveaways, gave rise to both new and protracted disputes. Land conflicts affected communities in at least Banteay Meanchey, Battambang, Kampong Chhnang, Kampong Speu, Kandal, Kep, Koh Kong, Kratie, Oddar Meanchey, Phnom Penh, Preah Sihanouk, Preah Vihear, Pursat, Siem Reap and Stueng Treng provinces. The Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO) documented that at least 5,070 families were newly affected across 47 cases during the year.

In Preah Sihanouk province, 339 families from the Neak Ta Thmar Prang forest community faced an ongoing dispute with Mi Ner Va Investment Co. Ltd. over 91 hectares of land within an officially recognized community forest.[55] The dispute escalated in February 2025 when the company began clearing the land to develop a landfill site. Despite the forest's protected status, land titles overlapping with the area had reportedly been issued by authorities and sold to the company.

In Preah Vihear province, Kuy Indigenous community members sought protection of their ancestral and communal land used for rotational farming, which they alleged had been cleared by Santana Agro Product Co. Ltd.[56] Tensions escalated in January 2025, when clashes occurred between community members and company agricultural workers.[57]

Development projects continued to place long-established communities at risk. In Kandal province, approximately 400 families who had lived there for decades faced livelihood loss, flooding, and the risk of forced eviction when a lake was fenced off and slated for development near the new Techo International Airport, developed by Overseas Cambodia Investment Corporation (OCIC).[58]

55 LICADHO, "Forest Community Petitions Senate President over Land Conflict", May 30, 2025, online: https://www.licadho-cambodia.org/flashnews.php?perm=447.

56 Khuon Narim, "Kuy Indigenous Demand Resolution Over Land Dispute in Preah Vihear", CamboJA News, March 4, 2025, online: https://cambojanews.com/kuy-indigenous-demand-resolution-over-land-dispute-in-preah-vihear/.

57 Sovann Sreypich, "Hundreds of Indigenous People Clash with Developers Over Disputed Farmland", January 31, 2025, online: https://cambojanews.com/hundreds-of-indigenous-people-clash-with-developers-over-disputed-farmland/.

58 Phon Sothyroth, "Seized lakes: How Cambodia's airport boom is breaking a fishing community", HaRDstories , September 10, 2025, online: https://hardstories.org/stories/land-rights/cambodias-new-airport-slowly-destroys-a-rural-community.

In Phnom Penh, residents affected by a railway development similarly petitioned for land titles amid fears of eviction.[59] Villagers from Koh Meas community also continued to call for long-awaited land titles in 2025, after their land was reclassified as state private land and leased to a private company in 2020.[60]

Alongside land disputes, women land activists continued to face backlash and judicial harassment for defending their homes and livelihoods. As in 2024, women from Boeung Tamok's Samrong Tbong community in Phnom Penh remained subject to ongoing legal harassment.[61]

Similar patterns were seen in Koh Kong province. In June 2025, the Supreme Court ordered that the defamation convictions of Koh Kong land activists, Phav Nheung and Seng Lin, be referred back to the Preah Sihanouk Appeal Court for retrial.[62] The charges dated to November 2019, when the two women accused a former community representative of seizing land. In November 2025, the Preah Sihanouk Appeal Court retried the case and upheld the convictions, ordering each woman to pay a fine of 1 million riel (about US$250) and 2 million riel (about US$500) in compensation.[63]

In a separate case, the Sihanoukville Appeal Court dropped incitement charges against 11 Koh Kong land activists, including women activists Det Huor, Inn Thou, Phav Nheung, Seng Lin, Soung Theng, Tith Tang, Yi Kunthea, and Yoeut Khmao.[64] The group had been convicted of incitement in June 2024 after attempting to travel to Phnom Penh to submit a petition regarding an ongoing land dispute with a company linked to a tycoon. Nine of the activists spent two months in pre-trial detention in 2023 in relation to the charges that were ultimately dropped.

In May 2025, an affected community in Koh Kong also submitted a petition about its ongoing land dispute to the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction.[65] In September, around 40 community members were stopped and questioned by local police while travelling to Phnom Penh to follow-up on their petition, before being permitted to continue.

59 Sovann Sreypich, "Phnom Penh Residents Push City Hall Again for Land Titles, Road Construction", CamboJA News, June 20, 2025, online: https://cambojanews.com/phnom-penh-residents-push-city-hall-again-for-land-titles-road-construction/.

60 Sovann Sreypich, "Koh Meas Residents Demand Land Titles Amid 50-Year Development Lease", CamboJA News, March 14, 2025, online: https://cambojanews.com/koh-meas-residents-demand-land-titles-amid-50-year-development-lease/.

61 LICADHO, "Charges Dropped Against Koh Kong Land Activists; Boeung Tamok Residents Convicted", July 17, 2025, online: https://www.licadho-cambodia.org/flashnews.php?perm=454; Sovann Sreypich, "Boeung Tamok Residents Accept Compensation, Plead Judge to Quash Criminal Charge During 18-Minute Hearing", CamboJA News, June 27, 2025, online: https://cambojanews.com/boeung-tamok-residents-accept-compensation-plead-judge-to-quash-criminal-charge-during-18-minute-hearing/.

62 LICADHO, "Supreme Court Orders Retrial in Defamation Conviction of Land Activists", June 17, 2025, online: https://www.licadho-cambodia.org/flashnews.php?perm=449.

63 LICADHO, "Appeal Court Upholds Defamation Verdict of Koh Kong Land Activists ", November 19, 2025, online: https://www.licadho-cambodia.org/flashnews.php?perm=476.

64 LICADHO, above n 61.

65 LICADHO, "Koh Kong Community Members, Reps Gather at Land Ministry", September 1, 2025, online: https://www.licadho-cambodia.org/flashnews.php?perm=459.

07.

Climate Change

Cambodia is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, including extreme heat, drought, and flooding. The CEDAW Committee recommended that Cambodia ensure the effective participation of women in the formulation and implementation of climate change and disaster response policies, and that these policies explicitly integrate a gender perspective.[66]

1.9 million
children live in high climate risk areas.

30% - 40%
income loss among pepper farmers in Kampot and Kep provinces.

Cambodia's Gender and Environment Survey 2024 found that 87% of the population lives in areas facing high environmental risk across both urban and rural areas, and that nearly all Cambodians had experienced at least one disaster in the previous year.[67] The survey identified that Cambodian women face disproportionate disaster-related impacts, including reduced access to medical care and hygiene products, damage to livelihoods, increased unpaid care workloads, reductions in food and nutritional intake, and heightened personal safety risks. It also found that very few Cambodians are engaged in formal decision-making processes related to climate change or environmental management. A report by UNICEF further assessed children's exposure and vulnerability to climate hazards, estimating that 1.9 million children – approximately 36% of the country's child population – live in communes with high and very high climate risks.[68]

87%
of the population lives in areas facing high environmental risk

66 CEDAW Committee, above n 1, para. 43(a)-(b).

67 National Institute of Statistics (2025) "Cambodia Gender and Environment Survey 2024", online: https://data.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/documents/Publications/2025/cambodia_gender_and_environment_survey_en.pdf.

68 Ministry of Environment and UNICEF Cambodia (2025) "Children's Climate Risk Index for Cambodia", online: https://www.unicef.org/cambodia/reports/childrens-climate-risk-index-cambodia.

The impacts of climate change are being widely felt. Banteay Srei Organization, in cooperation with other organizations, interviewed 150 owners and workers (89 women and 61 men) in small pepper farms in Kampot and Kep provinces.[69] Respondents reported feeling hotter each year and that incomes had fallen by 30% to 40% in 2024 due to heat-related impacts. Heat had resulted in plants dying, reduced yields, lower-quality peppercorns, and increased costs for water and pumping equipment. As a result, some lacked the capital required for pepper production in 2025.

The assessment found that women were disproportionately affected, reporting higher rates of physical ailments, reduced paid labor participation, and lower decision-making power than men. Other publications throughout 2025 similarly indicated that women living in coastal communities or working in garment factories, construction, agriculture, and informal employment faced disproportionate climate-related risks.[70]

Cambodia is a party to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement. National legal and policy frameworks include the 2023 Code of Environmental and Natural Resources, the Climate Change Strategic Plan 2024-2033, the updated Nationally Determined Contribution, the Long-Term Strategy for Carbon Neutrality (2021), and the Master Plan on Gender and Climate Change 2018-2030.

Together, these demonstrate a commitment to mainstreaming gender across climate change adaptation, mitigation, and disaster risk reduction. However, not all policies are fully gender responsive. Some lack clearly defined activities, dedicated financing and resources, and mechanisms to ensure women's and girls' participation in decision-making, while gaps in implementation persist. The Gender and Environment Survey 2024 provides a strong evidence base to inform gender-responsive policy and implementation going forward.

