

PONLOK CHOMNES NATIONAL POLICY FORUM 2025



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The Asia Foundation finally wishes to express its deep appreciation to the government stakeholders, including those who contributed as speakers, for their engagement and valuable perspectives. Special thanks are extended to the Office of the Council of Ministers for its support, and to His Excellency Permanent Deputy Prime Minister Vongsey Vissoth for his leadership and encouragement.

ABOUT THE ASIA FOUNDATION

The Asia Foundation is an international nonprofit organisation working to solve the toughest social and economic challenges in Asia and the Pacific. Informed by more than 70 years of experience and deep local knowledge, The Asia Foundation works with partners across more than 20 countries to improve lives and expand opportunities.

ABOUT PONLOK CHOMNES

Building on the achievements of Ponlok Chomnes I (2019-2023) which aimed to strengthen the capacity of Cambodian knowledge sector institutions for quality research, The Asia Foundation is implementing the Ponlok Chomnes II: Data and Dialogue for Development in Cambodia Program (2023- 2027). Supported by the Australian Government, this program's goal is to contribute to public policy decisions, based on evidence and informed by inclusive dialogue, are operationalised and become the norm in Cambodia.

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DISCLAIMER

The Ponlok Chomnes National Policy Forum “**Inclusive Policymaking in the Age of Uncertainty: Connecting Knowledge, Policy and People**” was supported by the Australian Government through The Asia Foundation’s Ponlok Chomnes II: Data and Dialogue for Development Program. The views expressed in this booklet are those of the speakers and panellists and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Government or The Asia Foundation.

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PONLOK CHOMNES NATIONAL POLICY FORUM 2025 AT A GLANCE



**Inclusive Policymaking in the
Age of Uncertainty: Connect-
ing Knowledge, Policy and
People**



**5 September
2025**



**Phnom Penh,
Cambodia**



232

Participants

Women

83

Persons with
Disabilities

15

Indigenous
Person

1

37

**Speakers
& Moderators**

11

2

1

- Key ministries and national institutions
- Academic institutions
- Development partners
- Research centres
- Civil society organisations
- Local organisations
- Think tanks
- Communities
- Private sector actors and Media





Plenary and parallel panel discussions

1

The Role and Future of Cambodia's Knowledge Sector in Strengthening Inclusive Policy Processes

2

Integrating Climate-Induced Migration and Social Protection into Climate Change Responses

3

Inclusive Rural Development: Community and Social Group Participation in Local Planning and Impacts of Local Investments in Addressing Social Groups' Needs in the Context of Climate Change

4

The Humanities & Social Sciences in Cambodia's Evolving Research Landscape

5

Lightning Talk: "Small Policy Ideas for Cambodia's Future"



Across social media platforms, the event generated

+54,000
online engagements

+100
shares,
amplifying its reach and reinforcing the momentum for inclusive and data-driven development in Cambodia.

13
media articles

2
television news segments

BTV, CNC, Phnom Penh Post, Khmer Times, Cambodianess, Kiri Post, Kampuchea Thmey, and Cambodia Investment Review.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS



Plenary Panel Discussion on "The Role and Future of Cambodia's Knowledge Sector in Strengthening Inclusive Policy Processes"

- Cambodia's knowledge sector can only shape effective policies when evidence is timely, accessible, and inclusive. Strengthening collaboration between researchers, policymakers, and communities- especially women,

youth, minorities, and persons with disabilities- is essential to ensure national strategies translate into real benefits for all Cambodians.



Panel Discussion on "Integrating Climate-Induced Migration and Social Protection into Climate Change Responses"

- Cambodia's climate resilience depends on linking social protection, migration, and adaptation strategies. While awareness of climate change is high, coping strategies remain limited, highlighting the need to scale up

inclusive policies, strengthen community knowledge, and promote climate-resilient livelihoods for vulnerable groups.



governance, and ensure that all groups—especially women and marginalised communities—benefit from the country’s continued progress.

Panel Discussion on “Inclusive Rural Development” - Cambodia’s new National Rural Development Policy marks a strong step forward toward sustainable and inclusive growth. With its focus on model villages, decentralisation, and multi-stakeholder collaboration, the policy aims to uplift rural communities, strengthen local



policies, better data systems, and inclusive networks to ensure Cambodian researchers can contribute meaningfully to national identity, development, and global knowledge.

Panel Discussion on “The Humanities & Social Sciences in Cambodia’s Evolving Research Landscape” - Interest in humanities and social sciences research is growing, especially among women scholars, but challenges remain around mentoring, resources, and clarity of purpose. Building a strong research culture requires supportive



vulnerable groups, and build systems that are fair and sustainable.

Lightning Talk on “Small Policy Ideas for Cambodia’s Future”

— Youth envision a Cambodia where policies are people-centred, inclusive, and grounded in local realities. Their proposals from housing and social protection to minority rights and taxation highlight that effective policymaking must listen to communities, protect



INTRODUCTION

Cambodia's policy landscape is undergoing a significant transformation, highlighting an increasing need for evidence-informed decision-making and collaborative policy processes. The Australian Government is proud to support the strengthening of collaboration between policy actors and researchers and to promote inclusive policy processes through the Ponlok Chomnes II: Data and Dialogue for Development in Cambodia Program (July 2023- June 2027), implemented by The Asia Foundation.

Under the Pentagonal Strategy Phase I and the National Strategic Development Plan, the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) is actively seeking to integrate data, research, and evaluation into policymaking processes. The adoption of key national strategies in 2024, such as Neary Rattanak VI on gender equality, the new National Disability

Strategic Plan, National Social Protection Policy Framework 2024–2035, and the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) 3.0 on climate action further demonstrates Cambodia's commitment to inclusive development. The National Research Agenda 2025, while primarily focused on science, technology, and innovation, also reflects a growing recognition of the importance of research to support national priorities.

The government's increasing demand for inclusive data indicates the value of enhancing the integration of the knowledge sector. These policies and openness create meaningful opportunities for collaboration between government institutions, civil society, and research actors. In particular, facilitating both the growing demand for research, data, and meaningful policy dialogue, and the supply of timely, credible, and accessible evidence grounded in inclusive consultation.

While Cambodia’s knowledge sector¹ has become more active, with government and local institutions producing useful research outputs, there is still room for improvement in how government and non-government actors work together. In times of uncertainty, this collaboration plays a significant role in the ability of institutions to adapt to emerging challenges and ensure policies are responsive and reflective of the needs of underrepresented groups, such as women, youth, ethnic minorities, and persons with disabilities.

Over the past two years, Ponlok Chomnes has partnered with a network of over 20 local think tanks and research institutions to promote inclusive dialogue, quality research, and the integration of Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) across research, communications, and engagements efforts.

Against this backdrop, the Ponlok Chomnes National Policy Forum 2025, themed “*Inclusive Policymaking in the Age of Uncertainty: Connecting Knowledge, Policy and People*,” provided a timely platform for dialogue. Building on the legacy of earlier forums under Ponlok Chomnes Phase I, the 2025 Forum spotlighted Cambodia’s evolving knowledge sector and explored how researchers, government actors, and communities can work together to strengthen inclusive, evidence-informed policymaking.



The Forum convened 232 participants (81 women, 15 Persons with Disabilities, 1 Indigenous Person, and 21 not identified) from across Cambodia, including representatives from the Royal Government, research and academic institutions, civil society, development partners, youth networks, and community leaders. Its objectives were to foster collaboration between policymakers and researchers, showcase how data and evidence can inform national strategies, and promote inclusion by ensuring that women, youth, persons with disabilities, and ethnic minorities are part of national policy conversations and solutions.

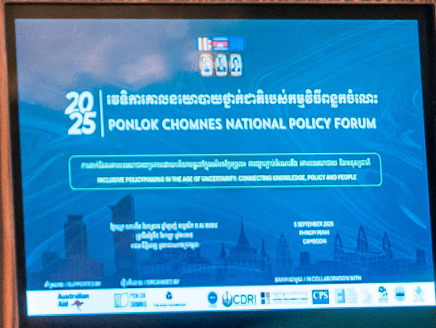


The Forum reaffirmed Cambodia's commitment to using research, dialogue, and inclusion as key drivers of national development. With a keynote address by H.E. Mr. Vongsey Vissoth, Permanent Deputy Prime Minister, and opening remarks by H.E. Derek Yip, Australian Ambassador to Cambodia, the event underscored the shared vision of both governments to ensure policies are informed by credible evidence and reflect the voices of all Cambodians.

This booklet captures the key messages, reflections, and moments from that day, celebrating Cambodia's progress toward a more inclusive, evidence-informed, and resilient policy future.

¹ Knowledge sector refers to the institutional landscape encompassing government, private sector, and civil society organisations that generate and utilise research and analysis to inform public policy.

