

# THE KNOWLEDGE SECTOR IN CAMBODIA

## Knowledge Producers: Situation, Challenges, and Programming Suggestions





# **The Knowledge Sector in Cambodia**

Knowledge Producers: Situation, Challenges, and  
Programming Suggestions

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## List of Abbreviations

ACT	Alliance for Conflict Transformation
AVI	Asian Vision Institute
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CARDI	Cambodian Agricultural Research and Development Institute
CD-Center	Cambodia Development Center
CDHS	Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey
CEA	Cambodian Economic Association
CICP	Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace
CIIS	China Institute of International Studies
CPS	Center for Policy Studies
CSES	Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey Reports
D&D	Decentralization and Deconcentration
EMIS	Education Management Information System
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
HIS	Health Information System
IRIC	International Relations Institute of Cambodia
LGBTQI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, and Intersex
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEF	Ministry of Economy and Finance
MPSEZ	Multi-Purpose Special Economic Zone
NIS	National Institute of Statistics
NRM	Natural Resource Management
NSDP	National Strategic Development Plan
NSPPF	National Social Protection Policy Framework
PAR	Public Administrative Reform
PFM	Public Financial Management
RS4	Rectangular Strategy Phase 4
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SNDD	Sub-National Democratic Development
UN	United Nations

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# Executive Summary

The Asia Foundation and Australia’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) are collaborating on a three-year program *Ponlok Chomnes: Data and Dialogue for Development in Cambodia* that aims to strengthen the capacity of the Cambodian knowledge sector institutions to undertake quality research that informs public policy analysis and dialogue in Cambodia. In May 2019, the Foundation and DFAT in Cambodia commissioned a team of three experts to conduct a series of diagnostic assessments to map out key barriers/constraints to a functioning knowledge sector and assess what needs to be done in the knowledge sector to improve functionality of the system. The study has three main aims:

- Review emerging national development issues and identify priority sectors that also align with gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) principles;
- Define the knowledge sector and take stock of the organizations that generate knowledge and evidence to directly or indirectly influence policy-making processes;
- Review GESI within the broader national development agenda and in the knowledge sector.

The research methodology used the definition of a knowledge system developed by the Knowledge Sector Initiative in Indonesia (AusAID 2012)<sup>1</sup> as: “the institutional landscape of government, private sector, and civil society organizations that provide research and analysis to support the development of public policy.” To map out and assess the knowledge sector, the team reviewed key policy documents on the economic strategy and direction of the knowledge sector in Cambodia; interviewed 29 key informants; and conducted a validation of findings with selected experts and stakeholders.

## The main findings of the study are:

- Review of policy literature found that there is progress in terms of social economic development in Cambodia. To sustain this progress over the next ten years will depend on both domestic and external factors including regional economic integration, skills and jobs development, governance reforms, and the expansion of social protection systems;
- The Government’s Rectangular Strategy Phase 4 will be key to advancing the knowledge sector. This strategy sets out four goals for Cambodia by 2023: economic growth and stability; jobs and skills; poverty and vulnerability reduction; and better governance. To achieve these goals, the Government of Cambodia will invest in and

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1 AusAID (2012). Knowledge Sector Initiative Design Document, Jakarta

focus on four strategic areas: human resource development; economic diversification; private sector development and employment; and sustainable development;

- There are several policy areas identified that offer opportunities to strengthen the knowledge production capabilities within Cambodia to inform policy decisions. These include jobs; skills and migration; foreign policy including regional economic integration; social protection; social vulnerability in urban areas; public service delivery and innovation; and agriculture;
- An important component of the knowledge sector in Cambodia is characterized by young Cambodians who have studied overseas and now form a pool of professionals, practitioners, and entrepreneurs, including those associated with private universities, who are committed to knowledge production in the form of research and analysis and want that research and analysis to inform policy decisions;
- Few research institutes or think tanks have close links to policy-making circles<sup>2</sup> ;
- For GESI related topics, development partners have provided funding to ensure that research, analysis, and data to inform development policies adequately considers GESI issues such as: women’s economic empowerment; social protection; reducing violence against women. Some development partners, such as DFAT and UN agencies, are supporting research organizations working on GESI to build their capacity and networks with a longer-term view to increase availability and improve the quality of GESI research in the future;
- Most of the knowledge production by think tanks and research institutes involved standard research processes from inception to dissemination and publication. There seems to be scope for more innovation in terms of policy engagement amongst Cambodian think tanks with government institutes.

### **Suggestions stemming from the report findings include:**

- At a strategic level, the Ponlok Chomnes program should prioritize these three areas for maximum impact: strengthening links between researchers and policy makers; strengthening capacity of knowledge producers; and informing the broader public on specific emerging issues, especially those affecting people’s everyday lives.
- At a management level, the Ponlok Chomnes program should be a ‘convener’ and ‘facilitator’ rather than an implementer. It should help strengthen existing institutions rather than creating new research organizations. It should also provide support to joint Government-CSO committees, such as the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), to engage a wide range of stakeholders to help develop research agendas in select policy areas; promote collaboration amongst research organizations in

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<sup>2</sup> Policy-making circles in this case refer to a group of policy makers and technocrats who are closely involved in strategic planning, as well as planning, budgeting, data collection, and M&E work.

Cambodia; and connect research institutions with regional research networks and communities of practice.

- At a capacity development level, the Ponlok Chomnes program should support better access to existing datasets, research, and analysis; provide technical assistance on the production and dissemination of research products; provide technical support for establishing rigorous peer review mechanisms within and between research organizations; support the capability of national institutions to understand the importance and use of disaggregated data to better address GESI issues in policy making; and support the production of high quality Khmer language research products.



# 1. Introduction

The Asia Foundation and Australia’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) are collaborating on a three-year programme *Ponlok Chomnes: Data and Dialogue for Development in Cambodia* that aims to strengthen the capacity of Cambodian knowledge sector institutions to undertake quality research that informs public policy analysis and dialogue in Cambodia. The goal of the program will be realized through mutually-reinforcing activities conducted under four program objectives:

- Objective 1: Increase understanding of Cambodia’s knowledge sector;
- Objective 2: Strengthen the capacity and networking of established knowledge sector institutions;
- Objective 3: Support research by emerging knowledge sector actors through an Emerging Research Fund; and
- Objective 4: Promote thoughtful and inclusive policy dialogue and analysis.

In May 2019, the Foundation and DFAT in Cambodia commissioned a team of three experts to conduct a series of diagnostic assessments to map out key barriers/constraints to a functioning knowledge sector and assesses what needs to be done in the knowledge sector to improve functionality of the system. This study has three main aims:

- Review emerging national development issues and identify priority sectors that also align with gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) principles;
- Define the knowledge sector and take stock of the organisations that generate knowledge and evidence to directly or indirectly influence policy-making processes;
- Review GESI within the broader national development agenda and in the knowledge sector.

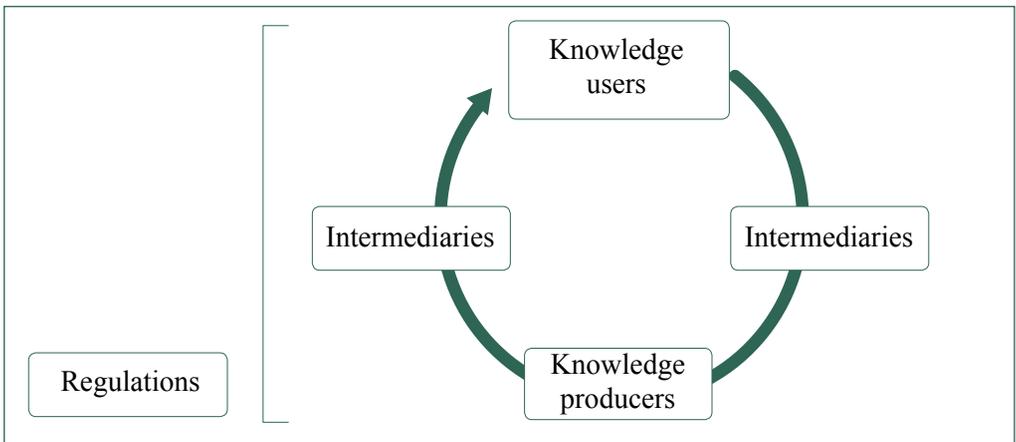
## 1.1. Study methodology and approach

In this study, we have applied the definition of a ‘knowledge sector’ as developed by the Knowledge Sector Initiative in Indonesia (AusAID 2012)<sup>3</sup> as: “the institutional landscape of government, private sector, and civil society organizations that provide research and analysis to support the development of public policy.” The key elements of

the knowledge sector in Cambodia are (as illustrated in Figure 1 below, *ibid.*):

- Knowledge Producing organisations (the focus of this study);
- Policy makers, civil servants, and organisations who demand and use different types of evidence to inform policy debate and decisions, who can play the role of both Knowledge Users and Knowledge Producers;
- Organisations and individuals who communicate and synthesise knowledge from both Knowledge Users and Knowledge Producers, referred to as Intermediaries; and
- The regulations, procedures, and norms that determine how the elements of the system interact formally and informally, also referred to as the ‘enabling environment.’