69 Banteay Srei Organization, People in Need, Fair Farms, Solar Green Energy Cambodia, "As Assessment Report on the Impacts of Heat on Women and the Role of Gender Within the Peppercorn Value Chain, Opportunities for Gender Mainstreaming, and Small Pepper Farm Owner and Companies' Adaptation to Climate Change in Kampong Trach and Chhouk District of Kampot, and Other Areas of Kep Provinces," March 2025, online: https://banteaysrei.info/app/uploads/2025/12/An_Assessment_Report_on_the_Impacts_of_Heat_on_Women_and_the_Role.pdf.

70 See National Institute of Social Affairs (NISA), Advocacy and Policy Institute (API), and Fishery Coalition Action Team (FACT) (2025) "Climate Change Adaptation Through a Cash-transfer Program (CTP) in Cambodia: Empirical Evidence from Coastal Communities", online: https://policypulse.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/NISA-Final-Report.pdf; Vabotra Chea, et al. "Perceived impact of heat stress on health and productivity of tropical female garment workers – a comparison between cool and hot months", BMC Public Health, April 25, 2025, online: https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s12889-025-22787-0; Sao Phal Niseiy, "Climate Crisis Hurts Street Vendors, Mostly Women", Cambodianess, July 20, 2025, online: https://cambodianess.com/article/climate-crisis-hurts-street-vendors-mostly-women; Laurie Parsons, et al. "Climate-linked heat inequality in the global southern workforce: Cambodian workers' economic and health vulnerability to high core temperatures in five occupational sectors", Taylor & Francis, March 11, 2025, online: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17565529.2025.2474026?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

08.

Microfinance Debt

The CEDAW Committee recommended that Cambodia effectively regulate microfinance institutions and establish an oversight mechanism to prevent exploitative lending practices.[71] However, as documented in previous years, Cambodia's microfinance industry, backed by investments from international development banks from across Europe and other regions, continued to maximize profit at the cost of borrowers' well-being, without any systematic access to remedy. These debts were overwhelmingly collateralized with land titles and the burdens disproportionately carried by women, who make up the majority of microfinance borrowers.

Human Rights Watch released a 2025 report examining the impacts of predatory microfinance lending on Indigenous people in Ratanakiri province.[72] The report found that "over-indebtedness has compounded the marginalization of Indigenous peoples", and documented related harms including the loss of culturally significant land, disruption to collective land titling processes, loss of means of subsistence, and other harmful coping mechanisms such as reduced food intake, children's school dropout, and debt-related suicides. **Human Rights Watch also documented a case in which a credit officer pressured a family to sell their adolescent daughter into sex work to repay loans. The family refused, yet the girl did not leave her room and missed school for several days due to fear of being kidnapped.**

Debt burdens only intensified as approximately 910,000 Cambodian migrant workers returned from Thailand, and hundreds of thousands of people were internally displaced amid the border conflict. While targeted measures were introduced in an effort to reduce financial pressure on some displaced households and families of frontline soldiers,[73] early reports suggest that these measures were sporadic and gaps remained. Women migrant workers who returned to Cambodia reported to Human Rights Watch that they skipped meals and forewent healthcare to make microfinance repayments.[74] By the third quarter of 2025, 5.69% of approximately 2.3 million retail loans were over 90 days late on repayments,[75] underscoring the ongoing need for meaningful debt relief and remedy.

71 CEDAW Committee, above n 1, para. 41.

72 Human Rights Watch (2025) "Cambodia: Microfinance Lending Harming Indigenous Groups", online: https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/09/24/cambodia-microfinance-lending-harming-indigenous-groups.

73 Cambodia Microfinance Association, "CMA Highlights Microfinance Sector Support for Front Soldiers and Displaced Households Affected by Border Conflict", January 16, 2026, online: https://opendevelopmentcambodia.net/wp-content/blogs.dir/2/files_mf/1768536375a.jpg; Pa Tongchen, "Loan Relief Ends for Displaced, Border Farmers Amid Mounting Debt", November 28, 2025, online: https://cambojanews.com/loan-relief-ends-for-displaced-border-farmers-amid-mounting-debt/.

74 Human Rights Watch, anove n 20.

75 Credit Bureau Cambodia previously reported on the percentage of loans that were over 30 days late on repayment. In 2025, the Credit Bureau began only reporting on loans that are over 90 days late. Therefore, this figure is not comparable to previous years. Credit Bureau Cambodia, "Retail Credit Index: Q3 2025 Quarterly Report", online: https://www.creditbureau.com.kh/directus/assets/e8d52587-cce1-4481-ae1c-0c3abe2321e7.

09. Gender-Based Violence

Gender-based violence – including domestic violence, sexual violence, technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV), child marriage, violence targeting sex workers and entertainment workers, and human trafficking – persisted across Cambodia in 2025. Despite the numerous recommendations issued by the CEDAW Committee in 2019, limited access to essential services and justice continued, alongside deeply rooted social norms that normalize gender-based violence and prioritize cultural harmony over women's and girls' rights. Risks of gender-based violence and limited access to justice were also heightened amidst the Cambodia-Thailand border conflict and large-scale internal displacement.

Cambodia continued to delay comprehensive reform of the 2005 Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and the Protection of Victims, despite its well-documented gaps and weaknesses. In June 2025, 13 civil society organizations again called on the government to publicly release the roadmap on amending the Domestic Violence Law, to draft a revised law that complies with Cambodia's national and international obligations through meaningful consultations, and to adopt a fully revised law supported by the resources required for its implementation.[76] No public progress had been reported by the end of the year.

9.1 Incidents of Gender-Based Violence

The Cambodian government does not publish national, disaggregated data on the prevalence of reported cases of gender-based violence. In this context, several civil society organizations that provide services to people who have experienced gender-based violence documented cases throughout the year. While not representative of the national prevalence, their data illustrate the persistent patterns of violence and ongoing barriers to safety and justice.[77]

76 Joint Statement, "Cambodia's Delay in Overhauling the Domestic Violence Law is Putting Lives at Risk", June 17, 2025, online: https://ngocedaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Joint-Statement-DV-Law-Amendment-Final_20250617_ENG.pdf.

77 The same case may have been documented and supported by more than one organization in order to provide holistic and comprehensive services. As a result, there may be overlap between the cases documented by CWCC, Banteay Srei, RHAC, and LICADHO.

- **Cambodian Women's Crisis Center (CWCC)** supported 317 cases in Phnom Penh, Banteay Meanchey, Kampong Thom, and Siem Reap provinces from January to June 2025, including 143 domestic violence cases, 82 sexual violence cases, and 92 human trafficking cases.

- **Reproductive Health Association of Cambodia (RHAC)** identified 337 new sexual and gender-based violence cases in Banteay Meanchey, Kampong Chham, Kampong Chhnang, Kampong Thom, Kampot, Kandal, Phnom Penh, Pursat, Siem Reap, and Stung Treng provinces from January to August 2025.

- **Banteay Srei Organization** referred 123 victims/survivors of gender-based violence in Siem Reap and Battambang provinces to safe house services, including 39 affected by sexual violence and 84 affected by domestic violence

- **LICADHO** investigated 146 cases of women's rights violations and 159 cases of girls' rights violations in 2025, predominantly related to domestic and sexual violence. Across these cases, 30 women and 12 girls were killed.

LICADHO also published data on deaths in domestic and sexual violence cases documented by the organization from January 2020 to August 2025.[78] While not nationally representative, the organization recorded 146 deaths, including 96 women, 4 men, 27 girls, and 19 boys. The data show an increase in recorded cases in 2024, with the rate of documented cases increasing even further in 2025. Most deaths occurred in the context of intimate partner or family relationships, with current or former partners identified as responsible for the deaths of 79 women and girls, and other family members or relatives responsible for 47 deaths. In some cases, sexual violence preceded murder, most often involving individuals known to the person, such as neighbors.

In one case, a man and two boys sexually assaulted and murdered a 15-year-old girl in a school setting in May 2025.[79] The case generated widespread public discussion on social media, much of which involved narratives that blamed the girl and her parents rather than the perpetrators. While some positive public messaging challenged these responses, and the suspects were detained and convicted, both the crime and the accompanying discourse highlighted the persistent societal barriers to addressing even the most severe forms of gender-based violence.

The Cambodian Organization for Women Support (COWS) surveyed 360 people in Kampong Thom, Stung Treng, and Preah Vihear provinces.[80] Twenty-eight per cent of respondents reported experiencing sexual harassment within their communities, with higher percentages reporting intimate partner violence and domestic violence. The survey also examined perceptions of contributing factors to sexual violence, with alcohol and drug use the most frequently reported factor, reported by 28% of respondents.

78 LICADHO, "Enough is Enough: At Least 146 Cambodians Killed by Domestic and Sexual Violence Since 2020", October 16, 2025, online: https://www.licadho-cambodia.org/articles/20251016/202/index.html.

79 Sangeetha Amarthalingam and Thang Sinorn, "Teenagers Rape and Kill 15-year-old Girl in School Toilet", Kiripost, May 22, 2025, online: https://kiripost.com/stories/teenagers-rape-and-kill-15-year-old-girl-in-school-toilet.