Ms. Dolgion Aldar
Ponlok Chomnes Program Director
The Asia Foundation



WELCOME REMARKS

“

CHUM REAP SUOR AND GOOD MORNING,

It is my great pleasure, on behalf of Ms. Meloney Lindberg, The Asia Foundation’s Country Representative, and on behalf of The Asia Foundation and the Ponlok Chomnes II: Data and Dialogue for Development in Cambodia Program, to welcome you all to the National Policy Forum 2025.

I would first like to acknowledge the support of the Australian Government and the partnership of the Royal Government of Cambodia, whose leadership and collaboration make this work possible. I would also like to thank our Ponlok Chomnes partners, who have co-designed today’s Forum and the community representatives who travelled from different provinces today.

The National Policy Forum has been a flagship of Ponlok Chomnes since 2019, and they helped put Cambodia’s knowledge sector on the map. Phase 1 of Ponlok Chomnes Program laid important foundations for inclusion, such as the creation of the SheThinks Network, Cambodia’s first network of women researchers, which continues to address gender disparity in research and amplify women’s voices in policymaking.

In Phase II (2023–2027), Ponlok Chomnes is expanding this work. We are collaborating with more than 20 Cambodian research institutions, universities, and civil society organisations on issues that matter deeply to Cambodia’s future from climate change and rural development to social protection, inclusive governance and open data, and Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion.

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The theme of today's Forum- "*Inclusive Policymaking in the Age of Uncertainty: Connecting Knowledge, Policy and People*" - is especially timely. Around the world, governments are grappling with uncertainty caused by climate change, digital disruption, and shifting social and economic dynamics. In such times, the importance of using local knowledge to navigate uncertainty cannot be overstated. That's why throughout the Forum, we will try to answer the question: "How can Cambodia's knowledge sector continue to adapt in a time of uncertainty?"

This Forum provides space to reflect on progress, strengthen collaboration, and explore how Cambodia's knowledge sector can better support national strategies and inclusive policymaking.

Our objectives are simple:

- To connect people, government, researchers, civil society, and communities, to share ideas and build relationships;
- To showcase how Cambodian research and evidence can inform today's policy challenges; and
- To promote inclusion, ensuring the perspectives of women, youth, persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and other underrepresented groups are part of national policy conversations and solutions.

My vision is for the Ponlok Chomnes National Policy Forum to evolve into a regular platform that connects everyone in Cambodia's knowledge sector, much like the existing Government–Private Sector Forum or the Civil Society–Government Partnership Forum. But what makes this Forum unique is its focus: it is dedicated to the knowledge sector, a space for those working on evidence and ideas, striving for shared standards, and committed to inclusive practices. In the future, it could even be co-hosted by government and civil society, reflecting the spirit of collaboration at the heart of policymaking.

Finally, I want to emphasise that this Forum is not only about discussion, it is about connection. I encourage you to share openly, listen with curiosity, and work together.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to H.E. Mr. Vongsey Vissoth, Permanent Deputy Prime Minister and Minister in Charge of the Office of the Council of Ministers, for his keynote address; H.E. Derek Yip, Australian Ambassador to Cambodia, for his continued support; and to all our partners who have worked hard to design and organise this Forum.

**THANK YOU AGAIN FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION.
AND I HOPE YOU FIND TODAY'S DISCUSSIONS
VALUABLE AND RELEVANT TO YOUR WORK.**

H.E. Derek Yip
Australian Ambassador to Cambodia

OPEN



OPENING REMARKS

“

GOOD MORNING,

It is a pleasure to join you today at the Ponlok Chomnes National Policy Forum 2025. I express my sincere appreciation to The Asia Foundation and other partners involved in the Ponlok Chomnes II Program, for convening this important forum.

I also acknowledge the strong collaboration and commitment of the Royal Government of Cambodia and members of the Ponlok Chomnes Technical Steering Committee for their contributions to strengthening inclusive, evidence-informed policymaking in Cambodia.

Cambodia and Australia face a complex and ever-evolving set of challenges — climate change, economic headwinds, and inequality, to name a few. These challenges require us to develop policy responses that are grounded in evidence and data.

Australia has been a strong and steadfast partner to Cambodia for many decades, particularly in development assistance. Since the early 1990s, our support for Cambodia has spanned a range of sectors, including education, health, agriculture, governance, social protection, and water.

Developing the most effective strategies to make advancements in these areas requires the involvement of the knowledge sector. It is here where the kernels of good ideas begin. Policies informed and supported by robust evidence, and by the perspectives of diverse groups, drive positive and effective change.

This is why, since 2019, through our support for Ponlok Chomnes: Data and Dialogue for Development in Cambodia program, we have been investing in initiatives that enhance research, promote inclusive dialogues and strengthen public policy processes.

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In its first phase, Ponlok Chomnes strengthened the capacity of Cambodian knowledge institution: think tanks, research organisations, and policy groups, to conduct high-quality research and to share it in ways that can influence policy. This work laid a foundation of skills, networks, and credibility.

Now in its second phase, Ponlok Chomnes II seeks to build on that foundation by ensuring that evidence-informed and inclusive policymaking increasingly becomes the norm. The program is not only about strengthening research but about embedding research and dialogue into the very way policies are shaped in Cambodia. This is a significant step forward.

At the heart of this effort is inclusion. For policies to be effective, they must reflect the needs, perspectives, and lived experiences of the people they affect. It is vital that women, persons with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, youth, and other marginalised groups have the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to policymaking.

Having empirical research data on the social inclusion and exclusion dynamics of various marginalised groups can act as a catalyst, steering public policies in directions that promote equal opportunities in decision-making.

This year, we launched the Australia–Cambodia Development Partnership Plan 2025–2029, which translates into action the priorities our two countries share. The Partnership Plan reflects our deep institutional links, vibrant people-to-people connections, and joint commitment to peace, stability, and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific.

It sets out three agreed objectives — how we will work together to deliver them — and where Australia can best add value to Cambodia’s national priorities. One key focus is supporting national institutions and local partners to generate and apply reliable data for policymaking that is relevant and responsive to the needs of all Cambodians, particularly women, persons with disabilities, and other marginalised groups.

Through programs like Ponlok Chomnes and CAPRED, we are demonstrating our commitment to genuine and respectful partnership— engaging with both government and non-government actors in Cambodia. This Forum is a perfect example of that principle in action.

Our broader development cooperation is also guided by two global strategies. The International Disability Equity and Rights Strategy— Advancing Equity to Transform Lives, developed in consultation with persons with disabilities, shifts the focus from simple inclusion to systemic change, addressing the barriers that prevent full and equal participation in society.

And Australia’s International Gender Equality Strategy reaffirms gender equality as both a fundamental human right and a driver of prosperity across the Indo-Pacific.



This year's Forum is especially timely. The theme **"Inclusive Policymaking in the Age of Uncertainty: Connecting Knowledge, Policy and People"** captures the global and national challenges we all face. Evidence-based policymaking provides the best foundation for navigating uncertainty and shaping a future that works for all citizens.

Today's Forum invites us to consider the role of Cambodia's knowledge sector in an uncertain future:

- How can researchers and policymakers adapt to rapid change?
- How can we strengthen collaboration?
- How can we ensure that evidence and dialogue are central to policymaking?



These are not easy questions. By coming together in forums like this, by listening to each other, and by sharing perspectives and expertise, we take important steps toward answering them.

Finally, I want to acknowledge and thank everyone in this room. I am delighted to see such a diverse groups of participants, representing think tanks, community organisations, research institutes, government agencies, local NGOs, multilateral organisations, and international development partners in today's forum.

In closing, I would like to thank His Excellency Mr. Vongsey Vissoth for being a champion of data and evidence in policymaking. I also thank all of today's participants. Your presence demonstrates the power of collaboration. I encourage you to take this opportunity to further enhance cooperation and to continue building a robust knowledge sector community. Your work is critical to achieving Cambodia's inclusive development goals.

**THANK YOU, AND I WISH YOU ALL A PRODUCTIVE
AND INSPIRING FORUM.**



H.E.
Perm
in C

H.E. Mr. Vissoth Vongsey
Permanent Deputy Prime Minister
Minister, Office of the Council of Ministers



KEYNOTE ADDRESS

“

Today, I am truly delighted to participate and deliver this keynote address at the Ponlok Chomnes National Policy Forum 2025, under the theme, "Inclusive Policymaking in the age of Uncertainty: Connecting Knowledge, Policy, and People", an event co-organised by The Asia Foundation and its partners through the Australian Government funded Ponlok Chomnes Program.

I extend my warmest welcome to His Excellency the Ambassador, Excellencies, Ladies, and Gentlemen, and all representatives from development partners, academic and research institutions, civil society organisations, and distinguished guests present at this forum.

I wish to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the Australian Government and The Asia Foundation for their partnership and commitment to strengthening Cambodia's research and policy ecosystem through the Ponlok Chomnes Program. This program has consistently supported Cambodia's socio-economic development in alignment with the Royal Government's strategic frameworks and key priorities. I also highly commend the Ponlok Chomnes Program for the successful implementation of its first phase from 2019 to 2023, which yielded commendable achievements through numerous research studies that contributed to policy formulation in critical sectors such as the economy, agriculture, education, tourism, and public services.

