



Draft Concept Note

Ponlok Chomnes Provincial Policy Forum

Local Knowledge Matters: Impact of COVID-19 on Vulnerable Groups

March 11, 2022

Battambang Province, Cambodia

[Meeting Registration - Zoom](#)

Background

For more than two years, the COVID-19 pandemic put immense pressure on many sectors in Cambodia, slowing down economic and social development. Although all stakeholders, including the government and non-government institutions, have been working tirelessly to address the challenges emerging from the pandemic, some of these challenges have affected certain groups more acutely.

Same as the general population, marginalized and vulnerable groups across Cambodia continue to experience difficulties and hardship as they adapt their lives to these changed circumstances and find ways to recover from the impact of the pandemic. COVID-19 has limited their access to necessary resources and basic needs. For instance, vulnerable children are more prone to health problems, poor nutrition, and limited access to education. The pandemic also affected citizens' participation in their local level planning processes due to the restrictions on in-person gatherings; and resulted in adverse socioeconomic impacts.

Though COVID-19 cases are reducing in Cambodia, which has also vaccinated a large percentage of its population, the pandemic has left behind some key lessons on how critical it is to ensure social inclusion. Having in place robust recommendations to continue the efforts of key players in this field will serve Cambodian society well as it recovers from COVID-19, and in the future.

About the “Ponlok Chomnes: Data and Dialogue for Development in Cambodia” Program

With support from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), The Asia Foundation's “Ponlok Chomnes: Data and Dialogue for Development in Cambodia” program aims to strengthen the capacity of knowledge sector institutions to undertake quality research that informs public policy analysis and dialogue in Cambodia.

Ponlok Chomnes has been supporting its Core Partners¹ and Emerging Research Partners² to conduct various pieces of research that examine the impacts of COVID-19 on various sectors including the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable groups such as children and indigenous people in Cambodia. The research provides on-the-ground and sophisticated data and contributes towards an increased and deeper understanding of the actual impacts of the pandemic on citizens at national and local level.

¹ Ponlok Chomnes' Core Partners include Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI); Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace (CICP); Center for Khmer Studies (CKS); Centre for Policy Studies (CPS); and Future Forum (FF). For more information, please click this [link](#).

² Ponlok Chomnes' Emerging Research Partners include The Affiliated Network for Social Accountability – Cambodia (ANSA); Department of Tourism, Royal University of Phnom Penh (DoT-RUPP); Khmer Association for Development of Countryside (KAFDOC); Komar Rikreay Association (KMR); My Village Organization (MVi); VBNK; Youth Council of Cambodia (YCC); Analyzing Development Issues Centre (ADIC); and Coalition for Integrity and Social Accountability (CISA). For more information, please click this [link](#).

Timely data and evidence are vital for policymakers and development partners to make better decisions during this crisis and achieve better outcomes on improving Cambodia's health system as well as the socio-economic development.

While national data is significant for national level policymaking, local level knowledge and/or data is important to focus on issues emerging at the local level; thereby contributing to interventions by local authorities that are tailored to the needs of people on the ground.

Therefore, in collaboration with its emerging research partners namely: Khmer Association for Development of Countryside (KAFDOC), Komar Rikreay Association (KMR), and My Village Organization (MVi); the Ponlok Chomnes program is organizing a Provincial Policy Forum to convene provincial government representatives, local NGOs, as well as knowledge producers to showcase their research, discuss, exchange knowledge and network with knowledge users, including policy makers and policy practitioners at the provincial level (from provinces Battambang, Kratie, and Stung Treng). This Provincial Policy Forum aims to build knowledge to inform policymaking at the subnational level.

Objectives of Ponlok Chomnes Provincial Policy Forum

The objectives of the Ponlok Chomnes PPF are to:

- Communicate research and data that responds to policy needs to better inform Cambodia's COVID-19 response to the needs of vulnerable groups at the provincial level,
- Promote the knowledge exchange and policy discussion by policy makers and stakeholders at the national and provincial level, and;
- Create an enabling environment where knowledge sector actors meet to discuss and broaden their network to build a strong knowledge sector community at the provincial level.

Expected Outputs

The Ponlok Chomnes PPF expects to produce:

- Digital publication of the Provincial Policy Forum in both Khmer and English, and
- Summary of key insights from each discussion session.

Immediate Outcome

Outcome statement highlighting key insights and recommendations drawn from the Ponlok Chomnes Provincial Policy Forum will be documented to inform the government and stakeholders' decision, policies, and implementation for tackling COVID-19 in local communities.

Format

The PPF will be conducted using two types of formats:

1. Keynote Addresses by Policymakers: To be delivered during a high-level opening session to serve diplomatic, political, and visibility objectives.
2. Plenary Discussions: To promote active discussion between participants that consists of policymakers, researchers and policy practitioners from the government, think tanks, and NGOs. This recognizes valuable ideas and experiences that both speakers and participants contribute to.

While the Provincial Policy Forum is anticipated to be a blended event, given the evolving situation of the pandemic, Ponlok Chomnes shall also be prepared to adapt the Forum into a virtual event. This is to be determined in alignment with government prescribed norms and regulations.

Expected Participants

The Ponlok Chomnes Provincial Policy Forum will target diverse stakeholders at national and provincial level, including policymakers, development partners, academia, experts and researchers, university students, and civil society.

Stay engaged with us on social media using the following hashtags: #PonlokChomnes, #KnowledgeSector, #ProvincialPolicyForum2022, among other related hashtags.

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