80 Information provided by COWS.

9.2 Access to Services & Justice

Access to services and justice for people who experienced gender-based violence remained grossly insufficient in 2025. WPM published new research on women's access to justice and the use of local dispute resolution in response to intimate partner disputes.[81] The research examined the practices of 52 officials providing local dispute resolution, comparing those who had received gender-responsive mediation training with those who had not.

The report identified persistent gaps in knowledge, capacity, and survivor-centered practice among both groups. Some officials continued to divert cases that warranted formal legal action to local dispute resolution, which "risked legitimizing the abuser's actions or further endangering the survivor". Service providers also consistently reported that referral pathways to legal aid, medical care, counselling, and shelters were unclear or ineffective. The use of administrative decisions as a protective measure was similarly inconsistent and ineffective.

Among the 49 women who participated in WPM's study, most expressed a preference for local dispute resolution, which is often perceived as more accessible, affordable, timely, and culturally appropriate than the formal legal system. While some reported positive outcomes, including improvements in their relationships or successful divorce, others continued to express serious concerns about their safety and access to justice. The report concluded that urgent reform is needed to both local dispute resolution and the formal legal system to ensure effective, survivor-centered access to justice.

A COWS survey of **360 people** found that around 30% said there was no safe place in their commune for people experiencing violence.

A survey of 360 people by COWS similarly found that approximately 30% of respondents reported that there was no safe place in their commune for people experiencing violence. More than half (52%) indicated that local authorities and other stakeholders should do more to widely publicize information on how people facing violence can access safe locations.[82]

81 Women Peace Makers (2025) "Prospects and Challenges for Women's Access to Justice: Revisiting Local Dispute Resolution Practice in relation to Intimate Partner Disputes", online: https://wpmcambodia.org/project/prospects-and-challenges-for-womens-access-to-justice/.

82 Information provided by COWS.

CWCC reported that access to government-appointed legal aid remained limited. People requesting legal aid were often required to provide proof of financial need, commonly through an Equity Card issued under Cambodia's Identification of Poor Households (IDPoor) program. These requirements can exclude some women and children who need legal aid but lack the necessary documentation. Access to financial redress similarly remained limited. Even when civil compensation was ordered by a court, the process of enforcement is complex and time-consuming. Lengthy procedures, legal and administrative costs, travel expenses, and time away from work present barriers to financial redress in practice.

CWCC also reported that child-friendly approaches within the legal system are lacking.[83] Notably, the use of trained child interviewers, safe interview spaces, and age-appropriate language was insufficient. Children were at times questioned using aggressive techniques and, in some cases, in the presence of the accused in courtrooms. Although some courts used physical barriers, some children could still hear the accused and reported feeling their presence. Other challenges included children having limited choice about the gender of the authorities and judges they interacted with, and prolonged legal proceedings that disrupted education and daily life. These factors were reported to contribute to fear, stress, confusion, intimidation, anxiety, and increased trauma. These can interfere with children's ability to provide full and accurate testimony and may undermine children's confidence in disclosing abuse and seeking justice.

9.3 Technology Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV)

Increased access to technology and the internet, as well as Cambodia's growing digital economy, have enabled new forms of gender-based violence to occur online or through the use of technology.

Research by the Asia Centre examined TFGBV experienced by Cambodian women who are visible in the public domain, including women human rights defenders, Indigenous women advocating for their rights, journalists, and civil society leaders.[84] The study identified common forms of harm including online bullying and harassment aimed at undermining credibility; online sexual harassment, such as derogatory messages or requesting or sending unsolicited explicit images; and the manipulation or de-contextualization of online content. These harms were perpetrated by both State and non-State actors.

83 Information provided by COWS.

84 Asia Centre (2025) "Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence in Cambodia: Impact on the Civic Freedoms of Women Journalists and Human Rights Defenders", online: https://asiacentre.org/technology-facilitated-gender-based-violence-in-cambodia-impact-on-the-civic-freedoms-of-women-journalists-and-human-rights-defenders/.

Klahaan Organization also researched public understanding and experiences of TFGBV in Cambodia through 61 interviews and an online survey of 129 participants.[85] Almost one-third of survey participants (32%) reported having experienced TFGBV, while more than half (55%) reported knowing someone who had. Women and LGBTIQ+ people were most frequently perceived as being at heightened risk, followed by people with disabilities, Indigenous people, those living in rural areas, and ethnic minorities.

The most frequently experienced or witnessed forms of TFGBV included hate speech; sexual harassment and exploitation, particularly image-based abuse; and online scams. These were most often perpetrated through social media comments, shared posts, or direct messages and calls. While many incidents involved strangers, former intimate partners also perpetrated online sexual harassment and image-based abuse.

Both studies highlighted structural and social factors that contribute to TFGBV. The Asia Centre identified links between TFGBV and broader patterns of gender-based violence, shaped by unequal power relations and gaps in legal and protection mechanisms. Klahaan's interviews highlighted additional factors, including limited media literacy, the anonymity offered by online platforms, and prevailing gender norms and expectations.

TFGBV was found to undermine participation in both online and offline public life. The Asia Centre reported that such harms restrict freedom of expression, association, and religious practice, and contribute to women withdrawing from public roles through self-censorship or stepping down from leadership and advocacy positions. Similarly, 71% of Klahaan's survey respondents indicated that they self-censor online, and more than one-third (36%) reported that TFGBV limits their participation in offline public discussions and opportunities. Reported offline impacts also included emotional distress, stigma, anxiety, depression, and concerns for personal safety.

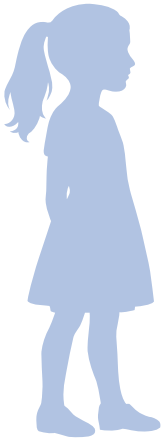
Public awareness of TFGBV also remained uneven and limited. However, the Asia Centre observed that women increasingly share their experiences on social media, contributing to broader public awareness and discussion.

Protections and support mechanisms remained limited. The Asia Centre found that existing legal provisions do not adequately address TFGBV, that judicial processes are not sufficiently survivor-centered, and that civil society organizations often lack the protocols and expertise to respond. Klahaan similarly identified significant barriers to seeking support, including stigma and victim-blaming attitudes, limited information about and trust in available services, and financial costs.

85 Klahaan (2025) "Behind the Screen: Understanding Online Gender-Based Violence in Cambodia", online: https://56dd158a-1ed4-4131-9020-9d0718381f08.filesusr.com/ugd/091c7d_eef56ca6c07e4d86867a42c520ff884c.pdf.

14%
of women surveyed across 9 provinces were married before age **18**

Cambodia's legal minimum marriage age is 18, but an exception allows marriage at 16 with parental consent.



9.4 Child Marriage

Although Cambodia has made progress in reducing child marriage through targeted interventions, further progress remains necessary. The legal minimum age of marriage in Cambodia is 18 years, with an exception that permits child marriage at 16 years with parental consent.[86] In practice, limited enforcement and the prevalence of informal marriages result in younger children being married.

A study by the Ministry of Women's Affairs, together with Plan International, found that 14% of women participants across nine provinces had married before the age of 18. The study identified the highest prevalence in Ratanakiri province, where 37% of women participants were married before the age of 18.[87]

Cambodia has indicated its development of a national action plan on preventing early marriage and teenage pregnancy in Cambodia (2025-2030).[88] However, continued progress will depend on ongoing investments in education, improved economic opportunities, and efforts to address the social norms that contribute to early marriage.

9.5 Violence Against Sex Workers & Entertainment Workers

Sex workers' and entertainment workers' rights to safety, bodily autonomy, healthcare, and access to justice continued to be undermined by criminalization, a lack of legal protection, and gendered social norms in 2025. Despite the CEDAW Committee's recommendation to decriminalize sex work,[89] the 2008 Law on the Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation and the 2010 Safety Village Commune/Sangkat Policy Guideline[90] continue to prohibit most activities associated with sex work. These frameworks contributed to unsafe work environments and diminished access to social, legal, and health services. The failure to differentiate between sex work and human trafficking also enabled anti-human trafficking initiatives that adversely affected sex workers' rights and livelihoods.

86 Civil Code of Cambodia, Article 948.

87 Ministry of Women's Affairs and Plan International, June 2024, online: https://asset.cambodia.gov.kh/mowa/2024/06/report-on-early-married-kh.pdf.

88 See, National Action Plan on Prevention and Response to Violence Against Children 2025-2030, July 18, 2025, online: https://www.unicef.org/cambodia/media/10486/file/NVAC%202025-2030%20English%20version.pdf.pdf

89 CEDAW Committee, above n 1, para. 29(a).

90 Ministry of Interior, "Safety village commune/Sangkat Policy Guideline", August 16, 2010, online: https://www.sithi.org/medias/files/projects/sithi/law/Village%20Commune%20Safety%20Policy%20(Eng)%20-%202010.pdf.

Women's Network for Unity (WNU) documented the arrests of at least 189 sex workers in 2025, including 26 independent sex workers and 163 entertainment workers in karaoke establishments and restaurants. As in previous years, many were first arbitrarily detained at the Prey Speu Social Affairs Center or the Orkas Knhom Drug Rehabilitation Center before being sent to Daun Penh District authorities and the Department of Social Affairs in Phnom Penh prior to release.