”



Indeed, the theme of today's forum is of great significance for a developing nation such as Cambodia, both in the present context and for the future, as global, regional, and domestic landscapes undergo rapid and unpredictable transformations. The world is confronting a situation of heightened uncertainty and escalating risks, affecting the flow of labour, capital, goods and services, and investment, and particularly impacting technology sharing and cooperation. Alarming trends include rising global trade tensions, reciprocal tariff pressures between major economies, economic fragmentation and global supply chain disruptions, climate change, growing inequality, demographic shifts, competition in the development of information, digital, and artificial intelligence technologies, and especially the shifting geo-economic and geopolitical landscape, which increasingly points towards a multipolar, fragmented, and regionalised world. Moreover, the erosion of global governance, a lack of global leadership, and a loss of political and strategic trust among nations have made it increasingly difficult to foster international cooperation, thereby hindering the pursuit of effective solutions to pressing global challenges.

In this context, evidence-based and inclusive policymaking is not merely a "requirement" but an "imperative", for strengthening good governance, fostering policy innovation, enhancing social cohesion, reducing development inequality, building legitimacy and trust, increasing the effectiveness of policy implementation, harnessing the potential of human capital, and reinforcing our nation's development resilience. Furthermore, international best practices and experience demonstrate that the use of credible evidence or data, integrated into dialogues with the participation of all relevant stakeholders, is more likely to enhance the Royal Government's ability to make clear, comprehensive, and adaptable policy decisions, ensuring their effective implementation to address the genuine needs of our country and its people. In this spirit, I am confident that the second phase of the Ponlok Chomnes Program, from 2023 to 2027, will further contribute to public policy formulation that is data-driven, evidence-based, and informed by inclusive dialogue, achieving even greater results with the active participation and support of ministries, institutions, research institutes, civil society organisations, and other key stakeholders.

EXCELLENCIES, LADIES, AND GENTLEMEN,

As the world grapples with a rapidly changing and unprecedented environment, Cambodia has entered a new phase of development, demanding the formulation of policies and strategies with foresight and adaptability to achieve the Cambodia Vision 2050. The Royal Government of Cambodia stands ready to navigate these changes, in whatever form they may take. We have proactively prepared national policies and reform plans for key sectors, consistently linking knowledge with the people that can effectively, transparently, justly, and equitably address societal realities and to bolster our resilience against potential future crises. The Royal Government has always prioritised evidence-based and inclusive policy decisions to ensure that our policies truly serve the needs and aspirations of every Cambodian, especially the most vulnerable, in the face of uncertainty.

As we are all aware, the Royal Government of the 7th Legislature of the National Assembly, under the enlightened leadership of Samdech Moha Borvor Thipadei Hun Manet, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, remains steadfastly committed to formulating and deciding upon policies based on evidence, data, and analysis, not on emotion or imagination. This commitment is reflected in the launch of the Pentagonal Strategy Phase I for Growth, Employment, Equity, Efficiency, and Sustainability, which was crafted based on the achievements of the past 25 years and a forward-looking analysis of the next 25 years.

Furthermore, I wish to inform the Forum that with a profound sense of responsibility and a firm will to implement deep reforms, the Royal Government has established a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for the implementation of the Pentagonal Strategy – Phase I, a vital tool for driving and measuring achievements, specifically for tracking, evaluating, and adjusting the implementation of government policies, to realise our policy objectives while strengthening the accountability of relevant ministries and institutions to the Royal Government, and concurrently, to ensure the building and strengthening of a solid foundation for development as we strive towards the Cambodia Vision 2050.

In parallel, the Royal Government is actively urging and encouraging ministries and institutions to establish reliable data systems and to engage in open and constructive dialogue, to contribute to improving the formulation of policy measures and the implementation of reforms in several areas, including public service delivery, infrastructure development planning, social protection, governance, and digital transformation.

In this respect, I would like to offer eight recommendations to this Forum and all relevant actors to promote inclusive policymaking:

Promote the establishment of a Research Community,

focusing on creating a network that connects the Royal Government with research institutions to enhance the exchange of knowledge and data and foster policy dialogue at the national, regional, and international levels on specific sectors or themes that support the implementation of the Pentagonal Strategy – Phase I and the priorities of the Royal Government. The Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) of the Office of the Council of Ministers is already developing a concept paper for this initiative, and I call upon all relevant partners to continue supporting this work to bring it to fruition.

Encourage ministries and government institutions

to increase collaboration with research institutions, educational bodies, and development partners on research activities. This includes thinking with strategic vision and conducting scenario analysis to enhance the quality, in both form and substance, of strategic policy and development plan formulation, which is crucial for making sound decisions and implementing effective and results-oriented measures that address the right problems through evidence- and data-based research.

Build and strengthen the capacity of policymakers,

researchers, and all stakeholders, through training programs, exchange forums, and the use of modern technology or artificial intelligence for faster, and more in-depth analysis, to enhance knowledge, improve ethical data collection and research, and develop analytical skills based on data and evidence, particularly in priority development sectors.

Ensure the use of data and statistics with integrity,

by promoting the quality, accuracy, completeness, consistency, and reliability of data, from collection to compilation for study and analysis. This requires a proper work system and a clear internal knowledge management framework and mechanism.

Promote investment in data infrastructure,

especially in data centres and big data, by establishing standards for data management and sharing among ministries and institutions, and by building and ensuring a data management system that is accessible, interoperable, and reusable.

Enhance intra- and inter-ministerial cooperation

to bridge the gap between the growing demand for data and the supply and sharing of reliable data, by creating multi-stakeholder dialogue platforms on inclusive policymaking, comprising representatives from key ministries, research institutions, the private sector, and civil society.

Integrate inclusive dialogue into the policymaking cycle,

ensuring multi-stakeholder participation—from state actors and the private sector to research institutions, non-governmental organisations, and target local communities, by organising consultative forums, feedback mechanisms, or public forums that guarantee stakeholder engagement at every stage of policy formulation. This will foster trust between the public, policymakers, and researchers, and encourage all stakeholders to participate in implementation.

Continue to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation system and remain committed

to evidence-based policymaking. This will enable us to respond to the real needs of society equitably and to build a better, more prosperous future for all our people.

The work outlined in these eight points is substantial and will require a long-term commitment to cultivate a culture that links knowledge with policymaking, grounded in high-quality research and data. I am hopeful that the Ponlok Chomnes Program will continue to play a key role in this long-term endeavour.

EXCELLENCIES, LADIES, AND GENTLEMEN,

I wish to re-emphasise that inclusive and evidence-based policymaking is crucial for formulating comprehensive policies. It requires linking knowledge with dialogue among the government and various stakeholders, including citizens, research and educational institutions, local and international researchers, the private sector, and development partners. This approach will generate significant positive impacts on society by gathering diverse knowledge, experiences, real-world perspectives, and opinions, which forms the basis for creating mutual understanding, ownership, and participation from all stakeholders. Through these efforts, we can prepare ourselves, enhance our agility, and foster the spirit of innovation necessary to ensure ownership, resilience, and the development of our nation.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to express the profound gratitude and high appreciation of the Royal Government and the people of Cambodia to the Australian Government. Australia has continuously provided scholarships to Cambodian students, particularly at the postgraduate level, and has offered ongoing support to research institutions in Cambodia. These contributions have been instrumental in strengthening Cambodia's capacity in research, development, and the formulation of more effective and efficient policies.

Before concluding, I would like to once again thank the Australian Embassy in Cambodia, the Ponlok Chomnes Program, and The Asia Foundation for organising this important policy forum. I also thank the representatives from ministries and institutions, development partners, the private sector, research and educational institutions, and civil society organisations who are present here today. I encourage all participants to engage in lively discussions and provide valuable input, which will serve as a foundation for translating today's dialogue into concrete action. May this forum spark meaningful conversations, inspire creativity and innovation, and strengthen partnerships for the formulation of national policies that serve the interests and meet the real needs of our citizens.

To conclude, I wish Your Excellencies, Ladies, and Gentlemen, and all participants of this forum, the four gems of Buddhist blessing: longevity, nobility, health, and strength.

THANK YOU!

Launching Ceremony: Guidebook for Quality Research and Inclusive Dialogue Guidelines

Ms. Dolgion Aldar

Ponlok Chomnes Program Director

The Asia Foundation

It is my great honour to introduce the *Ponlok Chomnes* Guidelines that we are launching today. These guidelines represent an important step forward in strengthening Cambodia's knowledge sector.

What makes a sector a sector is when the actors and institutions in those activities share common **norms and practices**. Just as the health sector is shaped by medical standards and the media sector by journalistic ethics, the knowledge sector in Cambodia needs its own norms and standards to ensure that research and dialogue are credible, ethical, and inclusive.