**Figure 1: The elements of a knowledge sector**



Source: Adapted from AusAID (2012).

As a system, the knowledge sector in Cambodia takes different forms and changes and evolves over time. The knowledge sector includes both the national level as well as the sub-national level where local research organisations and local government interact to inform local policies and development planning decisions (See Also Meadows

2009<sup>4</sup>, Pellini et al. 2018<sup>5</sup>). It is useful to look at the knowledge sector as an evolving system because changes in capacity within a system are dynamic, rather than linear (Green 2017)<sup>6</sup>. For example, if an initiative focuses on a specific part of the system (e.g. knowledge production or knowledge producers), it will influence changes and be influenced by changes in other parts of the system as well.

This study involved two main stages. Stage 1 consisted of reviewing emerging development issues in Cambodia. Stage 1 focused on identifying the priority policy sectors for the Government of Cambodia using the following criteria: (i) the significance to future development challenges for the country; (ii) the potential impact on vulnerable groups, including women; and (iii) the likelihood that different forms of evidence will have on policy decisions in the sector.

Following on the findings from Stage 1, Stage 2 consisted of high-level mapping of the elements of the knowledge sector in those priority policy areas with a focus on knowledge-producing organisations and GESI.

The criteria that we used to review knowledge production capabilities in the knowledge sector are derived from Pasanen and Shaxson's work 'How to design a monitoring and evaluation framework for a policy research project,' (2016)<sup>7</sup>. These include:

- Strategy and direction which involved assessing the extent to which knowledge producers (and intermediaries) have a clear strategy in place that states that their intent is to produce knowledge to inform and influence policy decisions directly or indirectly;
- Processes and systems that organisations have in place in order to ensure that the overall strategy is carried out, monitored, and documented, and that high-quality knowledge product outputs are produced and communicated for policy impact;
- Outputs which refers to the types of knowledge products and knowledge sharing events that knowledge producers (and intermediary organisations) produce to achieve their policy influence objectives.;
- Uptake and policy change which refers to the interest and responses to knowledge outputs and events by the actors who need and demand evidence, as well as examples of policy change to which knowledge products have contributed to directly or indirectly.

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4 Meadows, D. H. (2009). *Thinking in systems: A primer*. London: Earthscan.

5 Pellini, a. et al. (2018). *Knowledge, politics and policymaking in Indonesia*. Singapore: Springer.

6 Green, D. (2017). *How change happens*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

7 Pasanen, T. and Shaxson, L. (2016). *How to design a monitoring and evaluation framework for a policy research project*. London: Overseas Development Institute.

## The research activities for this study included:

- **Desk review:** The team reached out to request relevant policy documents and research reports from key officials in the Government, development partner organizations, and the research community, obtaining the latest policy documents and research reports, especially ones that already synthesize other relevant reports<sup>8</sup>;
- **Key informant interviews:** Interviews were conducted with key informants who represent policy makers/civil servants (6), development partners (5), research institutes and think tanks (13), NGOs (2), and independent researchers (3). The interviewees were selected based on their knowledge of the policy-making process in Cambodia and their experience in using and/or producing research for policy purposes.
- **Validation workshop:** A presentation and validation of findings with selected experts and stakeholders was held at a public event in Phnom Penh on August 29, 2019.

### 1.2 Limitations

Three key limitations of the study should be noted. The first is the time constraint. The research team had a set amount of time to review programme documentation, collect the primary data, analyse available data, and produce this report. We are aware that the full picture of the Cambodian knowledge sector is much more complex than we have been able to capture here. Within the amount of time allotted, we interviewed a number of respondents, but not all of those identified could be reached in the timeframe.

Second, on the issues of research capabilities of knowledge producers, our team relied mainly on perceptions shared by our informants, partly due to the time constraints. We understand that in order to make a more objective assessment on the capabilities of those institutions and stakeholders, a much more rigorous methodology and more complete data is needed. That said, such an in-depth study is not yet necessary to inform the design of the programme but should be left to the phase of partner selection which is a separate process on its own.

Third, this study represents an initial overview of the landscape of Cambodia's knowledge sector that is dynamic and evolving. As such, a follow-up study or review is needed to update the situation. From the programming perspective, this study also represents a baseline assessment against which future changes will be measured.

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<sup>8</sup> Besides the Government policies, we found two key synthesis reports which we used in this literature: (i) UNDP's Common Country Analysis (CCA) (2018), and (ii) SIDA's Multi-Dimensional Poverty Assessment (2019).

## 2. Development priorities and research needs

### 2.1. Overall development trends and policy priorities

Cambodia has seen impressive growth and development during the last two decades. With a sustained GDP growth rate of 7.6% between 1994-2015, Cambodia entered into the lower middle-income country tier in 2015. In 2014, Cambodia's poverty rate was 13.5%, down from 47.8% in 2007<sup>9</sup>. Improved connectivity allows more people, especially the young, to access internet and social media. In 2018, about 6.8 million Cambodians used Facebook (that is approximately 36% of the population), compared to 4.8 million a year earlier. Young people are migrating to urban areas and accounted for 56% of total migration in 2016 which has resulted in fast-paced urbanization of Phnom Penh and other larger cities, such as Siem Reap and Battambang.<sup>10</sup>

These positive developments provide new social and economic opportunities, especially for the younger generation. At the same time, some challenges remain. Overall, more than a third of Cambodia's population is multidimensionally poor taking into account a measure based on ten indicators including education, health, and living standards.<sup>11</sup> This is a different measurement than the poverty rate and seeks to show a more holistic picture of how people experience poverty in their daily lives. Certain demographic groups, including women, youth, elderly, people with disabilities, indigenous people, and member of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, and intersex (LGBTQI) community have become more vulnerable due to discrimination and unequal access to public services and support. The biggest challenges for youth are remaining in school past basic education and finding adequate employment. Women face issues linked to limited access to economic resources, constraints in exercise control over their sexual and reproductive health and rights and accessing relevant services, a high prevalence of domestic violence, and gender stereotypes that limit social and economic opportunities and mobility for women. Similar to men, female migrant workers and those in informal sectors are also subject to other challenges including high work-related hazards and lack of social protection measures. Last but not least, elderly people risk being left behind both economically and socially in poorer areas of the country.<sup>12</sup>

The Royal Government of Cambodia has acknowledged these challenges and has identified solutions to these problems as key elements of its political agenda as well as of policy documents such as the Rectangular Strategy Phase 4 (RS4),<sup>13</sup> the recently

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9 World Bank (2019) The World Bank in Cambodia: overview, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/cambodia/overview>

10 UNDP (2018) Common country analysis (CCA) for Cambodia, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

11 UNDP (2018) Multidimensional Poverty Index, Cambodia

12 UNDP (2018) Common country analysis (CCA) for Cambodia, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

adopted National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP),<sup>14</sup> and the National Social Protection Policy Framework (NSPPF) (2016-2025).<sup>15</sup>

The RS4 sets out four strategic areas as the cornerstone of its policy strategy until 2023: economic growth and stability, jobs and skills, poverty and vulnerability reduction, and better governance. These four strategic areas are seen by the Government as key to the achievement of strengthening human resource development, economic diversification, private sector development and employment, and sustainable development (See Annex 1).

Gender inclusivity is given high attention in the RS4, the NSDP, and the NSPPF. In addition, they are also reflected in other cross-sectoral policies, such as the Neary Rattanak IV: Five Year Strategic Plan for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment,<sup>16</sup> the Sub-National Democratic Development (SNDD) Three Year Implementation Plan,<sup>17</sup> the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports' Gender Mainstreaming Strategic Plan in Education,<sup>18</sup> and health and vocational training related policies from the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training.<sup>19</sup> These policies are all aligned with both the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) agenda<sup>20</sup> and the ASEAN social and economic development agendas.<sup>21</sup> The Government's official development priorities are also reflected in the frameworks of key development partners and non-state actors, as reflected in their country strategies and other relevant documents.<sup>22</sup>

Governance and institutional reforms are central to the goals and strategic areas mentioned above. Three specific governance reforms that the research team have found to be particularly important are: Public Financial Management (PFM),<sup>23</sup> Decentralization and Deconcentration (D&D),<sup>24</sup> and Public Administrative Reform (PAR).<sup>25</sup> These have been complemented recently by a fourth initiative: monitoring and evaluation

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13 RGC (2018) Rectangular Strategy Phase 4, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

14 RGC (2019) National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) for 2019-23.

15 RGC (2017) National Social Protection Policy Framework (NSPPF) (2016-2025)

16 MOWA (2015). Neary Rattanak IV: Five Year Strategic Plan for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (2014-2018). Phnom Penh, Cambodia

17 NCDD (2018) The 3 Year Implementation Plan (IP3-III). Phnom Penh, Cambodia

18 Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (2015): Gender Mainstreaming Strategic Plan in Education 2016-2020, Unofficial Translation, Phnom Penh.