During the same period, WNU documented 120 cases of physical violence and sexual assault (including gang rape) against sex workers and entertainment workers, committed by district security guards, landlords and shop owners, clients, intimate partners, and detention center staff. Workers faced significant barriers to obtaining justice for these rights violations. In two cases supported by WNU, women who filed complaints about client- or partner-perpetrated violence with police in Phnom Penh and Sihanoukville reported that their cases were recorded but not acted upon. Police only instructed the women to contact the police if they saw the perpetrators again, leaving them at ongoing risk of harm.

Transgender sex workers also reported compounded discrimination, marginalization, exploitation, and safety concerns. Sex workers in Siem Reap and Banteay Meanchey provinces reported an increase in public abuse, insults, and harassment, as well as a lack of protection by local authorities.

9.6 Human Trafficking & Online Scam Compounds

Human trafficking for the purpose of labor exploitation within Cambodia's scam industry continued throughout 2025. Estimates indicated that more than 150,000 people were held in such facilities, generating between US $12.5 and $19 billion per year, equivalent to up to 60% of Cambodia's GDP.[91] Monitoring groups reported continued proliferation of these sites into 2025, identifying more than 250 locations with evidence of illegal online activity.[92] While men make up the majority of those trafficked into the industry, women, girls, and boys are also affected.

Research by Amnesty International – which included interviews with 58 survivors, including 43 men and boys and 15 women and girls – found that human and child trafficking, forced labor, child labor, torture, deprivation of liberty, and slavery by organized criminal groups were playing out on a "mass scale" with "grossly inadequate" action by the Cambodian government.[93]

91 Jacob Sims (2025) "Policies and Patterns: State-Abetted Transnational Crime in Cambodia as a Global Security Threat", Humanity Research Consultancy, online: https://www.humanity-consultancy.com/publications/policies-and-patterns-state-abetted-transnational-crime-in-cambodia-as-a-global-security-threat.

92 Cyber Scam Monitor, "Going Out East: Expansion of Scam Compounds on the Cambodia–Vietnam Border", November 4, 2025, online: https://cyberscammonitor.substack.com/p/going-out-east-expansion-of-scam.

93 Amnesty International (2025) "'I was someone else's property': Slavery, human trafficking and torture in Cambodia's scamming compounds", online: https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa23/9447/2025/en/

One man reported that his captors threatened to gang rape his wife, who was held at the same compound, if he did not comply with their orders. Subsequent reporting by Amnesty documented sexual assault by compound bosses, including violations resulting in two women becoming pregnant.[94]

The International Justice Mission also identified links between scam operations and the sexual extortion of children, including the use of children's sexualized images to coerce them into engaging in sexual contact, providing additional images, or transferring money. The report also noted that women trafficked into scam compounds had been forced to produce sexual content to facilitate these harms.[95]

A 2025 analysis characterized the persistence of Cambodia's scam industry as being enabled by "endemic corruption, reliable protection by the government, and co-perpetration by party elites".[96] Although the government orchestrated a "crackdown" in July, it did not target major known compounds or politically connected elites, with some perpetrators released or potentially alerted in advance.[97]

The 2025 US Department of State Trafficking in Persons Report continued to rank Cambodia as Tier 3, stating that "there was a government pattern of human trafficking in online scam operations" with senior government officials financially benefitting from the operations, such as by privately owning the properties in which they operate.[98] It noted that Cambodia had never prosecuted any scam compound operator or owner despite extensive evidence.

In October 2025, the US and the UK imposed sanctions on 146 entities and individuals connected to the Cambodia-based Prince Group and its chairman Chen Zhi, a Cambodian national at the time, due to operating "a transnational criminal empire through online investment scams". The UK froze assets, including 19 properties, and the US indicted Chen Zhi and seized approximately US$15 billion in bitcoin.[99] The US also severed the Huione Group from the US financial system due to its role in money laundering.[100] Zhi was extradited to China in January 2026.[101]

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94 Amnesty International, "Cambodia: Growing humanitarian crisis as escaped scamming compound survivors tell of murder, rape and torture", January 27, 2026, online: https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2026/01/cambodia-growing-humanitarian-crisis-as-escaped-scamming-compound-survivors-tell-of-murder-rape-and-torture/.

95 IJM (2025) "A Potential Nexus Between Forced Scamming and the Financially-Motivated Sextortion of Children", online: https://www.ijm.org/nexus-report.

96 Jacob Sims, above n 91.

97 Coby Hobbs and Khuon Narim, "Nationwide Raids Miss Key Scam Sites, Powerful Elites, Analysts Say", CamboJA News, July 17, 2025, online: https://cambojanews.com/nationwide-raids-miss-key-scam-sites-powerful-elites-analysts-say/.

98 U.S. Department of State, "2025 Trafficking in Persons Report: Cambodia", online: https://www.state.gov/reports/2025-trafficking-in-persons-report/cambodia/.

99 Lauren Turner and Osmond Chia, "Bitcoin worth $14bn seized in US-UK crackdown on alleged scammers", October 15, 2025, online: https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c70jw436n0yo.

100 U.S. Department of the Treasury, "U.S. and U.K. Take Largest Action Ever Targeting Cybercriminal Networks in Southeast Asia", October 14, 2025, online: https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sb0278.

101 Simon Fraser, "Cambodia extradites alleged scam mastermind to China after arrest", BBC, January 8, 2026, online: https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cy4q8e88n2vo

10. Employment & Labor Rights

Shifts in the global economic landscape, together with business closures in tourism and other key sectors, undermined the livelihoods of Cambodian women. The minimum monthly wage in the garment, footwear, and travel goods sector – in which over 75% of workers are women – was set at US$208 for 2025.[102] Workers and independent unions reported that the US$4 increase from the previous year was insufficient to meet rising living costs, particularly in the context of high inflation.[103]

In August 2025, the US imposed a 19% tariff on imports from Cambodia. Although approximately 33% of Cambodian exports are destined for the US, the Asian Development Bank assessed that the tariff would have a "negligible impact" on key economic variables. However, it cautioned that the "volatile" global trade policy environment left Cambodia vulnerable to serious socio-economic risks.[104]

10.1 Access to Social Protection for Informal Economy Workers

Women working in the informal economy continued to face significant challenges and discrimination in 2025, despite the CEDAW Committee's recommendation to ensure that the rights of women in informal employment are effectively protected.[105]

The Independent Democracy of Informal Economy Association (IDEA) observed that informal economy workers – particularly street vendors – frequently experienced discrimination by local authorities and within their communities, alongside difficulties accessing social protection programs.

102 UNDP, "Retaining Women in Cambodia's Workforce After LDC Graduation", March 14, 2025, online: https://www.undp.org/cambodia/blog/retaining-women-cambodias-workforce-after-ldc-graduation#:~:text=In%202024%2C%20the%20garment%2C%20textiles,benefiting%20around%203%20million%20persons.

103 Sovann Sreypich, "Garment Workers' Minimum Wage Raised To $208 for 2025, Employees Say It's Too Little, September 19, 2024, online: https://cambojanews.com/garment-workers-minimum-wage-raised-to-208-for-2025-employees-say-its-too-little/.

104 Asian Development Bank, "Economic Impacts of the United States Tariff on Cambodia", November 2025, online: www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/1095941/adb-brief-360-us-tariff-cambodia.pdf.

105 CEDAW Committee, above n 1, para. 37(b).

The National Social Assistance Fund (NSAF), established in 2022, is intended to support at-risk populations through programs such as cash transfers, healthcare services, and subsidies aimed at reducing poverty and improving living conditions. In practice, access to NSAF benefits is constrained by strict enrolment requirements. Applicants must hold a Cambodian national identification card and a valid Equity Card classified as "Poor Level 1" or "Poor Level 2" to register for support. These requirements pose a significant barrier for women in the informal economy, who often lack the required documentation or are denied recognition by authorities. In July 2025, Prime Minister Hun Manet also rejected a proposal to extend the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) to people aged 60 and above, citing budget constraints.[106]

Waste Picker Denied Social Protection, Killed While Seeking Assistance

A 61-year-old etchai, or waste picker, in Phnom Penh experienced ongoing discrimination by her community and local officials. Despite having multiple dependents and ongoing health concerns, authorities repeatedly arbitrarily denied her requests for a residence certificate, national identification card, and NSSF registration. In January 2025, during Chinese New Year celebrations, she waited outside the home of a local tycoon, seeking a customary gift of food and cash. She was among four people who died upon being trampled in the crowd.[107]

Elderly Street Vendor Injured, Left Without Support

A 72-year-old street vendor who had sold fruit for 15 years was no longer able to work after sustaining serious leg and shoulder injuries in a traffic accident in 2025. Because of her age, she was not eligible to enroll in the NSSF, leaving her without access to government assistance or healthcare. The absence of social protection – combined with discrimination by healthcare providers, lost livelihood, and chronic healthcare needs – significantly affected her quality of life.