The **Research Guidebook** provides practical tools for conducting rigorous and ethical research — from research design and informed consent to data collection and communication.

The **Inclusive Dialogue Guidelines** complement this by providing clear, step-by-step advice on how to ensure diverse voices are heard and respected in policy conversations.

Together, these guidelines help to set the **shared norms and practices** that will make Cambodia's knowledge sector stronger, more inclusive, and more impactful- if they are used and referenced by the main stakeholders.



We also have another set of Guidelines being developed focusing on ensuring accessibility in both research and dialogue processes.

To make all these resources as widely accessible as possible, the guidelines can be downloaded.² They will also be shared through our Ponlok Chomnes Telegram group so that partners and colleagues across the country can easily access and use them. And the **Khmer-language versions are on the way.**

Today, I would like to highlight that these guidelines were not written by some

technical experts in isolation. They were developed through a **working group of around 10 dedicated members** from our research partners and civil society partners and reviewed by technical experts for input. Their commitment ensured that the guidelines are practical, grounded, and accessible for real use in Cambodia's policy environment.

We want to take this opportunity to thank the working group for their contributions, and to acknowledge that these guidelines are truly a collective achievement.

² A Guidebook on Quality Research: <https://policypulse.org/publications/references/12404/>

³ Guidelines for Inclusive Dialogue: <https://policypulse.org/publications/references/guidelines-for-inclusive-dialogue/>

Reflection from a Working Group Member

Mr. Mean Vibolratanak

Cambodian Disabled People's Organisation

I feel very happy and inspired to have been actively involved in this development process under the Ponlok Chomnes program. These guidelines can be useful for the participants here and for others who are conducting or planning to do research and share their findings.

For researchers, there may already be many documents, but the Ponlok Chomnes program has developed these two guidelines to support future inclusive research and dialogues. For those preparing to start research, these guidelines can help guide their research and learning process. These guidelines are not perfect, but they



represent an important starting point, an investment in advancing research efforts, as well as **a bridge connecting researchers to underrepresented groups** in social development. Please note that these guidelines are living documents, which means they can be updated and changed over time to fit new contexts.

As a person with a physical disability and a representative voice for persons with disabilities, I strongly hope that the diverse

data and experiences in research will be recognised and used to help fulfill our rights, in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Cambodia’s laws that promote the rights of persons with disabilities.

Finally, I would like to say that **no one should be left behind** in research or dialogue, work with us and advocate for the promotion of our rights.



Plenary Panel Discussion: The Role and Future of Cambodia's Knowledge Sector in Strengthening Inclusive Policy Processes

Cambodia's knowledge sector has become more active and has grown steadily in recent years. Encompassing think tanks, universities, research institutes, civil society organisations, and government ministries, the sector now plays a growing role in producing and sharing valuable research and evidence.

Despite this progress, challenges remain. The policy–research environment is still somewhat fragmented, evidence is not always accessible or user-friendly, and marginalised voices continue to be underrepresented in both research and policymaking processes.

These dynamics are unfolding at a time when Cambodia is undergoing rapid policy changes and when demand for credible evidence from government, development partners, and society at large is increasing. National strategies such as the Pentagonal Strategy Phase I, the National Social Protection Policy Framework 2024–2035, Neary Rattanak VI, and the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) 3.0 on climate action highlight the urgency of more inclusive, accountable, and evidence-based approaches. In parallel, the National Research Agenda 2025 affirms the role of science, technology, and innovation in national development, while also opening space for collaboration between government, research institutions, and civil society.

PLENARY PANEL DISCUSSION

AND FUTURE OF CAMBODIA'S KNOWLEDGE SECTOR IN STRENGTHENING INCLUSIVE POLICYMAKING



Looking ahead, the key question is how Cambodia's knowledge sector institutions can adapt to uncertainty, driven by climate change, economic volatility, and shifting social dynamics, and also position themselves as trusted, inclusive partners in policymaking. Strengthened collaboration among policymakers, researchers, and communities is essential to ensure national strategies deliver tangible benefits for all Cambodians, including women, youth, ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, and other underrepresented groups.

The plenary panel discussion aimed to explore the role and future of Cambodia's knowledge sector in advancing inclusive, evidence-informed policymaking process. It examined the gap between the growing demand for evidence and the limited supply of timely, credible, and accessible research, considering Cambodia's evolving development agenda. Panelists identified practical strategies to strengthen knowledge-policy linkages, focusing on how marginalised voices can be better integrated into both research and policymaking processes.

DISCUSSION SUMMARY

Cambodia's knowledge sector now plays an increasingly visible role in shaping national policies. Think tanks, universities, government ministries, and civil society groups are producing more research and sharing it with decision-makers. The panel discussion highlighted how research is being used in practice, the challenges that remain, and what can be done to make policymaking more inclusive and evidence-based.

In the agriculture sector, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) has brought research functions under one roof to strengthen coordination. Data from local studies is helping guide policies, such as competitiveness strategies in Pursat province supported by Ponlok Chomnes, and pilot projects on agricultural insurance with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Policies are incorporating more flexibility and are updated as new research becomes available.

In the education sector, research has also been central to reform. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport initiated the “**New Generation School**” model, which began as a small pilot and was later expanded nationwide once it proved effective. Teacher training standards and pedagogical institutes were also updated based on the findings from local studies. Panellists stressed that research done by Cambodian experts is more reliable and relevant than copying models from abroad. However, they noted that access to research remains limited, and more effort is needed to make findings user-friendly. Platforms like Ponlok Chomnes' Policy Pulse initiative were praised for helping make evidence more widely available.



Speakers agreed that the policy context is changing quickly, with new challenges emerging such as climate change, economic shifts, and artificial intelligence (AI). While AI can summarise existing information, it cannot replace the value of local research that reflects the real needs of the community and people's lived experiences. To ensure inclusive policymaking, it is essential to listen directly to women, youth, ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, and other marginalised groups.



Despite progress, research institutions still face barriers. Access to government data remains low, funding often depends on donor priorities, and research findings are not always presented in a way that policymakers or the public can easily use. Think tanks also face questions about independence when dealing with sensitive issues. Panellists called for more publications in Khmer, along with shorter policy briefs and infographics that are easier to understand.

Inclusion was a central theme throughout the discussion. Participatory research and feminist action research were highlighted as approaches that involve communities from the very beginning of a study. Engaging persons with disabilities as research assistants and co-researchers is another way to make evidence more representative. Ethical safeguards, such as informed consent and safe data management, are also essential.



The discussion further noted the importance of practical tools to connect researchers and policymakers. The Inclusive Policy Dialogue Guideline developed under Ponlok Chomnes was seen as a valuable resource for widening participation and creating more accountability. Ministries are beginning to use such approaches to strengthen communication and feedback. Regular forums, research boards, and technical working groups can also build trust and help translate research into real policy decisions.

Looking ahead, panelists agreed that Cambodia needs to invest more in the knowledge sector. This includes establishing a national data centre where ministries share data annually, creating competitive funding schemes for independent research, and strengthening open data systems.

At the same time, existing local networks such as commune-level agricultural officers can help collect data, spread findings, and provide feedback from communities back into policy discussions.

SPEAKERS & MODERATOR

Panellists

H.E. Finan Khim

Undersecretary of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries

H.E. Dr. Chankoulika Bo

Undersecretary of State, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport

Dr. Sithirith Mak

Scientist and Director of the Centre for Natural Resources and Environment, Cambodia Development Resource Institute

Mr. Sophal Chan

Director, Centre for Policy Studies

Ms. Sophany San

President, SheThinks Network

Moderator

Ms. Suyheang Kry

Executive Director, Women Peace Makers

Parallel Session 1a: Integrating Climate-Induced Migration and Social Protection into Climate Change Responses

Co-organised by Cambodia Development Resource Institute and National Institute of Social Affairs

Given its reliance on climate-sensitive industries, Cambodia is particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change. The country faces several significant risks, including rising temperatures, more frequent and intense extreme weather events (e.g., floods and droughts), and sea-level rise. Despite ongoing adaptation efforts, climate change is projected to reduce Cambodia's gross domestic product (GDP) by 9.8% by 2050.³ The increasing severity and frequency of climate-related hazards threaten livelihoods, including the loss of land, homes, crops, and livestock, and can force vulnerable populations to migrate as a survival strategy. For rural communities, migration can become a means to access better economic opportunities, helping households generate income, sustain livelihoods, and maintain food security in the face of environmental pressures. However, climate impacts are not evenly distributed: women, children, poor households, and ethnic minorities often face disproportionate challenges in employment, access to natural resource, social norms, gender dynamics, and adaptation to new technologies.⁴

In response, the Cambodian government has actively engaged in international climate agreements and developed key policies, including the Pentagonal Strategy Phase 1⁵, the Cambodia Climate Change Strategic Plan (CCCSP) 2024-2033⁶, the Long-Term Strategy for Carbon Neutrality (LTS4CN)⁷, the Circular Strategy on Environment 2023-

PARALLEL SESSION ROUND #1A

INTEGRATING CLIMATE-INDUCED MIGRATION AND SOCIAL PROTECTION INTO CLIMATE CHANGE RESPONSES*



MODERATOR



2028 , and Cambodia's Third Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC 3.0)⁹. While these strategies and plans aim to address climate change challenges, enhance resilience, and promote sustainable development, it is observed that climate-induced migration remains insufficiently addressed in national climate responses. Similarly, social protection, a policy tool for mitigating livelihood risks, reducing poverty, and addressing inequality, has yet to be

meaningfully integrated into Cambodia's climate policy agenda.

