



COUNTRY BRIEF

ACCELERATING GENDER-RESPONSIVE CLIMATE ACTION THROUGH EMPOWERED CSOs

Capacity Needs Assessment in Cambodia

Photo: Iryna Butuzova.

OVERVIEW OF CURRENT POLICIES

KEY GENDER LEGISLATIONS AND ACTION PLANS

- > **Cambodian Gender Assessments** are periodic assessments done every five years (2004, 2008, 2014, 2018) in consultation with key stakeholders to provide a comprehensive analytical overview of gender in all sectors. These assessments then form the basis for mainstreaming gender in line ministries, for gender policy and planning, and serve as an important input to Neary Rattanak.
- > **National Policy on Gender Equality** (forthcoming) is in the pipeline and it provides a roadmap to achieve gender equality in line with the sustainable development goals (SDGs).
- > **Neary Rattanak** is a Five-Year Gender Strategic Plan led by the Ministry of Women's Affairs. The fifth plan is going on since the time these plans started in 1999 (1999-2003; 2004-2008; 2009-2013; 2014-2018; 2019-2023). It also stems from the Rectangular Strategy, which is the master framework for national strategic development. The current Neary Rattanak aims at gender mainstreaming in policies, strategic plans and programmes across sectors, and all spatial and planning levels in areas of priority areas of economy, education, health, legal protection, governance and climate change.



Photo: Kevin Standage.



THE CONSTITUTION OF KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA 1993, in its Article 31, states, "The Kingdom of Cambodia

recognizes and respects human rights as enshrined in the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human rights and all the treaties and conventions related to human rights, women's rights and children's rights."
The constitution provides the basis for gender equality in policies, legislation and programmes.

KEY FRAMEWORKS AND STRATEGIES FOR CLIMATE CHANGE AND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

- > **Climate Change Strategic Plan for Gender and Climate Change 2013-2023** - This 10-year strategic plan is made to ensure gender perspectives and human rights-based approaches are used in climate change response planning and action in Cambodia.
- > **Master Plan on Gender and Climate Change 2018-2030** aims to strengthen gender-responsive policy/strategy and effective coordination between the Ministry of Women's Affairs and sector ministries, civil society and private sector; strengthen gender-responsive institutional capacity; demonstrate the benefits from gender-responsive climate action through pilots; and enhance emergency preparedness.

FRAMEWORKS AND STRATEGIES FOR ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- > **Rectangular Strategy Phase IV 2018-2023** serves as a comprehensive framework for formulating the National Strategic Development Plan 2019-2023. One of the "4 Priority Areas" recognizes the need for inclusive and sustainable development, including ensuring environmental sustainability and a readiness for climate change, and a need for capacity improvement to respond to the impacts of climate change.

KEY LEGISLATIONS

- > Royal Decree on the Protection of Natural Areas 1993
- > Environmental Protection and Natural Resources Management Law 1996
- > Sub-Decree on Environmental Impact Assessment 1999
- > Land Law 2001
- > Forestry Law 2002
- > Law on Water Resources Management 2007
- > Law on Disaster Management 2015

Sources: Humayun and Picard 2017; MoEF Cambodia 2019, MoWA Cambodia 2014, MoWA Cambodia 2020; Nachmany, et al. 2015; Reggers and Lim 2019; UN Women 2016; and scoping studies done under EmPower project.



CLIMATE PUBLIC EXPENDITURE AND INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW (CPEIR) was

first done in Cambodia in 2012. It is a systematic analysis of public expenditure and how it is meeting the climate change goals. The 2017 review assessed the climate change expenditure allocated to mitigation and adaptation actions (and the related sectoral profiles) and their alignment with the intended plans; assessed the gender integrated in climate change expenditure; and made recommendations for integrating climate change objectives within the budgeting process. The 2017 assessment identified that only 10 per cent of external climate change expenditure was tagged as being gender-sensitive, and that the alignment of climate finance with national and sectoral plans was a challenge in Cambodia.