Women in the informal sector have called for expanded social protection, including health insurance, social security, poverty reduction programs, and scholarships for their children. They have also urged the government and relevant authorities to improve access to documentation, such as identification cards, birth certificates, and residence certificates, particularly for those without stable housing.

106 Chhorn Raksmey, "Call to Extend NSSF to Elderly Turned Down by PM", Kiripost, June 3, 2025, online: https://kiripost.com/stories/call-to-extend-nssf-to-elderly-turned-down-by-pm.

107 "Lunar New Year giveaway of cash and food leaves 4 dead in Cambodian capital as crowd surges", Associated Press, January 23, 2025, online: https://apnews.com/article/cambodia-crowd-crush-killed-sok-kong-facdf0652f008fa1695283aae9f49078.

10.2 Workplace Discrimination

Cambodia has not enacted comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation – despite the CEDAW Committee's recommendation to do so –[108] creating an enabling environment for discriminatory hiring practices, unfair dismissals, and workplace harassment.

Women, particularly women with disabilities and LGBTIQ+ people, reported disproportionate levels of physical and verbal abuse in garment factories and the entertainment sector. Pregnant workers and workers with disabilities also experienced discriminatory hiring practices and arbitrary dismissal, enabled by the ongoing misuse of fixed-duration contracts. Discriminatory social attitudes about gender and sexual diversity also remained prevalent, with many LGBTIQ+ people continuing to experience discrimination in the formal labor market in 2025.

Access to financial resources and inclusive banking services also remained constrained, creating additional barriers for LGBTIQ+ people seeking to start or expand businesses. As a result, some reported being pushed into informal, unsafe, or precarious forms of work, in which exploitation is more common and legal and social protections are limited.

10.3 Labor Rights of Sex Workers & Entertainment Workers

Sex workers and entertainment workers reported persistent livelihood insecurity throughout the year, including job loss, rising living costs and debt, housing instability, and pressure to migrate. Business closures in the tourism sector continued to undermine livelihoods. As in previous years, weak enforcement of labor standards and exploitative working conditions were systemic and normalized across the entertainment sector, undermining workers' ability to move to establishments offering better working conditions.

WNU visited 80 entertainment establishments in April and May 2025 across Phnom Penh, Kandal, Siem Reap, and Banteay Meanchey provinces. The sites employed approximately 1,882 workers and included 26 karaoke bars, 30 restaurants, 16 combined karaoke-restaurant venues, as well as four pubs, two clubs, and two beer gardens. WNU found that many workers were without employment contracts, benefits, and labor rights protections. Monthly wages often ranged from just US $40 to $100 per month, with unpaid overtime common and workers heavily reliant on client tips.

COWS also conducted small-scale research in 2025 on the experiences of women and girls working in karaoke bars and restaurants.[109] Among 165 people surveyed, COWS identified nine girls under the age of 18 working in entertainment establishments. Many women reported harassment and humiliation, particularly by patrons. Both women and men reported limited access to accurate information about sexual and reproductive health and gender-based violence, often relying primarily on social media for information. A significant number indicated limited awareness or use of condoms or contraception, citing shyness, concerns about provider attitudes, and confidentiality as barriers to accessing healthcare services.

108 CEDAW Committee, above n 1, para. 9(a).

109 Information provided by COWS.

11.

Healthcare

11.1 Sexual & Reproductive Health & Rights

0%
Women among provincial hospital directors

8%
Women among national hospital directors

23%
Women among general practitioners

22%
Women among specialist doctors

26%
Women among health center directors

Cambodia still has progress to make towards ensuring all Cambodian women, girls, and non-binary people have access to sexual and reproductive health services and information, as recommended by the CEDAW Committee.[110] Gaps remain across education, service availability, and public awareness, particularly among some marginalized groups. Women also remained underrepresented in the health sector as of 2024, accounting for just 23% of general practitioners, 22% of specialist doctors, 41% of nurses with bachelor's degrees, 8% of national hospital directors, 0% of provincial hospital directors, and 26% of health center directors.[111]

Ensuring access to Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) for children and youth remained an ongoing effort in 2025. Through its work in Siem Reap and Kampot provinces, RHAC identified that standardized delivery of CSE remains limited. Teachers were often reluctant to teach certain essential components of the curriculum due to prevailing cultural norms and stigma, undermining young people's access to accurate and complete information.

Cambodia continued efforts to reduce unsafe abortions in line with the 1997 Law on Abortion. However, understanding that abortion is legal and confidence in accessing these services also remained limited. Research by both RHAC and Klahaan identified persistent barriers to safe abortion services. In a rapid assessment conducted by RHAC in Siem Reap province, only 47% of the 171 women interviewed were aware that abortion is legal in Cambodia.[112] Low visibility of abortion services in public facilities remained a barrier, particularly for migrant women and women with low educational attainment. Nearly half of the participants reported discomfort discussing abortion, with social stigma and expectations of partners' involvement in decision-making restricting women's bodily autonomy.

110 CEDAW Committee, above n 1, para. 39(a)-(b).

111 Ministry of Women's Affairs, Ministry of Health, and National Institute of Statistics, "Policy Brief: Promote women roles in leadership and governance in the health sector", June 2024, online: https://www.nis.gov.kh/nis/Policy_Brief/G5_D2P_Policy_Brief_Eng%2005_10_2024.pdf.

112 RHAC (2025) "Rapid Assessment for Increase Access to Safe Abortion Services Project, Implemented by RHAC in Kralanh OD, Siem Reap Province".

Klahaan's research, based on 15 interviews and an online survey of 122 participants, similarly found that access to safe, affordable, and quality abortion services remains uneven.[113] Services were reportedly less accessible in rural areas, and some providers reportedly required a husband's signature, creating an arbitrary barrier to healthcare. The study further identified that limited public awareness of abortion's legality, combined with social norms linking abortion to shame and stigma – often associated with religion, spirituality, virginity culture, and other traditional norms – continued to undermine women's and girls' access to services. Some women reportedly travelled far from their home communities to maintain privacy.

Perceptions and tolerance of abortions varied by location, age, gender, and the perceived reason for seeking an abortion. Health risks to the woman were more widely accepted as a justification for abortion than circumstances such as not wanting to have a child at a particular time. More than half of respondents believed that unsafe abortions remain widespread, particularly among young and unmarried women. Klahaan recommended normalizing abortion as a reproductive right through increased public education, enhanced access to information, and increased availability of quality, safe abortion services.

Cambodia undertook some efforts to disseminate public messaging on safe abortion services. In June 2025, the Minister of Information, Neth Pheaktra, emphasized the role of the media in widespread information sharing on safe abortions and family planning during a workshop aimed at guiding stakeholders to share information with youth about safe abortion practices and prevent social stigma and discrimination within communities.[114]

Finally, Cambodia made some progress towards the CEDAW Committee's recommendation to ensure access to voluntary and confidential counselling, testing, and treatment for HIV.[115] Through an HIV/AIDS prevention project implemented in 13 northern provinces, RHAC documented 8,816 PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) users, 51,035 HIV tests administered, and 503 new HIV cases as of August 2025.

113 Klahaan (2025) "My Body, My Choice: A Short Study of Societal Perceptions on Abortion and Women's Reproductive Rights in Cambodia", online: https://56dd158a-1ed4-4131-9020-9d0718381f08.filesusr.com/ugd/091c7d_b53c5e3f17fc459283e22a9c4ea1c5cf.pdf.

114 "The media's crucial role in safe abortion education stressed", Khmer Times, June 5, 2025, online: https://www.khmertimeskh.com/501695457/the-medias-crucial-role-in-safe-abortion-education-stressed/.

115 CEDAW Committee, above n 1, para. 39(a).

11.2 Psychological Healthcare

Wellbeing Advancement Organization (WELL) researched access to free psychological and emotional wellbeing support in Phnom Penh for women who have experienced gender-based violence, with a focus on factory workers, domestic workers, and street vendors.[116] The study drew on interviews with 20 women who had experienced violence, an online survey of 104 members of the public, a focus group discussion with eight women, and interviews with five civil society organization leaders.

The research found that the availability of free psychological health and psychosocial support services has increased in recent years, provided by both government and civil society actors. Available services included individual counselling, group therapy, peer support groups, hotlines (such as Hotline 1280), and mobile applications (including the GBV Safe App). However, service availability remained concentrated in central urban areas and was often dependent on short-term or inconsistent funding for civil society programs.

Awareness and uptake of services remained low among the public and among women who had experienced gender-based violence. Few participants were aware of existing hotlines or mobile applications, and even fewer had used them. Instead, women most often relied on self-coping strategies, followed by informal sources of emotional support such as friends, union or association leaders, and online spiritual teachings. Barriers to accessing formal services included cultural stigma associated with help-seeking, fear of judgment, concerns about confidentiality, fear of retaliation by perpetrators, financial constraints such as loss of income from taking time off work, and practical barriers related to distance and transportation.

Women who accessed professional counselling or trauma-informed workshops reported high levels of satisfaction, particularly valuing emotional support and non-judgmental service providers. Peer support groups were also positively received. Some participants reported negative experiences where service providers lacked relevant skills, failed to provide follow-up, or offered unhelpful advice.