This discussion aimed to explore policy and practical opportunities for integrating climate-induced migration and social protection into Cambodia's climate response agenda, drawing on new research and cross-sector experiences to identify actionable strategies for inclusive resilience building.

³ https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/sites/default/files/2021-08/15849-WB_Cambodia%20Country%20Profile-WEB.pdf

⁴ https://www.cdri.org.kh/storage/pdf/Res%20report-Climate%20Change_11%2007%202024_low%20resolutions_1720668498.pdf

⁵ <https://www.mfaic.gov.kh/files/uploads/1XK1LW4MCTK9/EN%20PENTAGONAL%20STRATEGY%20-%20PHASE%20I.pdf>

⁶ <https://ncsd.moe.gov.kh/resources/document/cambodia-climate-change-strategic-plan-2024-2033>

⁷ https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/KHM_LTS_Dec2021.pdf

⁸ <https://ncsd.moe.gov.kh/resources/document/cambodia-LTS4CN-En>

⁹ https://nspc.gov.kh/Images/Cambodia%E2%80%99s%20Nationally%20Determined%20Contribution%203.0_2025_08_29_21_53_42.pdf



Presentation of Two Studies

Recent research and policy discussions have focused on the intersection of climate change, migration, and social protection in Cambodia, particularly in coastal provinces and vulnerable rural areas. Studies have shown that while knowledge of climate change has increased significantly at both national and local levels, adaptation strategies remain limited and are often based on traditional practices rather than technical knowledge.



Study 1: “Climate Change and Migration Patterns: Findings at the Commune Level in Rural Provinces of Cambodia” conducted by Cambodia Development Resource Institute

*Presented by Mr. Donira Khan, Research Associate,
Cambodia Development Resource Institute*

Cambodia is facing severe climate change impacts, including rising temperatures, erratic rainfall, and more frequent extreme weather events. These environmental changes have led to land degradation, damaged infrastructure, disrupted agriculture, and heightened socio-economic vulnerability in rural communities. A study conducted in three communes examined the link between climate change and human mobility. Findings show that most migrants have low education levels and prefer long-term migration over seasonal work. Men often engage in high-risk jobs, while women typically work in agriculture or in urban areas. Although many migrants remain within their provinces, a significant number of women move to cities.

The most common climate hazards affecting the communities are heatwaves and windstorms, with droughts and insect outbreaks also posing challenges. Limited available community support forces many households to rely on savings or loans. Migration is primarily driven by poverty, job scarcity, and debt, while climate change plays an indirect role in this dynamic, causing floods, drought, water scarcity, and decreased crop yields.



Study 2: “Climate Change Adaptation Through a Cash-Transfer Program (CTP) in Cambodia – Empirical Experiences from Coastal Communities”¹⁰ conducted by the National Institute of Social Affairs (NISA), Advocacy and Policy Institute (API), and Fisheries Action Coalition Team (FACT)

Presented by Dr. Chanthy Sam, Senior Researcher, National Institute of Social Affairs



The study on “**Climate Change Adaptation Through a Cash-Transfer Program (CTP) in Cambodia – Empirical Experiences from Coastal Communities**” was conducted in four coastal provinces: Koh Kong, Sihanoukville, Kampot, and Kep. It found that 80% of respondents understood climate change, and 91% reported having experienced impacts from climate change. However, understanding of adaptation strategies was generally weak, with responses typically rooted in existing local knowledge, such as halting activities during storms rather than proactively preparing for or mitigating risks.

The CTP was found to have a positive but limited impact. While it helps families meet basic needs and reduces vulnerability, it does not significantly contribute to income generation. Ninety-six percent used the cash transfers for daily consumption, while 65% spent it on non-food items, and 46% on healthcare and education. Although 92% reported that the CTP did not help increase their income, a similar percentage acknowledged that it helped improve resilience, and 60% said it helped them adapt to climate change. The program has evolved from a COVID-19 emergency measure to a longer-term family support package, now integrated into broader social protection policies targeting vulnerable groups such as women, the elderly, children, and persons with disabilities, particularly those holding health equity cards.

¹⁰ <https://policypulse.org/publications/articles/climate-change-adaptation-through-a-cash-transfer-program-ctp-in-cambodia-empirical-evidence-from-coastal-communities/>

DISCUSSION SUMMARY

Cambodia’s social protection system includes both social assistance (for the poor and vulnerable) and social security (for those who can contribute). Programs such as the Health Equity Fund, Family Package, School Feeding Program, Scholarship Support, and Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) provide ongoing support to reduce vulnerability. Emergency response programs are activated during crises (e.g., floods, droughts), while rehabilitation support falls under the broader social protection framework. These programs are seen as automatic stabilisers, helping individuals endure economic and environmental shocks without falling deeper into poverty.

The Royal Government works on several cross-cutting efforts. These initiatives include the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (MoSVY) collaborating with various ministries. MoSVY works with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) on the school feeding program, the Ministry of Health (MoH) on healthcare services, the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MoLVT) on TVET, the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MoEF) on poverty reduction, and the Ministry of Environment (MoE) on social protection related to climate change. Recently, a dedicated sectoral unit has also been established to support the implementation of NDC 3.0, focusing on strengthening climate change adaptation for vulnerable communities.





The updated NDC 3.0, submitted in August 2025, incorporates inclusivity and human rights considerations, targeting vulnerable populations including the elderly, people with disabilities, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and Indigenous communities. Institutional structures such as the National Council for Sustainable Development and enhanced inter-ministerial collaboration have strengthened the climate governance system.

Social work actors play a crucial role throughout at all stages of an individual's life (from birth to death) providing essential support services. Their interventions include prevention (awareness-raising and training), immediate support (such as shelters during disasters), and long-term rehabilitation, in collaboration with various stakeholders. A structured social work system consisting of primary, professional, and affiliated social workers who ensure that vulnerable individuals are effectively identified and supported, even in situations involving migration or displacement.

Additionally, initiatives such as climate-smart agriculture, climate-resilient value chains, and grant-based community enterprise development are being supported by partners like the Asian Development Bank and the Green Climate Fund, helping communities adapt to climate change while promoting local livelihoods. Programs like the Graduation-Based Program, implemented with support from development partners, aim to equip poor families with life and business skills that enable sustainable livelihood development and climate adaptation.

In conclusion, while Cambodia has made notable progress in integrating climate resilience into social protection and migration strategies, challenges remain in ensuring sustainable livelihoods, reducing dependency, and scaling up cross-sectoral collaboration. Strengthening policy implementation, enhancing community-level adaptation knowledge, and improving coordination among ministries are essential steps to build long-term resilience in the face of climate change. MoSVY reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening social protection at the grassroots level by identifying vulnerable groups such as women, pregnant women, children, persons with disabilities, and individuals with mental disorders. When cases require broader intervention, MoSVY will coordinate with other sectors/ministries.

SPEAKERS & MODERATOR

Panellists

H.E. Mr. Boriraks Sar

President, National Institute of Social Affairs

Mr. Sophornreaksmey Sreng

Deputy Secretary General of the General Secretariat for the National Council for Social Protection

Mr. Sona Long

Deputy Director of the Climate Change Department, General Directorate of Policy and Strategy, Ministry of Environment

Presenters

Dr. Chanthy Sam

Senior Researcher, National Institute of Social Affairs

Mr. Donira Khan

Research Associate, Cambodia Development Resource Institute

Moderator

Dr. Raksme Ang

Research Fellow, Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI)

Parallel Session 1b: Inclusive Rural Development: Community and Social Group Participation in Local Planning and Impacts of Local Investments in Addressing Social Groups' Needs in the Context of Climate Change

Co-organised by Centre for Policy Studies (CPS) and My Village Organization (MVi)

Cambodia remains a predominantly rural country, with the majority of its population relying on agriculture and natural resources for their livelihoods. Despite notable economic progress, rural areas continue to experience high poverty rates, limited livelihood options, and pronounced income inequalities compared to urban centres. Low agricultural productivity, caused by limited access to technology and extension services, is further exacerbated by the impacts of climate change, such as unpredictable weather and increased frequency of floods and droughts, which affect different groups in different ways, including women, persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and Indigenous minorities.