19 Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training, DGT VET (2016): Gender Policy and Action Plan, Phnom Penh.; Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (2017): Technical and Vocational Education and Training Statistics 2015-16, TVETMIS Office, Department of Labour Market Information, Phnom Penh.

20 RGC (2018). Cambodian Sustainable Development Goals (CSDGs) Framework Part2 Target & Indicator Data Schedules. Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

21 Projected Gender Impact of the ASEAN Economic Community Jakarta, ASEAN Secretariat, June 2016

22 For instance, these priorities have been reflected in the UN's CCA which was used to inform the development of the UNDAF.

23 RGC (2014). Public Financial Management Reform Program (PFMRP); RGC (2018). The Budget System Reform Strategy (BSRS) 2018-2025. Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

24 NCDD (2017). Three years implementation plan IP3-III. Phnom Penh, Cambodia

25 RGC (2015). National Program for Public Administrative Reform (NPAR) (2015-2018). Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

(M&E), to be able to monitor these reforms over time and evaluate their wider impact. This refers not only to sector programmes or projects, but also includes the macro-policy level, and shows the Government's intent to strengthen its capability to generate data, research, and analysis about Cambodia's social and economic development. The Government, led by the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF), is finalizing a new M&E framework to measure the progress of the RS4 and to complement ongoing M&E of the NSDP.<sup>26</sup> The United Nations (UN) and other development partners are key investors in data generation and use, and M&E for gender and social protection related issues and policies.

Overall, the policy document review found that the Government and development partners recognise the significant progress achieved by Cambodia over the last 20 years. At the same time, there is an acknowledgment that to continue on this trajectory over the next 10 to 20 years, there is the need to design and implement policies and reforms focusing on creating and sustaining regional economic integration, developing human capital, and investing in advanced governance and policy systems.

## ***2.2. Priority areas and research needs identified***

Based on findings from the desk review and key informant interviews, we have identified a list of key policy areas that are critical for the country's future development and where our respondents have identified there is a greater need for different types of evidence to inform policy discussions and decisions. A prioritization exercise was conducted to better understand policy priorities and research needs (Table 1). To conduct this exercise, respondents were asked to look at the research objectives of this study and list all of the development issues that they feel need more attention. They were then asked to rank these issues and the study team grouped these into priority areas based on their rankings. It is important to note that: (i) the prioritization was largely based on the perceptions of the key informants; (ii) the prioritization exercise, as reflected through the table, does not suggest that the issues under Priority Areas #1 are more important than those in #2. Instead, those under policy areas #1 were seen to have greater need to strengthen capability for identifying evidence needs and generating the data, analysis, and research required to respond to those needs; and (iii) the grouping is indicative at best and intends only to serve as a context for the following discussion on the landscape and development of knowledge sector in Cambodia.

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26 In the previous term, the NSDP was the main 5-year development policy document and the M&E (mid-term and end-term) was focused on what stated in the document. However, in this current term, to show seriousness about its reform agenda, the Government (especially the PM and MEF) had decided to also conduct M&E on the key indicators derived from the RS4 itself.

**Table 1: Priority areas and research needs**

Priority areas #1	Priority areas #2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jobs, skills and migration</li> <li>• FDI and changing regional dynamics</li> <li>• Service sector and urban vulnerability</li> <li>• Social protection, public services delivery and innovation, and civic engagement</li> <li>• Digitalization and digital economy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Health</li> <li>• Financial sector/HH debts</li> <li>• Agriculture</li> <li>• SME promotion</li> <li>• Judicial sector</li> </ul>

The ranking presented in Table 1 above was based mainly on the interviews with key informants. To add to this ranking, based on our knowledge and synthesis, the following highlights are worth noting about the key development trends and priorities:

- Jobs and labour force skills are highlighted as a policy priority of the Cambodian Government as is evident through their inclusion in national plans. However, the dynamics between low-skill labour migration, rural to urban and cross-border migration flows, regional economic integration and foreign direct investments, and more broadly, foreign policy and geo-political changes in the region, are not well researched by Cambodian organisations within and outside the Government. This is an area where investment in knowledge production and analysis is needed. Labour market and skills development policies have a close relationship and influence on the development of the service and tourism industries which are attracting a rapidly growing share of young workers. The service and tourism sectors are also much less researched than traditional employment sectors such as agriculture and industry.
- The rapid urbanisation of cities such as Phnom Penh and, increasingly, a few of the provincial cities such as Siem Reap, Battambang, and Sihanoukville (some of which is being driven by FDI), is putting pressure on the national and local governments to address problems of increasing urban poverty and access to and quality of public services. Investment in better and new evidence to better unpack and understand the complex dynamics of migration and to inform policy solutions is needed.<sup>27</sup>
- Our respondents indicated that stronger capacity in the knowledge system can contribute to continuous improvements in the quality and efficiency of public service delivery. Improved capacity would increase timely evidence to inform policy design as well as policy implementation and budget allocations through monitoring and evaluation evidence about policy progress.

<sup>27</sup> See for instance World Bank (2017). Urban Development in Phnom Penh. Phnom Penh, Cambodia; UNICEF (2014). Phnom Penh Multiple Indicator Assessment of the Urban Poor. Phnom Penh, Cambodia

- Social protection, including social assistance and new social insurance programmes, are high on the policy agenda of the Government and are policy areas where digital technologies offer new opportunities to improve the design and delivery of social protection services, as well as the ability to include citizens in the identification of problems and of the solutions that can improve the efficiency of public/state service providers. More research and analysis are required to understand how new technologies can improve these services and what inputs will be necessary to invest in these improved systems.
- Last but not least, the new digital economy has recently gained attention from policy makers and development partners.<sup>28</sup> However, much of the debate on the subject has been largely perception-based and not well supported by rigorous research or futures/foresight analysis. Given its increasing importance globally, questions around the digital economy (and industry revolution 4.0) in Cambodia are suggested to be further unpacked and researched, especially on their implications on specific segments of the Cambodian economy.

### 3. The knowledge sector in Cambodia today

This section presents the landscape of the knowledge sector in Cambodia today by applying the analytical framework on the key elements of a knowledge sector presented above. The findings presented primarily reflect the thematic and sectoral background of our key informants. The diverse backgrounds and areas of interest of these key informants includes macro-economic development, foreign policy, governance, decentralization, jobs and skills, gender, social protection, and rural livelihoods. But, given the diversity of participants and inclusion of other research, the findings can also be representative of the knowledge sector in Cambodia more broadly.<sup>29</sup>

This section will focus on three of the four elements of a knowledge sector, namely: (i) knowledge users, (ii) intermediaries, and (iii) environment and regulation. The discussion on knowledge producers is included in the next section.

Policy makers and civil servants are identified as comprising the main group of

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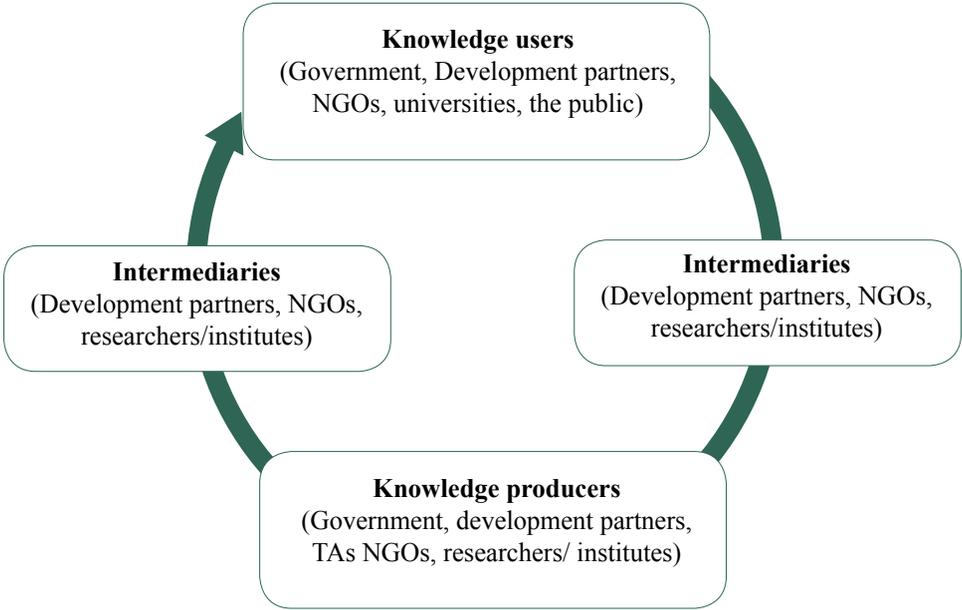
28 For more information, please see World Bank (2018). Benefiting from the digital economy: Cambodia Policy Note. Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