Overall, the study found that women value services where providers listen attentively, offer encouragement and understanding, and ensure confidentiality. Community-based services that operate outside standard working hours – such as evenings or Sundays – and that integrate emotional wellbeing support with practical assistance, including vocational training, savings groups, childcare, laundry services, transport support, or social activities, were particularly valued. Such integrated approaches were found to reduce stigma and improve accessibility. The study concluded that efforts to strengthen access to psychological healthcare should prioritize outreach, accessibility, service quality, and integration with broader community-based wellbeing initiatives.

116 Information provided by WELL.

12.

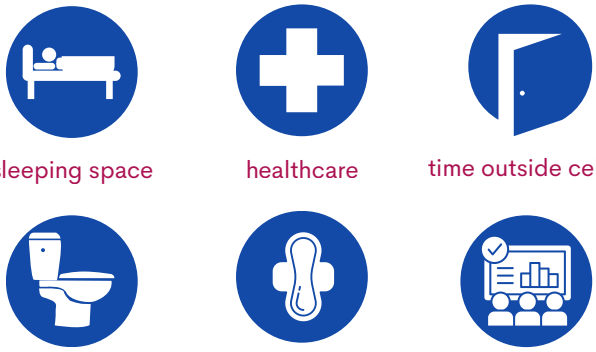
Women & Girls in Detention

Cambodia's prison population continued to grow rapidly, despite the CEDAW Committee's recommendation that Cambodia take urgent measures to reduce the number of women in detention by implementing alternatives to detention.[117]

LICADHO monitors 19 of Cambodia's 29 prisons and correctional facilities. As of January 2026, a total of 3,639 women and 142 minor girls were detained in the facilities monitored by LICADHO, out of a total population of 52,816 people. This marked a 26% increase in the number of women and girls in detention compared to the previous year, and a 67% increase since January 2024. Notably, 71% of the women detained at the start of 2026 had either not yet been convicted or had not yet received a final judgement, underscoring the extensive overuse of pre-trial detention.

Severe overcrowding remained a central concern, undermining dignified conditions and access to basic services. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Cambodia raised "serious concerns" about corruption within prisons and reported that overcrowding has resulted in insufficient access to sleeping space, healthcare, time outside cells, toilets, menstrual pads, and vocational training spaces.[118]

Overcrowding in prison affects access to:



117 CEDAW Committee, above n 1, para. 45(a).

118 "Role and achievements of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in assisting the Government and people of Cambodia in the promotion and protection of human rights", A/HRC/60/87, September 12, 2025, para. 68-74, online: https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/hrcouncil/sessions-regular/session60/advance-version/a-hrc-60-87-aev.pdf.

All 19 prisons monitored by LICADHO were operating above their official capacity as of January 2026. Seven facilities exceeded 400% capacity. Overcrowding was further exacerbated by two large-scale transfers of people from Oddar Meanchey prison to Siem Reap prison during periods of intensified border conflict in July and December 2025. Overcrowding also resulted in numerous other prison transfers across the country throughout 2025, often relocating people far from their families and lawyers.

Overcrowding disproportionately exacerbated poor conditions for at-risk groups, including pregnant people, children detained with their mothers, older persons, and people with disabilities. From January to December 2025, LICADHO documented the detention of at least 99 pregnant people and 240 minor girls. A total of 159 young children (88 girls and 71 boys) were also living with their mothers in prison. Women reported a lack of private spaces for breastfeeding and bathing children. In June 2025, LICADHO published an article featuring anonymous testimonies from two mothers, including one woman who described giving birth while shackled to a hospital bed.[119]

A sub-decree was subsequently signed into law to implement the NSAF's "Pregnancy and Children Under Two" subsidy program. However, systemic implementation of alternatives to detention and a significant reduction in the use of pre-trial detention remain urgently needed to address the ongoing humanitarian crisis facing women and girls within Cambodia's prisons.

7 out of the 19 prisons monitored by LICADHO were at more than 400% capacity

119 LICADHO, "No Place to Play: Childhoods Spent Behind Bars", June 1, 2025, online: https://www.licadho-cambodia.org/articles/20250601/199/index.html.

Recommendations

Wide-ranging, ongoing actions are required to ensure the full promotion, protection, and enjoyment of the rights of women, girls, and non-binary people in accordance with the CEDAW Convention and the Committee's Concluding Observations. However, the following priority actions are recommended to the Cambodian government:

1. Resource allocation:
Allocate sufficient, dedicated, and long-term human, technical, and financial resources from the national budget to effectively implement Cambodia's gender equity action plans, policies, and commitments.

2. Gender-based violence protection and prevention:
2.1 Urgently and comprehensively overhaul the legal framework – especially the Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and the Protection of Victims – to clearly define and criminalize all acts of domestic violence.

2.2 Strengthen gender-based violence prevention programs and ensure comprehensive access to services, including effective courts, protection orders and administrative decisions, legal representation, safe shelters, physical and psychological healthcare, financial aid, and training and livelihood opportunities.

2.3 Decriminalize sex work and repeal all punitive and discriminatory laws, policies and actions affecting sex workers; ensure that national laws differentiate between sex work and human trafficking and that anti-trafficking initiatives do not impinge on the rights of people in sex work.

3. Women human rights defenders and civic space:
End all forms of harassment, violence, and intimidation against women political opponents, journalists, land, labor and environmental activists, other women human rights defenders, and independent media outlets. Immediately release them from prison, drop all charges against them, and reinstate revoked media licenses.

4. Women's political participation:
Ensure women's equal representation in politics and law-making at the national, provincial, district, and commune levels through temporary special measures. These should include targeted positive action, quota systems, and amendments to electoral laws to require gender-balanced party lists, including mandatory alternation of women and men candidates and women in first-ranked positions for at least 50% of each party's lists.

5. Gender-responsive crisis response:
Systematically identify and address the needs of women, girls, and non-binary people in situations of crisis and displacement, including those arising from conflict, migration, climate change, and economic shocks. Ensure access to targeted emergency assistance, essential services, relevant employment and livelihood opportunities, effective gender-based violence protection mechanisms, and sustained debt relief.

Progress towards Implementation of 2019 CEDAW Concluding Observations

COB Para: 6

		Rating
Topic	Sustainable Development Goals	2020
Summary	Recognize women as the driving force of sustainable development	2021
		2022
2025 progress	Implemented.	2023/2024
		2025

COB Para: 9a

		Rating
Topic	Legislative framework	2020
Summary	Definition of discrimination in law	2021
		2022
2025 progress	Not implemented.	2023/2024
		2025

COB Para: 9b

		Rating
Topic	Legislative framework	2020
Summary	Systemic gender impact assessments of laws	2021
		2022
2025 progress	Not implemented.	2023/2024
		2025

COB Para: 11a

		Rating
Topic	Access to justice	2020
Summary	Legal aid with long-term State funding; regional appeals courts	2021
		2022
2025 progress	Some legal aid is available. However, it is not sufficient, long-term, or equally accessible. No new appeal courts have been established since 2020.	2023/2024
		2025

COB Para: 11b

Topic	Access to justice
Summary	End stigma in response to women and girls reporting rights violations
2025 progress	Some public awareness efforts have been implemented, but stigma persists at all levels of society and institutions, including law enforcement and the judiciary. There is no support for reporting State-perpetrated violence.

Rating
2020
2021
2022
2023/2024
2025

COB Para: 11c

Topic	Access to justice
Summary	Disseminate remedy information
2025 progress	Some public information has been disseminated, but access to judicial remedies remains insufficient.

Rating
2020
2021
2022
2023/2024
2025

COB Para: 11d

Topic	Access to justice
Summary	Gender-responsive justice system; more women and training on CEDAW
2025 progress	Some steps have been taken, such as training. However, the judicial system is not sufficiently gender-responsive, survivor-centered, trauma-informed, or child-friendly. Women remain underrepresented among judicial personnel.

Rating
2020
2021
2022
2023/2024
2025

COB Para: 11e

Topic	Access to justice
Summary	Impartial, independent judiciary; investigation and punishment of cases, including domestic violence and rape
2025 progress	The judicial system is not impartial or independent. Cambodia ranked 141 out of 143 countries globally in the World Justice Project's 2025 Rule of Law Index.[1] Domestic and sexual violence cases are not consistently investigated or prosecuted.

Rating
2020
2021
2022
2023/2024
2025

1 World Justice Project, "2025 Rule of Law Index", online: https://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/country/2025/Cambodia/.

COB Para: 11f

Topic	Access to justice
Summary	Combat corruption and hold officials accountable to restore trust in the judiciary
2025 progress	Officials are not held accountable for corruption. Cambodia ranked 163 out of 182 countries in Transparency International's 2025 Corruption Perceptions Index.[2]

Rating
2020
2021
2022
2023/2024
2025

COB Para: 13a

Topic	Conflict
Summary	Redress to Khmer Rouge GBV victims
2025 progress	Redress and reparations were not comprehensive. The ECCC has entered a residual legacy-focused phase since rendering its last judgement in 2022. Survivors continue to need greater access to support services, particularly in older age.[3]

Rating
2020
2021
2022
2023/2024
2025

COB Para: 13b

Topic	Conflict
Summary	National Action Plan on Security Council Resolution 1325
2025 progress	Cambodia has committed to and implemented some preliminary steps towards developing a National Action Plan. However, it had not yet been developed.