Rural communities also face significant infrastructure deficits, including inadequate roads, electricity, clean water, and sanitation. These gaps restrict economic activity and contribute to lower standards of living. Additionally, the digital divide limits access to education, market information, and opportunities for social and economic advancement. Education and healthcare services are generally of lower quality and less accessible in rural areas, leading to higher rates of school dropouts, malnutrition, and preventable diseases.



Rural communities often have limited influence over policymaking. Local governance structures and community organisations face capacity constraints, and national development policies sometimes overlook local knowledge and context, leading to mismatches between policy goals and community needs. Bridging the gap between grassroots research and national policy is therefore vital. Integrating insights and evidence from the village level into policy development can help ensure that rural development strategies are inclusive, responsive, and effective in addressing the needs of Cambodia’s rural population.

This parallel session on “Inclusive Rural Development” focused on how rural research and case studies at the village level could feed into the development of rural development policy. The discussion drew from CPS’s and MVI’s research findings as well as insights from policymakers, community representatives and key non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

DISCUSSION SUMMARY

While Cambodia’s economic performance has increased and poverty has been reduced, there are still disparities in terms of urban and rural development. People living in remote areas continue to face barriers in accessing opportunities to increase household income and improve their living standards. The agricultural sector remains the main source of income for most rural households. Thus, development strategies must be more comprehensive and better targeted to address rural needs. The Ministry of Rural Development has been implementing the *Rural Development Strategic Plan 2019–2023* and other policies to ensure positive outcomes. However, success requires collaboration among multiple levels of stakeholders.

The discussion on inclusive rural development highlighted the importance of bringing together diverse stakeholders including government, NGOs, researchers, practitioners, and community representatives to ensure that both research and practical insights inform national policy.

According to the representative from the Ministry of Rural Development, during the seventh mandate, the government began formulating Cambodia’s first comprehensive National Rural Development Policy, covering rural development across Cambodia. It has been developed through





extensive research, internal reviews, and wide consultations with ministries, NGOs, development partners, and subnational administrations. This process aimed to balance governance and management perspectives with grassroots needs, making the policy both sustainable and responsive. The draft has been reviewed by the Office of the Council of Ministers, after earlier meetings with the National Council for Development and the Economic and Social Council. It was expected to be launched in September 2025.

The plan focuses on creating “**model villages**” that demonstrate sustainability and dignity. To ensure responsiveness, the Ministry of Rural Development (MRD) is practising a decentralised approach, transferring four main responsibilities to subnational administrations: maintaining sanitation and public restrooms, repairing irrigation systems, maintaining wells, and managing Type 4 rural roads. Local governments are being trained to manage and maintain these facilities.

Besides the government initiative, the international community shared their contributions to rural development, including programs on health and nutrition, education, water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), livelihoods, climate change adaptation, and child protection. They work closely with the commune and ensure safety and accountability especially for women and children. They identified persistent gaps such as limited coordination among actors, insufficient budgets at the subnational level, and barriers for vulnerable groups, especially people with disabilities. Due to resource limitations, some actions need strong collaboration, joint planning, and

suitable resource allocation to meet the target outcomes and results.

The representative from the Ministry of Rural Development acknowledged these challenges and outlined strategies that emphasise cooperation, efficiency, and partnership. The government recognises that it cannot tackle all challenges simultaneously, given resource constraints. Currently, basic water supply coverage stands at 89% and basic sanitation coverage at 94%. However, there is a discrepancy between access to basic and safely managed services. Only 21% and 51% of the population have access to



safely managed services for clean water ¹¹ and sanitation ¹² , respectively. To address coordination and budgeting issues, the government introduced its “Cooperation, Efficiency, and Partnership” strategy as part of its fifth program. The MRD now holds quarterly meetings with CSOs and provincial departments of rural development to discuss barriers and find joint solutions.

The government openly collaborates with CSOs with or without a formal memorandum of understanding. Officials underscored the role of Village Development Committees in coordinating family-centred development and encouraged stakeholders to align

investments toward shared goals. If partners can jointly mobilise investments and resources, villages can be developed into models of good governance, education, healthy environments, livelihoods, infrastructure, and technology. These model villages are intended to serve as examples that inspire others.

¹¹ Safely managed services for clean water mean that their water comes from an improved source, is accessible on the premises, is available whenever needed, and is free from contamination.

¹² Safely managed services for sanitation mean that they use an improved sanitation facility that is not shared and safely disposes of human excreta either on-site or off-site.



There are currently 10,315 villages in Cambodia, and government representatives noted that, given existing resource constraints, progress would take a long time, potentially up to 200 years if each village required full support. Therefore, the MRD aims to develop “potential villages” that can gradually evolve into model villages. Under the 2050 Strategic Plan, if each successful model village can inspire or mentor ten others, providing official support to 500 villages could eventually yield 5,000 model villages nationwide. The MRD’s current target is to create 50 model villages as a pilot.

Local organisations working with Indigenous and marginalised communities in the northeast raised concerns about climate change, natural resource management, and inclusion. They noted that participation in local planning processes often falls short. While policy frameworks require broad community engagement, in practice participation remains low, particularly among women, persons with disabilities, and other marginalised groups. This raises questions about how national policy can ensure more inclusive engagement and equitable budget allocation.

In commune investment plans, only men and women are currently recognised as social categories, leaving other underrepresented groups unrecognised. Communities stressed that rural issues affect all citizens and should not be addressed in isolation. People in remote areas face economic hardship and lower living standards. Most rely on farming, fisheries, and forest resources, which are increasingly affected by droughts and erratic rainfall. Some households are also struggling with debt. While NGOs and government programs provide support, solutions remain constrained due to limited resources.

To promote inclusivity in rural development planning, more time and attention are needed to design and reform policies that ensure no one is left behind. Future policy and reform processes must meaningfully engage grassroots voices from the very beginning. Strengthening local participation mechanisms and ensuring that diverse social groups including Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, and women are actively involved in decision-making will be crucial. Moreover, greater coordination among ministries, development partners, and local governments is essential to translate policy commitments into concrete actions. Sustainable and inclusive rural development will depend not only on good strategies but also on shared accountability, equitable resource allocation, and continued collaboration among all stakeholders.

SPEAKERS & MODERATOR

Panellists

Mr. Siphath Touch

Deputy Director General, Ministry of Rural Development

Ms. Onchan Keo

Women leader in Samkhouy village, Stung Treng Province

Mr. Sophorn Chhun

Senior Technical Specialist for Food Security and Livelihood, World Vision

Dr. Narith Por

Researcher, My Village Organization

Moderator

Mr. Sophal Chan

Director, Centre for Policy Studies

Parallel Session 2a: Strengthening the Role of Humanities and Social Sciences in Cambodia's Evolving Research Landscape

Organised by the Center for Khmer Studies

The year 2023 marked the beginning of a new era in Cambodia's development outlook. At the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) 7th Legislature of the National Assembly, under the direction of the Prime Minister Hun Manet, along with the Council of Ministers, the Pentagonal Strategy Phase I was adopted with the ambitious goals of Cambodia becoming a middle-income economy by 2030 and an upper-income economy by 2048.

The Pentagonal Strategy Phase I is the first of five phases spanning a 25-year period and is designed to build on the accomplishments of the development strategies of the previous 25 years. To accomplish its development goals, the Pentagonal Strategy is designed around five pillars (Growth, Employment, Equity, Efficiency, Sustainability) and five key priorities (People, Roads, Water, Electricity, and Technology).

In the Pentagonal Strategy Phase I document published in August 2023, research is seen as a critical component in policy and program design, implementation, and evaluation. Evidence-based research is cited in the Strategy several times in relation to Pentagon I: Human Capital Development. For example, regarding teacher training, teachers are encouraged "to carry out regular research". Regarding health, the report notes the importance of "promoting medical research". Regarding agriculture, the report states the importance of "research and



PARALLEL SESSION ROUND #2A

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES IN CAMBODIA'S EVOLVING RESEARCH LANDSCAPE

Mr. Keo Duong
Lecturer
Royal University of
Phnom Penh (RUPP)

Dr. Ea Darith
Director of Department of
Conservation and Archaeology
National Authority for
Preah Vihear

Dr. Un Leang
Dean of the Faculty of Social
Sciences and Humanities
Royal University of
Phnom Penh (RUPP)

Ms. Bun Phoury
Vice President of SheThinks
Network and REDD+ Research
and Impact Advisor of
Conservation Society (WCS)

Dr. George Chigas
Associate Teaching Professor
Emeritus
UMass Lowell

MODERATOR

development of climate-resilient crops". Especially important for the purposes of the panel, the report emphasises the importance of "strengthening the effectiveness in research, compilation, and dissemination of historic values of heritage buildings, artifacts, ancient sites, *sleuk rith* manuscripts," etc. Additionally, regarding the monitoring and evaluating of the Strategy mechanisms, the document states that the RGC will establish "an evidence-based monitoring and evaluation framework to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of the implementation of the Pentagonal Strategy".¹³

Prime Minister Dr. Hun Manet has emphasised that national policies must be developed "*not by imagination or emotion, but by concrete data,*" describing data as "*a map and a compass*" for navigating Cambodia's development trajectory. He underscored that reliable, high-quality data is essential for formulating effective short-, medium-, and long-term policies, reflecting a growing national commitment to evidence-based and inclusive policymaking.