29 For existing studies on Cambodia's research/knowledge sector, please see for instance: CICIP and GDN (2016). Doing research in Cambodia: Making models that build capacity; OECD (2013). Effectiveness of research and innovation management at policy and institutional levels: Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam; The Asia Foundation (2014). Strengthening national policy research capacities in the field of gender equality in Cambodia; CDRI (2010). Scoping study: Research capacities of Cambodia's universities;

knowledge users as it pertains to knowledge about policy. There are many potential knowledge users but those in Government represent an important group that needs to be given special consideration. Other identified knowledge users are described below. Our respondents mentioned that the demand and need for data and evidence-based research has changed and increased over the last three to five years. In particular these needs include:

- **The need for expert knowledge** which can assist with the formulation of policies, programmes, and regulatory instruments on specific technical areas or issues such as public financial management, social insurance schemes, decentralization on the delivery of specific services, and the design and implementation of monitoring of evaluation frameworks for public policies and programmes.
- **The need for survey data** in the form of, for instance, baseline data and situational analysis, which can inform and support the formulation of policies and programmes in a wide range of areas. These include minimum wage standards, programmes to support the modernization of agriculture, financial services regulation, public service delivery in urban areas, etc. The need for more data emerges from the fact that as the complexity of policy decisions increases, policy makers realize that they need more timely and better quality research and data to better understand social and economic trends and ensure that the policies they design and implement are relevant and cost-effective.
- **The need for more and better evaluative knowledge** to provide rigorous evidence of the impact of public policies and programs and inform the design of new policies and programs. The demand for rigorous evaluation has noticeably increased within government departments over the last three years due to the Government's commitment ensuring more effective allocation and accountable use of public financial resources.
- **The need for data on citizen perceptions** as shown through social media platforms which can help to quickly and with minimal costs capture opinions and feedback on a range of issues relevant to citizen wellbeing, such as electricity prices, waste collection, crime, migration, etc. This type of data is already providing policy makers with important information about the issues people care about and which need the attention of policy makers.

**Figure 2: Key elements of the knowledge sector in Cambodia**



**Regulations**

- Increasing interest among policy makers for more research and data, but still uneven depending on key individuals in the management positions of each agency
- Limited government funding for research; research still heavily reliant on donor funding
- Lack of trust and an absence of agreed communication and collaboration protocol creating gaps between policy makers and researchers outside policy-making ‘loops’

Beside the Government actors, our respondents have identified three other groups of knowledge users: development partners/INGOs, the public, and universities.<sup>30</sup>

**Development partners and international NGOs** need and use expert knowledge, survey/baseline data, research, and analysis to inform the design, implementation, and the monitoring and evaluation of programmes and projects. A large amount of knowledge products have been created over the last 30 years to address the needs of development partners/INGOs. Much of this knowledge may be relevant for policy-making decisions, but it may have had a limited influence on policy since its content was often directed to

<sup>30</sup> While the Government is very likely to be the main user of research data, it is also reasonable to expect that development partners are equally if not more important users.

programmes and projects. Moreover, the information about this knowledge production is often internal to the organization and we have not been able to find information (a database or repository) of all the research and data collection that have been done for the various donor-funded projects and programmes.

As for **universities**, they have emerged in our interviews as groups that not only produced (mainly) research-based knowledge, but where professors, researchers, lecturers and students also need access to data, analysis, and research for teaching and research projects. However, as shown by some of the research we have reviewed, this demand is relatively limited because research does not yet receive sufficient attention in in most Cambodian universities.<sup>31</sup> That said, key informants have indicated that there have been more resources, both from development partners and the Government, to promote education and learning quality in public higher education, a part of which is about better use of research.

The **general public** has become important in terms of knowledge demand and use thanks to the rapid expansion of social media in Cambodia (especially Facebook).<sup>32</sup> As detailed in the box below, access to internet has increased from 2.2% in 2010 to more than 71.3% in 2018. The use of social media is higher among young people. Better access to electricity has also contributed to making the public a more active consumer of news and data through their phones, TVs, and radio.

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31 For more information, please see: World Bank (2018). Implementation completion and results report: Higher education quality and capacity improvement project; Mok, N., et al. (2019). Governance in public higher education in Cambodia. Phnom Penh, CDRI.

32 While no available survey data, it is observed that the public usually needs information that is most relevant to their everyday life, such as public services, new employment opportunities, etc. Proper research, however, is needed to answer this question.

## Box 1: Access to internet and connectivity in Cambodia

Access to internet and connectivity: The rapid use of new technology, especially digital technology, offers unique opportunities especially for young people. Internet subscription rates in the population has increased from 2.2% in 2010 to 71.3% in May 2018 with 8 million subscribers, according to the Ministry of Post and Telecommunication. Initially the increase was confined to Phnom Penh, followed by a sharp increase in other provinces since mid-2014. There is however still limited capacity among young people to harness its potential, especially among the less well-off. Anecdotes suggest that a large number of rural youth, migrant youth, and urban poor, while having access to the new digital technology such as internet and social media, still do not have a good understanding on how to use these. Overall, this suggests a need to promote digital literacy among youth and the general population.<sup>33</sup> Access to electricity is also an important factor that impacts access to technology. Differences in rural and urban accessibility to stable electricity sources play a role in connectivity.

The demand and need for data, analysis, and research for policymakers, development partners, and NGOs (mostly INGOs, but some local NGOs as well), is largely driven by their mandate, programming needs, and external policy and development agendas such as the SDGs. Government knowledge needs include different types of research and data, such as expert knowledge, survey data for policy formulation, survey data for impact evaluation, and data on citizen perceptions. As for development partners, part of their need is to help provide the Government with the above data. But equally important is the data for their own programming, namely, baseline data, endline data, and other supplementary assessments. For NGOs (both international and local), their need for data is similar to that of development partners, but possibly of smaller scale and scope (due to their more limited mandate and resources).

Increasingly, the demand for evidence and knowledge is influenced by the rapidly growing access to and availability of data analytics on citizen perceptions and sentiments from social media. In this way, social media (and data analytics from social media) can play an important role in suggesting new questions that policy makers should pay attention to or explore further.<sup>34</sup>

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33 MoEYS (2018) Cambodia Youth Development Index (CYDI). (Unpublished document).

34 Social media platforms can also be a space where fake news can create misinformation and a negative attitude against different forms of evidence.

On the regulatory frameworks that support (or hinder) the knowledge sector, two main points have emerged from our interviews. The first is that while much of the existing funding for research in Cambodia comes from development partners, there are a growing number of Government-led initiatives that are funded through the national budget. For example, the MEF has procured surveys and studies on labour and employment, basic education, and the use of national budget for public services. These are positive signs of Government commitment, although it may take time before a more institutionalised process to identify and procure different type of evidence becomes part of the capability of the public administration. There is still an uneven recognition of the potential and value of evidence-informed policy making within Government departments, and the time-consuming and bureaucratic procurement process for public service programmes (as opposed to a quicker process for infrastructure programmes). NGOs have reported difficulties in getting funding for research on GESI issues and that funding for GESI research is limited. However, due to time constraints and lack of information available on funding sources for GESI research, this study could not identify the budgets allocated for GESI research from the Government, development partners, or additional sources.

The second point raised during the interviews concerns the gap between knowledge users and producers, in particular between policy makers and civil servants and knowledge producers who are considered ‘not in the [policy] loop’ (informant). Generally speaking, Government key informants consider two types of knowledge producers as being ‘in the loop’, namely: (i) international experts or research organizations who are commissioned by development partners to respond to requests for research and analysis from the Government, and (ii) (mostly) local experts or research organizations with whom respective Government agencies have had contacts and developed trust.

To conclude this section, the research team wants to highlight how two interrelated factors contribute to explain the persistence of the gap between policy makers and outside research organizations and researchers. The first is a general lack of trust, which has been compounded by limited communication and interaction between the two groups. Although not always the case, this issue of trust is also found to be related to the general atmosphere of suspicion that sometimes divides those inside of and outside of the Government. The second is the absence of agreed protocols on how the two sides can work and collaborate with one another. Our key informants, both in and outside of the Government, suggest that such protocols, if developed, should address some basic questions such as how to keep confidentiality of information shared and opinions expressed, how to respect researchers’ professional integrity in presenting findings, and how to agree on key criteria for finding common ground when there are disagreements on certain issues.

## 4. Knowledge producers

### 4.1. An overview of knowledge producers

Besides the National Institute of Statistics (NIS) and statistics departments and offices in line ministries, we have identified six other groups of knowledge producers across policy issues: (i) Government research groups/organisations/units,<sup>35</sup> (ii) technical experts from development partners, (iii) research institutes and think tanks, (iv) university research centres, (v) United Nations agencies and NGOs (mostly INGOs, but sometimes, local NGOs as well), and (vi) consultancy firms and individual consultants.