Rating
2020
2021
2022
2023/2024
2025

2 Transparency International 'Corruption Perceptions Index' 2025 https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2025/index/khm

3 Women Peace Makers (2025) "Voice of Legacy: Amplifying Minority Survivors' Perspectives in Cambodia's Transitional Justice and Future Atrocity Prevention Effort", online: https://wpmcambodia.org/project/voice-of-legacy-amplifying-minority-survivors-perspectives-in-cambodias-transitional-justice-and-future-atrocity-prevention-effort/.

COB Para: 13c

		Rating
Topic	Conflict	**2020**
Summary	Women involved at all stages of peacebuilding	**2021**
2025 progress	Cambodia has shown leadership advancing the WPS agenda in ASEAN and regarding women's peacekeeping participation. However, women are not involved at all peacebuilding stages and remain significantly underrepresented in leadership.	**2022**
		2023/2024
		2025

COB Para: 15a

		Rating
Topic	National machinery	**2020**
Summary	Autonomy and resources for the Cambodian National Council for Women (CNCW)	**2021**
2025 progress	No progress.	**2022**
		2023/2024
		2025

COB Para: 15b

		Rating
Topic	National machinery	**2020**
Summary	National budget for full gender policy implementation	**2021**
2025 progress	Resources and funding remain limited, inadequate, and are not clearly allocated.	**2022**
		2023/2024
		2025

COB Para: 15c

		Rating
Topic	National machinery	**2020**
Summary	Civil society participation in formulating national gender policy	**2021**
2025 progress	A national gender policy has not been established. The most recent known consultation with civil society was in 2021/2022.	**2022**
		2023/2024
		2025

COB Para: 15d

Topic	National machinery
Summary	Effective M&E for gender policies and ministry activities
2025 progress	A comprehensive framework is not in place. National strategies and action plans contain fragmented approaches.

Rating
2020
2021
2022
2023/2024
2025

COB Para: 17

Topic	National Human Rights Institution
Summary	Establish a National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) per Paris Principles
2025 progress	An NHRI was proposed by the government in previous years, but there is no mechanism to ensure it upholds the Paris Principles. The political and human rights environment would prevent any institution from being independent or effective.

Rating
2020
2021
2022
2023/2024
2025

COB Para: 19

Topic	Civil Society
Summary	Guarantee freedom of expression, assembly, and association
2025 progress	Cambodia continued to violate the fundamental freedoms of women human rights defenders, trade unionists, land and environmental activists, and political opponents.

Rating
2020
2021
2022
2023/2024
2025

COB Para: 21a

Topic	Temporary Special Measures
Summary	Reallocate land for women's equal ownership
2025 progress	Temporary special measures have not been adopted. A 2025 report suggests the proportion of Cambodian women and men with ownership or secure rights over their agricultural land is approximately equal.[4] However, land tenure security in Cambodia remains weak and uneven, and women continue to experience land grabbing and forced evictions.

Rating
2020
2021
2022
2023/2024
2025

4 National Institute of Statistics, above n 66.

COB Para: 21b

		Rating
Topic	Temporary Special Measures	2020
Summary	Tenure security in informal settlements and adequate housing for women	2021
		2022
2025 progress	Temporary special measures have not been adopted. Land grabbing, forced evictions and resettlement at inadequate sites continue to undermine access to tenure security and adequate housing.	2023/2024
		2025

COB Para: 21c

		Rating
Topic	Temporary Special Measures	2020
Summary	Improved economic opportunities in rural areas with quotas	2021
		2022
2025 progress	Not implemented.	2023/2024
		2025

COB Para: 23a

		Rating
Topic	Stereotypes	2020
Summary	Comprehensive strategy to eliminate stereotypes and patriarchal attitudes	2021
		2022
2025 progress	Not implemented.	2023/2024
		2025

COB Para: 23b

		Rating
Topic	Stereotypes	2020
Summary	Alternative ways to teach gender without referencing the Chbab Srey	2021
		2022
2025 progress	No new efforts. The Chbab Srey is still taught in varying ways in schools.	2023/2024
		2025

COB Para: 23c

		Rating
Topic	Stereotypes	**2020**
Summary	Promote positive attitudes toward gender equality, particularly among youth	**2021**
		2022
2025 progress	Some social media and other public campaigns have been adopted that promote equality in some contexts	**2023/2024**
		2025

COB Para: 25a

		Rating
Topic	GBV	**2020**
Summary	Assess impact of measures and address root cause	**2021**
		2022
2025 progress	No known systematic assessment of the impact of measures. Some initiatives to prevent gender-based violence, change harmful attitudes, and address root causes have been adopted, but comprehensive strategies with sustained implementation remain limited.	**2023/2024**
		2025

COB Para: 25b

		Rating
Topic	GBV	**2020**
Summary	Comprehensive review of the Domestic Violence Law; amend the law to criminalize all domestic violence, facilitate protection orders and ensure effective remedies	**2021**
		2022
2025 progress	The Ministry of Women's Affairs developed a roadmap to review the Domestic Violence Law. However, it has not been made public and the process appears indefinitely stalled.	**2023/2024**
		2025

COB Para: 25c

		Rating
Topic	GBV	**2020**
Summary	Improve essential services	**2021**
		2022
2025 progress	Access to quality, holistic services remains limited and insufficient.	**2023/2024**
		2025

COB Para: 25d

		Rating
Topic	GBV	**2020**
Summary	Systematically collect disaggregated GBV data	**2021**
		2022
2025 progress	Disaggregated data is not regularly, systematically collected or published. However, the government has indicated potential willingness to do so.	**2023/2024**
		2025

COB Para: 27a

		Rating
Topic	Trafficking	**2020**
Summary	Address root causes of trafficking, lack of economic opportunity	**2021**
		2022
2025 progress	Not implemented. Internal displacement and the mass return of Cambodian migrants from Thailand, with limited livelihood opportunities in Cambodia, has likely increased risks of human trafficking and unsafe migration.	**2023/2024**
		2025

COB Para: 27b

		Rating
Topic	Trafficking	**2020**
Summary	Improve identification and referrals for victims	**2021**
		2022
2025 progress	The government has systematically refused to identify victims trafficked into the scam industry. There are no effective identification mechanisms or referrals to appropriate services.	**2023/2024**
		2025

COB Para: 27c

		Rating
Topic	Trafficking	**2020**
Summary	Rehabilitation and social reintegration of victims	**2021**
		2022
2025 progress	Access to rehabilitation and services remains limited, insufficient, and inaccessible, especially for people exploited in the scam industry.	**2023/2024**
		2025

COB Para: 27d

Topic	Trafficking
Summary	Protect women from liability, witness protection
2025 progress	No protections are available for people trafficked into the scam industry, who are often instead penalized as irregular migrants and subjected to immigration detention.

Rating
2020
2021
2022
2023/2024
2025

COB Para: 27e

Topic	Trafficking
Summary	Punish traffickers
2025 progress	Complicity in the scam industry enables traffickers to enjoy impunity. The government has not reported prosecuting any labor trafficking since 2022.[5]

Rating
2020
2021
2022
2023/2024
2025

COB Para: 27f

Topic	Trafficking
Summary	End misuse anti-trafficking law against non-traffickers
2025 progress	Anti-human trafficking legislation and initiatives continued to improperly target sex workers.

Rating
2020
2021
2022
2023/2024
2025

COB Para: 29a

Topic	Prostitution
Summary	Revise law to decriminalize sex work
2025 progress	Not implemented.