This perspective is strongly reflected in the objectives of the Ponlok Chomnes II program, which seeks to strengthen evidence-informed policymaking and inclusive dialogue between government, researchers, and civil society. An independent review of Ponlok Chomnes I, published in 2022, also affirmed the program’s effectiveness and its contribution to advancing evidence-based policymaking in Cambodia.

Within the context of the Pentagonal Strategy Phase I and Ponlok Chomnes II, this panel sought to explore:

- 1. The potential role of Cambodian scholars working in the humanities and social sciences;
- 2. Their level of interest and capacity for engaging in this research context;
- 3. The challenges they face; and
- 4. Possible strategies for meeting those challenges.



DISCUSSION SUMMARY

Interest in the humanities and social sciences is growing among Cambodian scholars, but challenges remain, including limited institutional support, unclear research goals, and few opportunities for early-career researchers. Insights from academics and educators highlight both encouraging progress and areas that still need attention.

Structured programs such as fellowships and mentorship-based training have shown strong results. With proper guidance, participants complete research projects, publish findings, and present at conferences. However, in many universities, student research engagement remains low. For instance, while hundreds enroll in history programs, only a few complete theses due to limited supervision and the heavy

13 <https://www.mfaic.gov.kh/files/uploads/1XK1LW4MCTK9/EN%20PENTAGONAL%20STRATEGY%20-%20PHASE%20I.pdf>



teaching workloads of lecturers. Many scholars begin serious research only after graduation, when they have better access to resources and networks. Still, there are notable success stories of Cambodian researchers producing peer-reviewed work, proving what can be achieved with sustained support.

A noticeable academic shift toward the humanities and social sciences has taken place, with around 75% of Cambodian studies concentrated in these fields. The Pentagonal Strategy emphasises research and innovation as national priorities, signalling stronger government support

for emerging scholars. Cambodia also has a rich tradition of research in history, anthropology, and education, including collaborations with international partners on cultural heritage preservation and UNESCO-recognised initiatives. Yet, the country still lacks a centralised system for tracking research outputs, limiting understanding of national progress and coordination across institutions.

Defining who is considered as a researcher is an ongoing discussion. Some people define researchers based on their academic qualifications, others on whether they publish in journals, and some by their

hands-on experience. In Cambodia, many women are actively involved in research through networks and organisations, even while balancing household responsibilities. Established in 2021 as a small, informal group of female researchers, the SheThinks Network has since evolved into a structured network comprising 80 members. The members of this network are committed to learning and contributing, though they often lack formal recognition. Gender-inclusive and supportive environments are seen as essential for the overall growth of research in the country.

Globally, research output is dominated by countries such as the USA, China, and the United Kingdom. China has recently become the largest producer of academic publications, though the USA remains the most cited. Cambodia still lags in terms of global publication numbers and citations, but local research activity is growing steadily. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport and other bodies are managing hundreds of research projects, indicating positive momentum. A deeper concern raised by experienced scholars is the purpose of this research. Cambodian researchers are encouraged to think beyond short-term goals and ask critical questions: *Why are we doing this research? Who is it for?*

Most Cambodian research since the early 1990s has focused on development and reconstruction, which was necessary after decades of conflict. This practical research has played a crucial role in rebuilding the country. However, scholars also point to the need for more reflective research, studies that explore identity, values, and long-term knowledge building. If research is only treated as a technical task or project requirement, it may lose its value as a meaningful academic activity. Scholarly research should help shape society, contribute to national identity, and build a knowledge base that serves future generations.

<https://www.mfaic.gov.kh/files/uploads/1XK1LW4MCTK9/EN%20PENTAGONAL%20STRATEGY%20-%20PHASE%20I.pdf>

Cambodia’s research landscape in the humanities and social sciences is improving, driven by increasing interest from scholars and students, particularly women. Government policies and international partnerships have helped support this growth. However, important challenges remain such as limited mentoring, unclear expectations, lack of data systems, and the need for deeper academic reflection. For Cambodia, building a strong and independent research culture will require balancing development goals with deeper academic reflection and ensuring that all researchers are empowered and recognised for their contributions.

SPEAKERS & MODERATOR

Panellists

Dr. Leang Un

*Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities,
Royal University of Phnom Penh, Senior Research
Fellow of Center for Khmer Studies*

Dr. Darith Ea

*Director of Department of Conservation and
Archaeology, National Authority for Preah Vihear*

Ms. Phoury Bun

*Vice President of SheThinks Network, and REDD+
Research and Impact Advisor of Wildlife Conservation
Society*

Mr. Duong Keo

*Lecturer and Co-Instructor, Royal University of Phnom
Penh, CKS Ponlok Chomnes Research Fellowship
Program*

Moderator

Dr. George Chigas

Associate Teaching Professor Emeritus, UMass Lowell

Parallel Session 2b: Lightning Talk: Small Policy Ideas for Cambodia's Future

Organised by Future Forum

Young researchers and members of marginalised communities play a crucial role in shaping Cambodia's sustainable development trajectory. However, meaningful opportunities for inclusive, solution-focused policy dialogue, especially on issues that directly affect ordinary and low-income Cambodians, remain limited.

To help bridge this gap, Future Forum organised a dynamic 80-minute Lightning Talk session, providing an entry point for passionate young researchers and thinkers to meaningfully showcase their small yet impactful policy ideas, focusing on everyday issues facing low-income and marginalised Cambodians.

The presentations explored practical and creative solutions to improve daily life, including topics such as walkable streets, dedicated public bus lanes, accessible alleyways for elderly residents, pagodas as educational spaces, safe routes to schools, traditional markets as hubs for social cohesion, and gender-affirming care for the transgender community.



Each speaker presented one **small but tangible policy idea** solutions that, while modest in scope, offer practical responses to everyday challenges faced by Cambodia's marginalised communities. The session was designed to spark interaction on grounded, community-focused policy proposals and to challenge assumptions. Following each presentation, audience members directly engaged with speakers, offering questions, critiques, and ideas to enhance feasibility and impact.

By spotlighting these people-centred ideas, the session demonstrated how youth-led research and innovation can meaningfully contribute to inclusive and responsive policymaking in Cambodia.



DISCUSSION SUMMARY

The youth session showcased a range of innovative ideas from young presenters who reflected on issues facing their communities and proposed practical solutions for Cambodia's future. Each presentation highlighted how everyday challenges, from housing and urban planning to social protection, minority rights, and taxation, connect to broader policy debates.

The first presentation, by **Aronsakada Ses**, focused on housing and urban settlement. He argued that while new housing developments such as Boreys may appear modern, they often copy models from other countries without considering Cambodia's local context. Limited space

for greenery and safe walking areas, along with poor infrastructure planning, reduces quality of life. Aronsakada recommended giving priority to pedestrians, separating vehicle and housing areas, and ensuring infrastructure such as waste collection and green space is prepared before construction. He pointed to international examples, such as Copenhagen's master plan, where parking is located outside living blocks, allowing more space for play and community. He concluded that with small shifts in mindset, Cambodia could create more livable, climate-resilient, and inclusive cities.



Chanmonyneath Neth then presented on women working in the informal economy, who make up the majority of Cambodia's female workforce. Based on her own observations and International Labour Organization (ILO) data, she noted that most women in markets and factories earn daily incomes without registration or access to social protection. To address this, she proposed introducing universal basic income for women in informal work. This, she argued, would strengthen women's financial security, close gaps in the social protection system, and promote women's participation in society. She also called for coordination across ministries and partners, careful targeting of beneficiaries, and robust monitoring systems to ensure sustainability.

On issues of gender identity and inclusion, **Seaklay Say** spoke about the experiences of transgender communities. He emphasised the importance of using respectful terms and moving away from discriminatory language. Many transgender people face high costs for medical care and lack access to services tailored to their needs. He called for including transgender voices in co-designing policies, using existing structures rather than creating new systems, and improving data collection on transgender people to make their needs more visible.

Rethy Bun highlighted the role of minority communities in protecting Cambodia's forests. He reminded the audience that Indigenous peoples globally safeguard much of the world's biodiversity, and in Cambodia, their traditional farming practices and cultural beliefs are closely tied to forest preservation. However, land registration for minority groups remains slow and complicated, with only a fraction of communities receiving titles. He urged faster land registration, stronger laws, and closer collaboration with minority groups so that traditional knowledge and cultural practices are integrated into forest management policies.

Savuth Run examined the government's poverty reduction program and the use of IDPoor cards. He observed that many vulnerable families, especially in urban areas, are left out of the system. He proposed updating poverty data annually instead of every three years, improving transparency through independent audits and public forums, and ensuring both rural and urban poor are included. Such measures, he argued, would help Cambodia achieve its poverty reduction goals and "leave no one behind" commitments.