To review the capabilities and characteristics of this group of actors we have adapted the framework developed by Pasanen and Shaxons (2016) (See Section 1.2). As shown in the table below, we have looked at the following elements: (i) strategy and direction, (ii) process and systems, (iii) knowledge outputs, and (iv) uptake and policy change.

Before discussing the specific findings, we think that it is important to highlight three cross-cutting characteristics of knowledge production in Cambodia which have emerged from the data collection. The first is that over the last 20 years there has been a very high number of, often uncoordinated, research projects which have been implemented in and on Cambodia on a wide range of policy issues. There have been many large data collection and analysis projects conducted with support from development partners.<sup>36</sup> However, the complete number of these projects is not easily available.<sup>37</sup> This is particularly true for GESI issues and topics.

The second point is that many young Cambodian students have received scholarships to study overseas and have returned to Cambodia with new knowledge and skills on research methods and ICT which has the potential to help bring innovation into research design, implementation, and dissemination. However, it is unclear to what extent the potential of these resources and new knowledge is being harnessed by research organisations, development partners, and Government departments today.

The third point is there is an emerging and growing pool of professionals, practitioners, and entrepreneurs (including from private universities) who value research, wish to make use of its findings, and convert them into practical and actionable policy ideas and suggestions.

With regard to the four capability areas as described above, and in addition to the details provided in the table below, the respondents from the key informants have highlighted the following points:

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35 A few key ministries, especially the MEF, have formed their own research groups to meet specific policy formulation and M&E needs. Yet, the roles and functions of these groups are still informal and ad-hoc.

36 A few key large datasets are expected in the next few years, including: The National Population Census, Agriculture Census, Cambodian Demography and Household Survey (CDHS), and possibly, a labour survey.

37 There is however no concrete data on the exact number of those projects.

- **Strategy and direction:** Only a few well-established organisations have written statements about their strategy and direction in terms of producing evidence that can inform the Government's policy process. However, whether in writing or not, several of those interviewed claim their main intention is to produce research to inform key stakeholders who in most cases are Government agencies and/or their funding development partners. In practice, however, those knowledge producers operate in a more project-based and donor-driven manner when it comes to influencing policy.<sup>38</sup>
- **Processes and systems:** All knowledge producers we interviewed could not point us towards detailed or written guidelines about the way they design and manage research projects and their quality assurance mechanisms. Some respondents have mentioned that they have a draft of such document which is being discussed internally. What has emerged from our interviews is that in the majority of cases the organisations follow a standard research process, starting with preparing a research proposal to completing a research report and dissemination of results. The extent to which these steps are followed, however, depends very much on the requirement of those who have the sign-off powers (i.e. clients, higher level officials) and the resources available (e.g. standby senior researchers, editors) to each institution.
- **Knowledge outputs:** The outputs and type of evidence that is produced depends on the role, function, and mandate of the knowledge producer. Government organisations have their own research groups and technical advisors' committees which are commissioned and funded by development partners. The main outputs are technical and administrative reports which are presented and discussed internally before approval by the Government and/or funding agencies. In most cases, these knowledge products are meant to inform internal discussions (and decisions) and not to be shared with the wider public. For external research institutes, their outputs vary by their focus areas and by projects, as discussed in the next section.
- **Uptake and policy change:** It was not possible for this study to assess the extent to which knowledge products attract interest by policy makers and contribute to policy change. That would require dedicated studies or case studies. What we were able to find is that generally speaking, research-based evidence and technical reports can have an influence on policy decisions when they are produced and presented by knowledge producers who are 'in the loop' with the Government policy circles. None of the knowledge producers we have interviewed has a system in place to document

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38 The only research institute that seems to have a clear and different approach is the Center for Khmer Studies (CKS), which aims to have first impact on other non-state actors and the public, and from there, expect that their ideas will be picked up by policy makers.

the uptake or contribution to policy change of their knowledge production.<sup>39</sup> Policymakers’ demand for evidence on GESI issues has been varied based on the topic and depending on possibility of funding from development partners. Currently at the national level, demand is higher within ministries and NGOs concerned with issues such as violence against women, economic empowerment, social protection, and migration, where GESI is understood as being directly relevant to policies and programs.

The authors’ opinion on the question of uptake and impact is that for a research project to be policy-relevant, it does not need to focus only on the uptake (i.e. targeting policy maker level), but should also consider the ‘side take’ (i.e. to other similar institutions and NGOs) and ‘down take’ to the public. The complementarity among these up-, side- and down-takes deserves more attention than it is currently given, especially when we consider the increased attention by the Government about public opinion (mostly expressed through social media) to shape its research needs and policy making priorities.

**Table 2: Knowledge production capacity of key groups of knowledge producers in Cambodia**

Groups of producers	Strategy and direction	Process and system	Outputs	Uptakes and policy changes
Government’s own research groups	Project-based	Project-based	Technical and administrative report	Unknown but can be high and direct
Technical assistance from WB, IMF, ADB	Project-based	Response to Govt request; following international methodology	Concrete technical assistance reports	Unknown but can be high and direct
Research institutes	Some in writing but in reality, project-based	Follows standard research steps, project-based	Project-based: can be opinion pieces, research papers, journal articles, and policy documents	Unknown but can be very uneven depending on projects and trust with the Government
University research centers	Some in writing but in reality, project-based	Follows standard research steps, project-based	Project-based: can be research papers, journal articles	Unknown but can be very limited

39 On influence on policy changes, please see for instance, Jones, H. (2011). A guide to monitoring and evaluating policy influence, ODI.

UN agencies and I/NGOs	Project-based	Response to Govt request; their own research needs; following international methodology	Research reports	Unknown but can be uneven depending on projects and trust with the Government
Consultancy firms/ individuals/ NGOs	Funding/client-driven	Project-based	Project-based	Unknown but can be very uneven depending on projects and trust with the Government

**4.2. Findings on research institutes and think tanks**

Our study places extra focus on research institutes and think tanks. Annex 2 provides a list of these institutions in Cambodia, 13 of which were interviewed for this study. A few research institutes were established over 20 years ago, while 8 of them were established within the last five years. Most of these new institutions have been established by researchers who have good relationships and networks with and within relevant Government agencies. A few of them have also been established in public and private universities.

The characteristics of these organisations varies. Some are focused on specific topics while other cover a wider range of policy topics (see Annex 2 for more details). Their missions and goals (whether in writing or not) mention contributing to evidence-informed policy making, building research capacity, and/or raising public awareness on key policy issues. How they actually operate and manage their work, however, varies considerably.

The study respondents highlighted the following set of challenges in the knowledge-to-policy capability of Cambodian research organisations, including the well-established ones:

- Few research institutes/think tanks have close links to policy-making circles<sup>40</sup> (feel as though they are ‘inside the [policy] loop’). Where such links exist, it is mainly

40 Policy-making circles in this case refer to a group of policy makers and technocrats who are closely involved in strategic planning, as well as planning, budgeting, data collection, and M&E work. For more information on policy making and reform in Cambodia, please see World Bank (2018). Cambodia’s cross cutting reforms. Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

because of two factors: (i) personal relationships and trust that the directors/board of directors and/or senior researchers have with relevant Government counterparts; and (ii) financial and technical support from development partners in establishing these connections. In other words, the links between research organisations and policy makers is mainly ad-hoc and depends very much on the personal relationships of the leaders of the organisations and key individuals.

- At the inception phase of research, the main challenge is the limited information and access to policy circles to determine the most relevant research topics and questions and research gaps for relevant policy makers.
- During research implementation, most researchers have difficulty accessing up-to-date statistical data and data sets which, as mentioned earlier, are still fragmented. Quality assurance and external peer review have not yet been standardized across the board during the research writeup and publication processes. A research project is likely to have rigorous peer review process only when it is a part of a regional project and/or connected to a university overseas.
- The challenge during the dissemination stage of a research project is about successfully reaching the right (policy) audiences.
- Another important challenge relates to recruiting, training, and retaining qualified researchers within an organisation. Good researchers, once they have gained sufficient experience, tend to choose to work as freelance consultants because of the higher remuneration.
- Language is also a challenge. Research outputs include opinion pieces, research papers, journal articles, and policy documents. The most common dissemination practice is to hold workshops, which are sometimes accompanied by policy briefs or multi-media and social media communication of the findings. One critical but often neglected problem is the accessibility and quality of Khmer language research products, which are often treated as an after-thought requirement once the English ones are already produced.
- Systems to document the uptake and impacts of research products are not common in policy research organisations (including organizations working on GESI issues). These organisations instead often rely mainly on anecdotal and self-claimed observations. That said, it is likely that knowledge products by those considered as ‘inside the loop,’ namely, the Government’s own research groups and technical experts (including those from donor agencies and individual consultants) whose expertise is requested directly by the Government are more likely to attract interest by policy makers or result in a contribution to policy decisions.
- Sources of policy-relevant research on GESI is limited, however, the Ministry of Women’s Affairs (MoWA) and other Government institutions with support from de-

velopment partners are starting to compile research and data on specific issues such as violence against women and social protection to make them more accessible.