Rating
2020
2021
2022
2023/2024
2025

5 U.S. Department of State, above n 97.

COB Para: 29b

		Rating
Topic	Prostitution	2020
Summary	Punish exploiters	2021
		2022
2025 progress	Some efforts were consistent with previous years. However, sex workers rather than exploiters continued to face arrests and detention.	2023/2024
		2025

COB Para: 29c

		Rating
Topic	Prostitution	2020
Summary	Address root causes such as poverty, demand, inequality	2021
		2022
2025 progress	Some efforts were consistent with previous years.	2023/2024
		2025

COB Para: 29d

		Rating
Topic	Prostitution	2020
Summary	Provide assistance and rehabilitation	2021
		2022
2025 progress	Some rehabilitation and reintegration programs are implemented. Sex workers' access to labor rights, employment benefits, and social protection remained absent or insufficient.	2023/2024
		2025

COB Para: 31a

		Rating
Topic	Political & public life	2020
Summary	Adopt temporary special measures, such as quotas	2021
		2022
2025 progress	Not implemented.	2023/2024
		2025

COB Para: 31b

		Rating
Topic	Political & public life	**2020**
Summary	Create an enabling environment for women's participation	**2021**
		2022
2025 progress	Cambodia continues to violate the rights of women political opponents. Women and other marginalized groups remain underrepresented at all levels of governance.	**2023/2024**
		2025

COB Para: 33a

		Rating
Topic	Nationality	**2020**
Summary	Access to nationality, education, employment, health care and housing for ethnic minority women, particularly Khmer Krom women and those of Vietnamese origin	**2021**
		2022
2025 progress	Access to nationality and services for ethnic minority women remain severely inadequate. Cambodia amended the legal framework in 2025 to enable Cambodian citizenship to be arbitrarily revoked without adequate protections against statelessness.	**2023/2024**
		2025

COB Para: 33b

		Rating
Topic	Nationality	**2020**
Summary	Facilitate identity documentation and birth registration without confiscating documents	**2021**
		2022
2025 progress	It is yet to be determined whether the 2023 Law on Civil Registration, Vital Statistics and Identification (CRVSID Law) will improve access to documentation and registration in practice, particularly for women and girls of Vietnamese origin.	**2023/2024**
		2025

COB Para: 33c

		Rating
Topic	Nationality	**2020**
Summary	Ratify the two conventions on statelessness	**2021**
		2022
2025 progress	Not implemented.	**2023/2024**
		2025

COB Para: 35a

		Rating
Topic	Education	**2020**
Summary	Increase secondary school access; eliminate barriers to girls	**2021**
		2022
2025 progress	Some ongoing efforts. Education was disrupted for hundreds of thousands of students due to the Cambodia-Thailand border conflict.	**2023/2024**
		2025

COB Para: 35b

		Rating
Topic	Education	**2020**
Summary	Encourage girls in non-traditional fields of study, such as STEM	**2021**
		2022
2025 progress	Some steps have been taken to encourage participation.	**2023/2024**
		2025

COB Para: 35c

		Rating
Topic	Education	**2020**
Summary	Comprehensive gender training for teachers	**2021**
		2022
2025 progress	While some training has been implemented, it is insufficient to eliminate gender bias or entrenched stereotypes.	**2023/2024**
		2025

COB Para: 37a

		Rating
Topic	Employment	**2020**
Summary	Workers on fixed-duration contracts enjoy freedom of association and employment benefits; enforce 2-year cap on fixed-duration contracts	**2021**
		2022
2025 progress	Fixed-duration contracts remain common, caps are not enforced, and they are systemically misused used to undermine access to maternity leave and the rights to freedom of association and assembly.	**2023/2024**
		2025

COB Para: 37b

Topic	Employment
Summary	Protect rights in informal employment sector, include domestic workers in Labor Law
2025 progress	Domestic and other informal economy workers are not explicitly protected under the Labor Law. Access to social protection is uneven among informal economy workers. Women in the entertainment sector often work without contracts and employment benefits.

Rating
2020
2021
2022
2023/2024
2025

COB Para: 37c

Topic	Employment
Summary	Promote sharing of parental duties, paternity leave
2025 progress	Women continue to complete the majority of domestic and family responsibilities, with limited access to childcare facilities. Cambodian law still does not provide for a specific statutory entitlement to paid paternity leave.

Rating
2020
2021
2022
2023/2024
2025

COB Para: 37d

Topic	Employment
Summary	Adopt comprehensive legislation on sexual harassment with remedies
2025 progress	Not implemented.

Rating
2020
2021
2022
2023/2024
2025

COB Para: 37e

Topic	Employment
Summary	Ensure equal pay for work of equal value per ILO C100
2025 progress	The principle of equal pay for work of equal value is not adequately enshrined in law. The existing law on equal pay for equal work is not consistently enforced. A minimum wage only applies in the garment, footwear, and travel goods sector.

Rating
2020
2021
2022
2023/2024
2025

COB Para: 37f

Topic	Employment
Summary	Protect migrant workers abroad
2025 progress	Senate President Hun Sen called on Cambodians in Thailand to return home in June 2025, alongside government guarantees of jobs and social support. Support for returned migrants was limited, increasing economic vulnerability and pressure to remigrate through unsafe channels.

Rating
2020
2021
2022
2023/2024
2025

COB Para: 37g

Topic	Employment
Summary	Ratify ILO Conventions 183, 189, 190
2025 progress	Not implemented.

Rating
2020
2021
2022
2023/2024
2025

COB Para: 39a

Topic	Health
Summary	Universal access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services
2025 progress	Efforts are ongoing to ensure equal access to sexual and reproductive healthcare, including HIV-related services and safe abortion services, although access is uneven.

Rating
2020
2021
2022
2023/2024
2025

COB Para: 39b

Topic	Health
Summary	Combat stigma against abortion and contraceptive use, including through CSE
2025 progress	Stigma against women and girls who use safe abortion services remains significant. Measures to combat stigma, including CSE, remained inconsistent.

Rating
2020
2021
2022
2023/2024
2025

COB Para: 39c

		Rating
Topic	Health	**2020**
Summary	Address women's nutritional needs in strategies	**2021**
		2022
2025 progress	Cambodia continued to address women's nutritional needs in strategies. In 2025, the Ministry of Health launched the "Fast Track Road Map for Improving Nutrition 2023 – 2030".	**2023/2024**
		2025

COB Para: 39d

		Rating
Topic	Health	**2020**
Summary	Prevent and address cervical cancer	**2021**
		2022
2025 progress	Cambodia continued efforts to prevent and address cervical cancer through HPV vaccines and screening. However, access remained uneven.	**2023/2024**
		2025

COB Para: 41

		Rating
Topic	Rural women	**2020**
Summary	Regulate microfinancing institutions and improve access to low-interest loans; support large women-owned businesses	**2021**
		2022
2025 progress	The microfinance sector is not effectively regulated, and relies on predatory, exploitative practices. The Cambodian government and international investors have not provided any meaningful relief or remedy.	**2023/2024**
		2025

COB Para: 43a

		Rating
Topic	Climate change	**2020**
Summary	Include women in policy formation and implementation	**2021**
		2022
2025 progress	Inclusion of women's and girls' voices in policy formation is limited. Women environmental activists who have expressed opinions on the impacts of climate change have faced harassment and imprisonment.	**2023/2024**
		2025

COB Para: 43b

		Rating
Topic	Climate change	2020
Summary	Include explicit gender perspective in policies	2021
		2022
2025 progress	Gender perspectives are included in some policies. However, some lack clearly defined activities, resources, and the detailed guidance necessary for implementation of gender perspectives, particularly at sub-national levels.	2023/2024
		2025

COB Para: 45a

		Rating
Topic	Women in detention	2020
Summary	Reduce number of women in detention via alternatives to detention	2021
		2022
2025 progress	The prison population has continued to increase at unprecedented rates; the number of women and girls detained in the prisons monitored by LICADHO increased by 26% in 2025, and by 67% since January 2024. Alternatives to detention are not adequately considered or applied.	2023/2024
		2025

COB Para: 45b

		Rating
Topic	Women in detention	2020
Summary	Address root causes, and account for effect on children of sentencing	2021
		2022
2025 progress	Not implemented.	2023/2024
		2025

COB Para: 45c

		Rating
Topic	Women in detention	2020
Summary	Improve conditions per Bangkok rules and Nelson Mandela rules; reduce overcrowding	2021
		2022
2025 progress	Prisons remain severely overcrowded, with nearly all facilities exceeding official capacity rates. Living conditions and access to services remain inadequate.	2023/2024
		2025

COB Para: 47a

Topic	Surrogacy	Rating
Summary	Repeal October 2016 decision to require women who act as surrogates to raise children as their own	2020 2021 2022
2025 progress	Not implemented.	2023/2024 2025

COB Para: 47b

Topic	Surrogacy	Rating
Summary	Address the root cause by improving income opportunities	2020 2021 2022
2025 progress	Not implemented.	2023/2024 2025

COB Para: 47c

Topic	Surrogacy	Rating
Summary	Ensure laws, policies address power imbalance of women who act as surrogates	2020 2021 2022
2025 progress	Not implemented.	2023/2024 2025

COB Para: 47d

Topic	Surrogacy	Rating
Summary	Draft law should not criminalize women who act as surrogates	2020 2021 2022
2025 progress	The draft law has not been finalized. Previous versions of the draft continued to criminalize women who act as surrogates	2023/2024 2025

COB Para: 49a

		Rating
Topic	Marriage	**2020**
Summary	Targeted measures to reduce child marriage rates	**2021**
		2022
2025 progress	Some targeted measures have been implemented. Cambodia indicated development of a national action plan on preventing early marriage and teenage pregnancy in Cambodia (2025–2030).	**2023/2024**
		2025

COB Para: 49a

		Rating
Topic	Marriage	**2020**
Summary	Repeal Article 950 of the Civil Code	**2021**
		2022
2025 progress	Not implemented.	**2023/2024**
		2025

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 32 local member CSOs. Working with a wider network of 30 additional partner organizations, NGO-CEDAW gives voice to otherwise underrepresented groups of women and LGBTIQ+ communities.

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

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