CAPACITY GAPS

I. TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE NEEDS IN PROJECTS

These include all the technical knowledge gaps that the organizations experience in improving their project engagements. Strengthening technical knowledge of CSOs enables them to design and implement gender-responsive (and going forward, gender-specific and gender-transformative) projects.

THEMATIC AREAS

- Understanding of climate and disaster risk, human rights and gender equality;
- Sector-specific approaches for resilience, highlighting impacts and strategies for engagements;
- Fundamentals of integrating gender in climate and disaster risk reduction projects;
- Tools and methods for gender analysis and gender mainstreaming; and
- Preparing gender action plans.



KEY CONSIDERATIONS

> Strengthening technical capacity of CSOs is only half the work done.

In parallel, capacities of public officials at sub-national level in supporting gender-sensitive activities must also be explored.

- > Communication capacity with key stakeholders, especially political stakeholders, is not directly a gender-climate related gap but is extremely important for the success of projects.
- > Mainstreaming is generic unless well-defined metrics on what constitutes gender-responsive (and going forward, gender-specific and gender-transformative) projects are designed.

2. LEADERSHIP CAPACITIES

These highlight the gaps at the leadership end of senior management in the civil society organizations (CSOs). They must be supported by custom-designed leadership programmes to drive transformational change in gender-responsive climate change and disaster risk reduction policy and planning at all levels.

THEMATIC AREAS

- Knowledge of regional best practices in climate resilience;
- Orientation to successful gender-responsive projects and project ideas in climate change and disaster risk reduction;
- Understanding of national and international policy and finance architecture for climate change, disaster risk and the gender mandates and the entry points for CSOs;
- Enhanced skills in gender analysis and understanding of human rights approaches to guide and mentor colleagues and peer organizations; and
- Gender-responsive budgeting and contribution of CSOs to ensure it is included in all tiers of policy planning.

3. ADVOCACY NEEDS

Engagement with stakeholders, such as provincial and district authorities, beneficiaries, peer organizations, change makers, community leaders and others, are a part of day-to-day project activities. Advocacy needs identified by CSOs are to influence local governments and public bodies to mainstream gender, such as in gender-responsive budgeting and to ensure inclusive processes.

THEMATIC AREAS

- Knowledge of CSO networks and how CSOs can engage with existing networks;
- Linking organization's operations and project activities with international and regional commitments;
- Awareness of networking opportunities/forums to exchange ideas and/or engage with peer CSOs; and
- Training on policy advocacy skills: Emerging issues in climate change, disaster risk reduction, gender, regional experiences, mainstreaming gender, gender-responsive projects and policies, community resilience planning, and gender-responsive budgeting.



KEY CHALLENGES IN OPERATIONS:

> Technical documents and strategies for gender mainstreaming at policy

level are inadequate, and the ones that exist do not have sufficient practical information.

- > Government has not created enough networking opportunities for CSOs to engage and participate in national and regional fora.
- > CSOs can ensure participation of women in initiatives but have no mechanism to measure empowerment. Women are often in attendance but do not voice their opinions. Sometimes, women get trained, and men decide for them even though they have not attended any training. At the commune level, many times women-members of council report that the commune chiefs do not support and value the work of women council members. Women are therefore fending for themselves even in institutional set-ups.



Photo: Iryna Butuzova

Language is a big barrier for local CSOs, inhibiting their access to resources; and quite often, they are not aware where these resources can be accessed from. A common information platform can serve as a resource repository of technical material in the local language, and as a channel for sharing updates to subscribers.

4. ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

These highlight the gaps in organizations' operations and management capacity, which is an important complement and a necessary condition to implement projects.

THEMATIC AREAS

- Improving documentation of climate and disaster risk reduction projects;
- Strengthening stakeholder engagement and communication, particularly with policy makers, government official, agencies and district development officials;
- Orientation to good practices on transparency, particularly those that are in agreement with international practices; and
- Gender-responsive budgeting mechanism for projects.

5. RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

These show gaps in resources, both financial and technical, that the CSOs experience to fund their activities and expand their scope of work. Other than knowledge of funding opportunities and donor criteria, resource mobilization depends upon overall capacity strengthening of the CSOs to design and implement gender-responsive projects, communicate results, and strengthen their partnerships with external stakeholders.

THEMATIC AREAS

- Awareness about donors, financing criteria, objectives and interests;
- Gender-responsive proposal writing and project design skills;
- Strengthened network and partnerships with external stakeholders, organizations and government bodies; and
- Orientation to good practices on transparency and reporting requirements.



EXTERNAL SUPPORT BEYOND TRAINING NEEDS

- > A communication tools package comprising flyers, flipcharts and videos in local languages can help advance the work of CSOs in community-based adaptation action.
- > Establish some benchmarks for what qualifies as good gender mainstreaming.
- > Identify and build a national level CSO network to share resources and information, and collectively advocate for change. Create opportunities and fund participation in conferences and other regional events.
- > Financial support for expanding the scope and scale activities.
- > Virtual interaction platforms with communities, particularly relevant now due to movement restrictions resulting from the pandemic.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS

These recommendations are for the policy makers to create an enabling environment for CSOs to operate and accelerate grassroots climate action, and to meet their finance, technology and capacity building needs that are not covered by trainings on technical knowledge gaps. The short- to medium-term recommendations are relatively low-cost interventions that are achievable in the time frame of three years. The medium- to long-term recommendations are high on complexity and budget requirements, but are also high-impact interventions.

SHORT- TO MEDIUM-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS (1-3 YEARS):

1. Communication tools package: One of the urgent needs of the CSOs is to have more innovative information, communication and educational tools to engage with local and indigenous communities for promoting climate-resilient behaviour; orienting them to climate risks, vulnerabilities and gender issues; and encouraging action. Creating a communication tools package in partnership with communication experts that has flyers, flipcharts and videos in local

languages can help advance the work of CSOs in community-based adaptation action. This can be a standard package accessible to all CSOs operating in the field and be made available on demand from the CSOs. Another alternative is to do a detailed needs assessment and custom design the package for different issues and geographies.

- 2. Information platform:** Language is a big barrier for local CSOs, inhibiting their access to resources; and quite often, they are not aware where these resources can be accessed from. A common information platform can serve as a resource repository of technical material in the local language, and as a channel for sharing updates with the subscribers.
- 3. Participation in external events:** CSOs also expressed the need to participate in regional and international fora that give them opportunities to know about international frameworks and best practices. A grant fund can be made available for CSOs who have interesting outcomes to showcase. This can be done on a pilot basis, and an evaluation of the pilot can suggest whether a regular grant mechanism should be pursued. National delegations to international and multi-lateral engagements can include CSO representatives. Both of these options would entail setting up some criteria for CSO participation.



Photo: tinopepe

MEDIUM- TO LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS (3-6 YEARS):

1. **CSO networks:** One of the important ways highlighted by CSOs to strengthen their work is by organizing them into a network or a coalition of partners. As this is a very resource-intensive task, the efforts until now have not yielded good networks. For the government and public bodies as well, building a network and providing them a tech-based platform for operations can be a resource-intensive task. It is recommended that a detailed assessment be done on mechanisms to build CSO networks and pilot test such a network to see if it is operable and if it is meeting the agreed objectives. If successful, then the long-term goal should be to make the network self-sustaining. Until that happens, interim funding provisions can be made; and in the long run, funds earmarked from specific sources can be dedicated to sustain the CSO network.
2. **Policy frameworks and a national M&E system:** The policy frameworks need a careful assessment to enable CSO engagement at all levels. They also need stronger integration with gender analysis, where the CSO engagement can be fruitful by bringing grassroots insights.

Similarly, a national framework for monitoring and evaluation of climate change adaptation will strengthen gender mainstreaming and gender-responsive programme action. This is a resource and data intensive work. However, many countries have initiated work in this direction in pursuit of monitoring progress on progress towards the SDG targets.

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