- Outside experts and researchers are often used. While reliance on external experts is still heavy, one positive trend is that, in producing expected outputs, the experts are usually required to work closely with (and, hopefully, build the capacity of) the internal research groups.

**Table 3: Key challenges and possible solutions in conducting research in Cambodia**

Key tasks	Challenges	Possible solutions
Identifying research topics and gaps in the evidence base	How to identify key issues that are researchable, reflect real policy needs, represent concrete gaps in the literature, and that take into account Government priorities/sensitivities	Ensure a good collection of existing literature, verify proposed research topics and questions with relevant policy makers, non-state actors, and experts
Developing a conceptual framework for a research	How to conceptualize the research questions and how to operationalize research questions and tools	Provide mentoring support either from in or outside the country
Collecting needed data	Where and how to access existing data and how to approach key informants	Establish data-hubs and a network of researchers and key informants by thematic area
Analysing data	How to analyse both qualitative and quantitative data using appropriate data analysis software to respond to the research questions	Provide trainings on how to use software for quantitative and qualitative data analysis
Assuring quality of the research	How to establish rigorous and systematic quality assurance of knowledge products	Ensure time and resources for quality assurance are factored into research budgets and timeframes

Disseminating research findings	How to identify and reach out to the right audience in both Government and non-government organisations	Promote better understanding of policy-making process in Cambodia and provide training on how to prepare policy-briefs and how to use social media/ multi-media to disseminate research findings
Producing Khmer research products	How to ensure greater availability of quality Khmer research products	Ensure time and resources for quality Khmer research products are factored into research budget and time-frames; provide trainings on how to write a good Khmer reports/ policy briefs
Publishing research in a peer reviewed research journal	How to increase the number of peer-reviewed journal publications by Cambodian researchers	Provide trainings on peer-reviewed journal publication processes; encourage joint journal publications outside of Cambodia; support the establishment and improvement of Cambodian academic journals

**4.3. Gender equality and social inclusion research in Cambodia**

Issues pertaining to GESI have been given noticeable attention in many research and data collection exercises in Cambodia. This is in part because of advocacy and support by development partners and a few local NGOs whose work focuses on women’s issues in particular. Many of the national surveys and administrative data collected by the Government disaggregate data by sex, some examples of which are the Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey (CSES), the Cambodia Health and Demographic Survey (CDHS), the Education Management Information System (EMIS), and the Health Information Management System (HIS). There are also examples of Government-led research that look specifically at gender dimensions in key sectors, such as the background research

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41 Those research works look at gender in education, health, employment, empowerment, etc.

conducted as a part of the Neary Ratanak Policy formulation and M&E.<sup>41</sup> Research has also been conducted on gender and the garment, textile, and footwear sectors,<sup>42</sup> but less research has been found about gender and the other two key sectors, namely, service and agriculture. A lot of the available GESI research focuses on women in particular, and some recent research suggests that additional research on men/boys, particularly in the areas of school retention, vulnerability to drug use, and migration-related safety concerns,<sup>43</sup> is needed.

One of the most noticeable gaps in terms of data and analysis around gender is in the budget data. While much can be learned about the situation and issues that are specific to women (and men) in different settings and sectors, the state budget does not yet include a separation between the pool of government and external resources that has been specifically allocated for GESI projects, except for a few specific women-focused projects.<sup>44</sup> The lack of gender responsive budget data has made analysis and advocacy around GESI programming particularly challenging.

It has been observed that more women have been promoted into Government leadership and high-level technical positions, at both the national and sub-national level. Examples collected from this study include the MEF (General Department of Policy), MoEYS (General Department of Youth), and NIS. This trend has resulted partly from the Government's policy to promote gender equality policy-making processes and also from the widening pool of young female professionals, many of whom have been granted scholarships to pursue high education, including at universities abroad. However, this trend is still uneven across Government agencies and policy discussions are still observed to be dominated by men.

Anecdotal evidence also suggests that women in Cambodia are at a disadvantage in being hired by research organizations/firms because of gender stereotypes that inhibit them from pursuing field work, data collection, and limit their ability to network. These gender stereotypes limit women's opportunities to pursue research and this is an area that needs to be addressed. However, when it comes to research organizations or firms, men seem to have dominated this profession in Cambodia.

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42 See for instance the Cambodia Garment and Footwear Sector Bulletin by ILO @ [https://www.ilo.org/asia/publications/issue-briefs/WCMS\\_663043/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/asia/publications/issue-briefs/WCMS_663043/lang--en/index.htm)

43 See for instance NIS (2017). *Cambodian Socio-Economic Survey of Cambodia (CSES) for 2017*. Phnom Penh; MoEYS (2018). *Cambodia Youth Development Index (CYDI)* (Unpublished report). Phnom Penh; SCI (2019). *Gender Intersectionality and Children Leaving Alternative Care*. Phnom Penh.

44 In 2014, there was an attempt to do gender-budget and costing but the lack of data prevented the study from being fully finalized.

## 5. Programming suggestions

### 5.1. For the knowledge sector in general

In this section we present suggestions and ideas derived from the findings of the previous section and which can contribute to the ongoing design of the **Ponlok Chomnes** program. We divide our ideas into suggestions for the long-term strategy of the programme (longer than 3 years), medium term (within 3 years), and short term operational and management suggestions.

Given the nature of the project, it is important that the design of the programme takes a long-term view and uses the three-year initial period to plan and prepare for long term growth and sustainability.

**Table 4: Key programmatic suggestions**

Long-term strategy	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Balance the programme’s objectives to support the knowledge sector for: i) policy-making influence purposes, (ii) building capacity among specific groups of knowledge producers, and (iii) informing the broader public with specific evidence</li> <li>• Ensure sustainability of the programme by promoting ‘positive demonstration effect’ and ‘learning by doing’ spirit to build the capacity of potential researchers and knowledge producers</li> </ul>	
Medium term strategy	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on ‘connecting the existing dots’ and not producing new dots (e.g. new research organisations) unless required for strategic needs</li> <li>• Act as a convener and facilitator, and less as an implementer of research</li> <li>• Work collaboratively starting from identifying problems, co-designing and testing solutions, making adaptations based on what does not work, and expanding what looks promising</li> <li>• Simplify and clarify the programme design which is critical for collaboration and trust building</li> </ul>	
Policy impact and partnership	Capacity building
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Form and support a joint Government-CSO committee (e.g. TAC)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate access to and effective use of existing data for research purposes</li> <li>• Provide technical support/ joint training on how to develop research products for dissemination on social media</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage with emerging key interested stakeholders such as practitioners, entrepreneurs, private universities, and young researchers,</li> <li>• Promote collaboration among research institutions in the country</li> <li>• Connect research institutions with regional research networks and universities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide technical support on how research quality assurance and peer review process</li> <li>• Build capacity of national institutions to understand the importance and use of disaggregated data on GESI</li> <li>• Connect research institutes and think tanks with universities and alumni associations</li> <li>• Urge more attention on the need for better Khmer research products</li> <li>• Link research organisations with organisations overseas to share and discuss approaches to strengthen evidence-informed policy</li> </ul>
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**For the long-term strategy**, two points are worth considering. First, the programme should be clear on its objectives to support the knowledge sector to (i) influence the policy-making process, (ii) build capacity among specific groups of knowledge producers, and (iii) provide the public with specific evidence pertaining to policies that impact their daily lives. These objectives are complementary and will support the programme design. Second, issues of sustainability should be given attention right from the beginning of the programme phase to shape the design of the programme. One concrete suggestion the research team has is to ensure sustainability by investing throughout the three years of the programme (and not just at the end) in research as a ‘positive demonstration effect’ and ‘learning by doing spirit.’ Building the capacity of knowledge producers in the knowledge system can in turn generate ideas and suggestions for other ongoing initiatives.

**For the medium term**, the programme should focus on ‘connecting the existing dots’ rather than investing in creating new research organisations. This implies the role of the programme as a ‘convener’ and ‘facilitator’ rather than an implementer. On the design question, it is recommended that the focus be kept concise yet clear in terms of what objectives, outputs, and roles. Simplicity can ensure, among other things, a shared sense of mission and trust building among key stakeholders. In the medium term, the programme should also emphasize deliberate support to and organisation of knowledge sharing events on GESI issues, including in collaboration with partners.

Based on the strategies presented earlier, some concrete ideas are proposed on two specific management and operational areas. The first one is on how to **promote policy impact and partnership**. In this area, the research team recommends: (i) forming and assisting a joint Government-CSO committee (such as the Technical Advisory Committee); (ii) engaging emerging key interested stakeholders from different backgrounds to

help inform a research agenda, implement research, and provide feedback on research findings; (iii) promoting collaboration among research institutions in the country; and (iv) connecting research institutions with regional research networks and universities.

On **capacity building**, the research team recommends: (i) facilitating access to and effective use of existing data for research purposes; (ii) providing technical support/ joint training on how to develop research products for dissemination on social media; (iii) providing technical support on how to develop and improve a quality assurance and peer review process (in collaboration with regional research networks, think tanks, and universities abroad); (iv) building the capacity of national institutions to understand the importance and use of disaggregated data to better address GESI considerations in policy-making; (v) connecting research institutes and think tanks with universities and alumni associations to share information on research employment and capacity building opportunities; and (vi) urging more attention is paid to the need for better Khmer research products.

## *5.2. On the knowledge sector and GESI*

In addition to the above suggestions, the following are specific to GESI:

- Requirements and provisions for sex-disaggregated data should further encouraged and more widely presented. Data gaps on sex, gender, and social inclusion should be identified and advocated to the Government and other development partners for future inclusion and collection. Further research should also be conducted on social inclusion so that appropriate data is collected, monitored, evaluated, and used for decision-making
- One specific gap to advocate for is gender-responsive budgeting. Such advocacy should be made along with technical recommendations as to how the existing budget and impact data can be further detailed and analysed to ensure proper analysis, tracking, and gender-equitable distribution. M&E systems should also be set up to analyse service delivery impact by sex and social inclusion indicators.
- In terms of partnership building, networks among female policy makers and female researchers should be established and supported. These networking platforms, either embedded in existing committee structures or newly created, will serve as a means to connect knowledge users and producers, to support women in research and policy in Cambodia, and to build capacity.

*Annex 1: Key strategic and specific focus in the Rectangular Strategy Phase IV*

Rectangle 1: Human resource development	Rectangle 2 - Economic Diversifications
<p><u>1). Improving the quality of education, science, and technology</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Increase salary of teachers and school reforms</li> <li>-Construct schools at village and commune levels</li> <li>-Better inspection of school mgt/ quality control</li> <li>-Promote vocational training at secondary level</li> <li>-Increase education response to labour market</li> <li>-Promote STEM and Promote sport</li> </ul> <p><u>2). Vocational training:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Implement the National Policy Framework on Education, Tech nical and Vocational Training 2017-2025</li> <li>-Create National Fund for Skills Development</li> <li>-Enhance capacity of national training centres to respond to IDP</li> <li>-Cooperate with private sector for skill-market match</li> <li>-Provide vocational orientation at secondary education</li> </ul> <p><u>3). Improving public healthcare and nutrition</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Update/implement the Health Strategic Plan 16-20</li> <li>-Push for universal health care through HEEF, social protection policy</li> <li>-Improve overall health service quality</li> </ul>	<p><u>1). Improving logistics system and enhancing transport, eneef- gy and digital connectivity</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Approve/implmt the Master Plan for Multi-modal Trans- port and Logistic to accelerate integration</li> <li>-Increase investment budget and financing of physical infrastructure</li> <li>-Lower electricity cost and availability</li> <li>-Promote digital connectivity</li> <li>-Build capacity to evaluate investment projects</li> </ul> <p><u>2). Developing key and new sources of economic growth</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Further implement ‘IDP 2015-25’, turning SHV into a multi-purpose SEZ (MPSEZ)</li> <li>-Formulate/implmt garment and footwear sector devt</li> <li>-Improve operation of SEZ to attract more investment</li> <li>-Prepare Master Plan for Tourism Sector</li> <li>-Promote entertainment industry</li> <li>-Develop oil and gas industry</li> </ul> <p><u>3). Readiness for digital economy and industrial revolution</u></p> <p><u>4.0</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Develop and implement long term digital economy strategic</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Improve HRM in health sector</li> <li>-Better enforcement of health-related laws</li> <li>-Reduce communicable disease</li> <li>-Implement cash transfer programmes for pregnant women and children &lt;2y</li> </ul> <p>4). <u>Strengthening gender equality and social protection</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Promote women roles in society and leadership level</li> <li>-Implement Neary Rattanak Strategic Plan</li> <li>-Implement SPPF 2016-25</li> <li>-Implement and expand newly introduce social protection schemes</li> </ul>	<p>4). <u>Promoting financial and banking sector development.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Further implmt 'Financial Sector Devt Strategy 2016-25'</li> <li>-Ensuring financial stability using risk-based and forward-looking approach</li> <li>-Use banking sector to mobilize domestic financing and expand financial services</li> <li>-Further develop securities market, bond-market, FinTech</li> <li>-Enhance oversight and fights against money laundering</li> <li>-Expand the use of Riels, expand new insurance products framework and include it as a sector in the national accounts</li> <li>-Update and implement the ICT policy</li> <li>-Further develop ICT infrastructure</li> <li>-Develop legal framework for digital sector</li> <li>-Educate for better use of digital technology</li> <li>-Develop entrepreneurship and digital eco-system</li> </ul>
<b>Rectangle 3 – Promotion of private sector development and employment</b>	
<p>1). <u>Job market development</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Strengthen 'Job forum' and skill training</li> <li>-Implement law on minimum wage</li> <li>-Promote apprenticeship/internship</li> <li>-Improve quality of work inspection thru Labour Law</li> <li>-Improve harmony in professional/industrial relations</li> <li>-Strengthen the governance of migrant workers</li> <li>-Expand electricity and clean water with low prices to workers/employees and students living in rented houses...</li> </ul> <p>2). <u>Promotion of SME and entrepreneurship.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Adopt and implmt the 'SME Development Policy'</li> <li>-Facilitate the registration and export of Cambodian products</li> <li>-Establish SME bank</li> </ul>	<p><b>Rectangle 4 – Inclusive and sustainable development</b></p> <p>1). <u>Promotion of agricultural and rural development</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Implmt the 'Master Plan for Agri Sector Devt Toward 2030'</li> <li>-Adopt and implmt the law on Plants Protection and Sanitary and Phytosanitary and Law on Contract Farming</li> <li>-Improve diversification and R&amp;D</li> <li>-Upgrade processing industry, vegetable farming, agricultural commercialization</li> <li>-Foster livestock and aquaculture,</li> <li>-Strengthen the mgt of ELC</li> <li>-Rationalize investment in irrigation</li> <li>-Promote 'One Village-One product Movement' and 'New Village Movement'</li> </ul>

- Establish National Entrepreneurship Fund/ Entrepreneurship Devt Centre
- Invest more on supporting infrastructure such as laboratory, trade facilitation...
- Enhance SME productivity through better standard compliance
- 3). Public-private partnership
- Implement the Policy paper on the devt of PPP mechanism for managing PIM 16-20 and PIM including PIP
- Adopt and implmt necessary regulation on PIP
- Build capacity needed for PIP
- Promote public investments through PIP
- 4). Enhanced competitiveness
- Adopt and implmt an Anti-Trust/ Competition Law
- Review/amend the Bankruptcy Law, promote Commercial Arbitration mechanism
- Improve implmt of produce/service/mgt standard
- Devt/implmt Consumer Protection Law
- Enhance fair competition thru fairer public process, e.g. tax, procurement...

- 2). Strengthening sustainable management of natural and cultural resources:
- Implmt the National Policy on Mineral Resources 2018-28
- Strengthen sand resource and biz mgt
- Manage forest and wildlife
- Continue to promote preservation and mgt of fisheries
- Further protect eco-system and natural resources
- Preserve and devt cultural heritage
- 3). Strengthening management of urbanization
- Continue land reform
- Strengthen capacity to manage urbanization
- Formulate infrastructure master plan for main cities
- Promote construction sector devt
- Enhance the beauty and services in cities and urban areas
- 4). Ensuring environment sustainability and readiness for climate change
- Implement the various policies
- Better manage the Protected Areas
- Strengthen the mgt of solid waste mgt

*Annex 2: Detailed available information on research institutes in Cambodia*

No	Name	Objective, areas of focus (and additional background information)	Year established	Director	Location	Affiliation
1	Future Forum <sup>45</sup>	To create a community of researchers focused on public policy issues	2015	Ou Virak	The Factory Phnom Penh (co-working space)	
2	CDRI <sup>46</sup>	To conduct policy-relevant research on governance, Education, Economics	1990	Chem Phalla (acting)	Phnom Penh	
3	Global Center for Mekong Studies <sup>47</sup>	To advise Southeast Asian governments (was established under a policy initiative launched by Beijing two years ago)	2017		Phnom Penh/ Mekong Region	China Institute of International Studies (CIIS)

45 <https://www.futureforum.asia/>

46 <https://cdri.org.kh/>

47 [http://www.ciis.org.cn/english/node\\_1004516.html](http://www.ciis.org.cn/english/node_1004516.html)

4	Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace (CICP) <sup>48</sup>	To engage in research within the fields of political science, diplomacy, history, and socioeconomics in order to better understand the current and future prospects of Cambodia, Southeast Asia, and Asia as a whole	1994	Ambassador Pou Sothirak	No.204, Street 1966, Phum Paung Peay, Sangkat Phnom Penh Thmey, Khan Sen Sok, Phnom Penh	Economic associations in Asia
5	Economic Institute of Cambodia <sup>49</sup>	To participate in the formulation of sustainable economic development policies and strategies that will equitably benefit most, if not all, Cambodians	2003	Sok Hach	Phnom Penh	
6	Cambodian Economic Association (CEA) <sup>50</sup>	To promote academic and policy debates on economic development issues in Cambodia	2005	Sok Hach	Phnom Penh	
7	International Relations Institute of Cambodia (IRIC) <sup>51</sup>	To conduct policy-relevant research on foreign policy, politics, security, economics, international relations	2005	Kin Phea	Russian Federation Blvd, Sangkat Kakab, Khan Porsenchey, Phnom Penh	Royal Academy of Cambodia / Government

48 <http://www.cicp.org.kh/>

49 <http://www.eicambodia.org/>

50 <http://cambonomics.weebly.com/>

51 <http://iric.gov.kh/>

8	Asian Vision Institute (AVI) <sup>52</sup>	To conduct policy research on the following topics: foreign policies, governance, environment, peace and conflicts, digital economy. It also plans to conduct trainings and raise public awareness on the research topics.	2019	Dr Chheang Vannarith	#24 Street 566, Boeung Kok 2, Toul Kork, Phnom Penh	Sala Traju
9	Cambodia Development Center (CD-Center) <sup>53</sup>	To conduct research on broader topics of development (although seems to focus more on foreign policy issues)	2019	Ansan Dav Ratha Lim	#55, Street 184, Sangkat Boeung Raing, Khan Daun Penh, Phnom Penh	
10	Institute for Research and Advanced Studies (University of Cambodia) <sup>54</sup>	To play an active role in supporting useful and productive research at The University of Cambodia, and thereby promotes the image of the University as a center of excellence in research			The University of Cambodia Northbridge Road P.O. Box 917 Sangkat Toek Thla, Khan Sen Sok, Phnom Penh, Cambodia 12000	University of Cambodia

52 <https://www.asianvision.org/>

53 <http://cd-center.org/en/>

54 <https://uc.edu.kh/ucs/Institute%20for%20Research%20and%20Advanced%20Studies/8/2762/>

11	<p>Parliamentary Institute of Cambodia<sup>55</sup></p>	<p>To contribute to the strengthening of the Cambodian Parliament through the capacity development of its members and parliamentary staff, and to share its experiences with others and other parliaments in the region and beyond.</p>	<p>2011</p>	<p>H.E. Oum Sarith, Chairperson Secretary General of the Senate</p>	<p>Inside the Senate compound</p>	<p>Parliament, Senate</p>
12	<p>Nuppun Institute for Economic Research<sup>56</sup></p>	<p>Economic research To build a quantitative framework for business and economic analyses</p>			<p>Office 492, Building H, Phnom Penh Center Corner Blvd. Preah Sihanouk and Sothearuos Phnom Penh, CAMBODIA.</p>	

<sup>55</sup> <https://www.pic.org.kh/index.php/en/>

<sup>56</sup> <http://www.nuppun.org/>

13	Cambodia Development Institute <sup>57</sup>	To foster research for Cambodia's economic development with a variety of research activities and training programs. Research methodology training programs, and certificate programs about South Korea and other Asian countries' development are offered. Research outputs include (1) database of development cooperation activities in Cambodia; (2) working papers on Cambodian development; and (3) academic journals.			Based at Ewha University (Korea) and RUPP (Cambodia)	Royal University of Phnom Penh / Ewha Womens University (South Korea)
14	Cambodian Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) <sup>58</sup>	To do research for sustainable agricultural development in Cambodia (increasing agricultural productivity, improving crop diversification and ensuring environmental sustainability and stability of rural livelihoods through agricultural research and technology utilization)	1999	Dr. Ouk Makara	National Road No 3, Prateah Lang Commune, Dangkor District, Phnom Penh,	Semiautonomous government research agency
15	Center for Khmer Studies (CKS) <sup>59</sup>	CKS supports research, knowledge sharing and insights on topics related to Cambodia's social, economic and cultural development.*	1999	Mr. Natharoun Ngo	Wat Damnak, Siem Reap; Tuol Tompoung, Phnom Penh	

57 <http://ediacambodia.org/?goPage=9>

58 <https://www.cardi.org.kh/?page=&lg=en>

59 <https://www.khmerstudies.org/>

\* this information is updated on July 2, 2020

16	DC-Cam <sup>60</sup>	Documenting genocide history/memories	1995	Chhang Yuk	Villa No. 66, Preah Sihanouk Blvd., Sangkat Tonle Bassac Khan Chamkar Mon Phnom Penh	National Institute of Public Health
17	Health System Research Center <sup>61</sup>	To promote evidence-based health system policy and governance through conducting high quality public health and health systems research to generate relevant evidence for policy, harnessing evidence generated by other health researchers, and transferring available knowledge and evidence to policy makers.			Lot#: 80, 289 Samdach Penn Nouth St. (289), Phnom Penh	
18	Center for Peace and Conflict Studies <sup>62</sup>	To work on conflicts and peace in the region (but has little on Cambodia)	2008	Emma Leslie	Les Residence Yen Dy Angkor House #6, Kravat Krong road, Siem Reap	Pannasas- tra Uni- versity

60 <http://dceam.org/home/>

61 <https://niph.org.kh/niph/research/index.html>

62 <http://www.centrepeaceconflictstudies.org/>

19	This Life Cambodia <sup>63</sup>	To conduct research, mainly on prisons, judicial reform for minor prisoners	2007	Billy Gorter	56, Group 10, Wat Bo Village, Sala Kamreuk Commune, Krong Siem Reap	Royal University of Phnom Penh
20	Cambodia 21st Century Maritime Silk Road Research Center <sup>64</sup>	To interpret, inform, and influence developments and policy making for the benefits and interests of Cambodia in all areas of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road.	2016	Dr. Neak Chandarith	Phnom Penh	Royal University of Phnom Penh
21	Enrich Institute <sup>65</sup>	To promote the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Cambodia	2010	Dr. Heng Pheakdey	No. 168, St 122, Phnom Penh	
22	National Institute of Diplomacy and International Relations <sup>66</sup>	To build a Cambodian team of researchers on foreign affairs who can contribute to the development of Cambodian foreign policy. NIDIR is open to work with regional and international think tanks to jointly develop research programmes in order to build its research capacity for the institute.	2016	Dr. Chhiv Yiseang, Under-Secretary of State and President of NIDIR	No 3, Samdech HUN Sen Street, Sangkat Tonle Bassac, Khan Chamkamon Phnom Penh	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

63 <http://www.thislifecambodia.org/research>

64 <http://cmsrrc.org/>

65 <http://www.enrichinstitute.org/>

66 <https://www.mfaic.gov.kh/national-institute-diplomacy-international-relations>

23	Open Institute <sup>67</sup>	To focus research on technology, migration and social-economic issues	2006	Javier Solar	Phnom Penh	Ministry of Education Youth and Sport.
24	Research Development Council (Ministry of Education) <sup>68</sup>	To discuss and analyze pressing issues in education reform and identify challenges for policy interventions	2015			
25	The Learning Institute <sup>69</sup>	Natural resource management	2005	Srey Ma-rona	#45 ST. 113, BKK III, Khan Chamkar Morn, Phnom Penh	
26	Center for Policy Studies (CPS) <sup>70</sup>	To conduct policy research on economic development policy, private sector development, natural Resource Management (NRM), and skills and social Development	2009	Chan Sophal	#35A, St 606, Sangkat Boeung Kak 2, Khan Tuol Kork, Phnom Penh	
27	Asia Research Centre <sup>71</sup>		2005	Sum Chhum Bun	Russian Federation Blvd., Phnom Penh, Cambodia	Royal Academy of Cambodia

67 <https://www.open.org.kh/en>

68 <http://www.moeys.gov.kh/en/heap/content/231-erc/>

68 <http://www.moeys.gov.kh/en/heap/content/231-erc/>

69 <https://www.learninginstitute.org/>

70 <http://www.cps.org.kh/>

71 <https://www.kfas.or.kr/ARC/rac/Intro.aspx?arc=fac>

28	Open Development, Cambodia <sup>72</sup>	To provide the public with up-to-date, accurate information about Cambodia and its economic and social development.	2015	Be Chantra	43 Samdach Chakrei Ponn 208, Phnom Penh	East-West Management Institute
29	Angkor Research <sup>73</sup>	To specific in market and public policy related surveys	2013	Ian RAM-AGE	#7A, St 173, Sangkat Toul Tom Poun II, Phnom Penh	
30	Indochina Research <sup>74</sup>	To specialize in integrated market research solutions	1995	Francis Palomares Jr.	37ABC, Street 271, Sangkat Phsar Doeum Thkov, Khan Chamkarmon, Phnom Penh	

72 <https://opendevelopmentcambodia.net/>

73 <http://angkorresearch.com/?page=front&lg=en>

74 <http://indochina-research.com/who-we-are/>

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