Kosal Nith addressed economic resilience by proposing reforms to Cambodia's tax system. He explained that heavy reliance on exports, combined with rising tariffs and regional pressures, puts the economy at risk. To secure more revenue for education, health, and social welfare, he recommended strengthening property and income taxes, expanding taxation to the informal sector, and improving property valuation systems. For taxation to succeed, he emphasised that citizens must see taxes as an investment and trust that government spending benefits society.

Finally, a presentation from **Sreymean Kouch** on animal welfare proposed laws to prohibit the eating of cats and dogs in Cambodia, drawing lessons from South Korea and Turkey. The speaker argued that such laws would improve Cambodia’s international image, promote animal welfare, and align with changing public attitudes. At the same time, support mechanisms would be needed for sellers transitioning away from the trade, along with stronger cooperation with NGOs to manage stray animals.

SPEAKERS & MODERATOR

Speakers

Mr. Aronsakda Ses

Research Fellow, Future Forum

Ms. Chanmonyneath Neth

Junior Research Fellow, Future Forum

Seaklay Say

Junior Research Fellow, Future Forum

Mr. Rithy Bun

Junior Research Fellow, Future Forum

Mr. Savuth Run

Junior Research Fellow, Future Forum

Mr. Kosal Nith

*Research Fellow, Future Forum & Research Associate,
Cambodia Development Resource Institute*

Sreymean Kouch

Junior Research Fellow, Future Forum

Moderator

Mr. Dara Chea

*Program Manager for Community of Research Program,
Future Forum*

Plenary Keynote

Monika Mak

Executive Director

Cambodian Disabled People's Organisation

It is an honour to join you here today at the Ponlok Chomnes National Policy Forum as we reflect together on inclusive policy practice in Cambodia. I would like to thank The Asia Foundation, the Australian Government, and all of the partners involved for creating a space that prioritises not only evidence and policy, but also people, and especially those who have too often been left out of policymaking processes.

For me, inclusive policy is not an abstract idea. It is about whether a young woman with a disability in rural Cambodia can finish school, find a job, and participate fully in her community. For those of us working in the disability rights movement, we often talk about inclusion as a principle. But inclusion is more than a principle. It is a practice. And it is a process that must be intentional, continuous, and reflective. This morning, I sat next to a woman with a visual impairment who was holding a braille agenda in her hands. I was surprised when she told me what the next agenda item was. This event showed a good practice of inclusion.

Let me highlight three important developments that give us reason for optimism.

- First, we know that Cambodia has taken meaningful steps in recent years. The adoption of the National Disability Strategic Plan (2024–2028), is a major achievement, and it lays out a vision for greater equity, accessibility, and empowerment. But the impact of this plan, and others like it, will depend on how inclusive our institutions and systems truly become.

- Second, Australia has launched its new Development for All strategy, placing disability inclusion at the centre of its development cooperation. These commitments show that disability inclusion is not a side issue, but a priority for governments and partners alike.
- Third, The Cambodian Disabled People's Organisation (CDPO) is also in the process of developing its own five-year strategy, which will build on our long history of advocacy, strengthen our research and evidence base, and amplify the voices of persons with disabilities in national policy processes.

Together, these efforts give us momentum to build a more inclusive society. But alongside these important developments, **we must also acknowledge three challenges that remain:**

- First, inclusion is still too often seen as an 'add-on' rather than a foundation.
- Second, resources for disability inclusion – whether financial, technical, or human – remain limited.
- Third, representation of persons with disabilities in decision-making is still far below where it should be.



So even as we celebrate progress, we must redouble our efforts to address these gaps. Consider diversity and view inclusion as an approach that spans across all sectors.

That's why we are especially pleased that Ponlok Chomnes has chosen disability inclusion as the main focus for 2025. This decision comes at the right time. By prioritising disability inclusion, Ponlok Chomnes is helping to ensure that the policy dialogue process in Cambodia is not only evidence-based but also representative of all citizens. This morning, I heard a person with visual impairment raised about engaging people with disabilities in research.

Inclusion must begin with the very first question we ask in our research. It must be built into how we collect data, design dialogue, choose language, and define success. That is why the launch of the Ponlok Chomnes Guidelines on Inclusive Dialogue this morning is so important. These tools make research not only more rigorous, but more just.

And inclusion does not stand alone. It is increasingly connected to other movements: gender equity, youth engagement, climate justice, rural development. These links reflect a deeper truth: people live at the intersection of many identities, and good policy must reflect that complexity.

Disability inclusion is fundamental for three reasons:

- According to the Cambodian Socio-Economic Survey, around 12% of households include at least one person with a disability. Yet representation in decision-making and access to public services remain limited.
- Communication, because how we share knowledge – through media, reports, or public forums – determines whether persons with disabilities can access information, see themselves represented, and contribute meaningfully to the national conversation. I am speaking loudly to ensure that my voice can be clearly heard by individuals with visual impairments.
- Dialogue, because persons with disabilities bring insights and solutions that enrich national debates on education, employment, health, and governance.
- And in policy, because laws and programs that are not inclusive risk leaving people behind and widening inequality.

At CDPO and within the Ponlok Chomnes Program, we believe that research on disability, youth, women, or any other group must not be done on them, but with them – and whenever possible, by them. This principle is essential for producing knowledge that is accurate, ethical, and transformative. I am proud that CDPO is increasingly recognised within Cambodia’s research sector for promoting participatory approaches that place lived experience at the center.

The Forum’s focus on inclusive dialogue resonates deeply with this principle. True dialogue is not about speaking on behalf of others, but creating the space where others can speak for themselves. Inclusive policy practice is therefore about power – about who gets to define the problem, shape the research, and decide the solutions.

So how do we build on today’s discussions and ensure inclusion is not a one-off theme, but a permanent feature of policymaking in Cambodia?

Ponlok Chomnes and its partners can leverage this year's focus to:

- Support more disability-inclusive research methodologies and training.
- Provide platforms where persons with disabilities, especially women and youth, are central voices.
- Build stronger partnerships between government, civil society, and research institutions to implement the National Disability Strategic Plan.



But it is not only about institutions. Each of us has a role to play. Whether you are a policymaker, researcher, or advocate, inclusion requires your active effort.

When persons with disabilities and other excluded groups participate in research, design programs, and shape policy, we get better outcomes for everyone.



As we move now to celebrate the Inclusive Awards, let us remember that the real award is not a certificate or a trophy. It is the progress we make in building a Cambodia where evidence, dialogue, and policy reflect the voices of *all* people.

And that is exactly what today's Awards recognise- practical, inspiring examples of research, communication, and dialogue that are not only about inclusion, but powered by it.

Finally, in an age of climate disruption, economic shifts, and global uncertainty, let us not retreat into technocratic solutions that treat people as numbers. Instead, let us lean into shared learning, mutual respect, and the belief that every voice matters.

I hope that today's Forum is not the end of the conversation, but a launching point. Let us take forward the energy, ideas, and commitment we have seen today and use them to build a more inclusive, resilient, and informed Cambodia.

THANK YOU.

Inclusive Awards Presentation: Impressions by the Winners

In promoting inclusion in policy processes, Ponlok Chomnes hosted an Inclusive Award Ceremony in 2025 to recognise the efforts that promote: Inclusive Research, Inclusive Communication of Research Products, and Inclusive Dialogue in Cambodia at either national or subnational levels. These awards honored individuals, groups, and organisations that have demonstrated an exceptional commitment to inclusivity by recognising and addressing the needs of diverse groups and promoting equity, accessibility, and meaningful participation of diverse groups in research, communication, and dialogue.

The purpose of these awards was to recognise and encourage work that demonstrates inclusivity, be it through innovative research, accessible and inclusive research products, or dialogue that addresses the needs and views of diverse groups in the policy processes at local or national levels.

These awards aim to:

Spotlight exceptional efforts that promote and put into practice inclusion and accessibility.	Inspire and motivate others to incorporate inclusivity in their work.	Provide a platform for sharing best practices in inclusive research, communication, and dialogue.
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PRESENTATION OF AWARDEES



Inclusive Research Award

Honouring research initiatives that ensure inclusion in their methodologies, focus areas, or collaborative approaches.

The winner of the Inclusive Research Award went to **Cambodia Children and Young People Movement for Child Rights (CCYMCR)** for their Child Rights Situation Assessment Research, which used child-friendly tools and empowered children from diverse backgrounds to participate and share their voices while engaging relevant stakeholders.

“CCYMCR is just a small organisation that works on children’s rights. Our research is inclusive because we include children, children with disabilities, children with diverse SOGIE ¹⁴ – LGBTQI+ children, and Indigenous children. We produced this work to inform the government to integrate our findings into the national policy plan. I would like to thank Save the Children for passing this information and nominating us. We also thank Ponlok Chomnes and the contribution from CDPO. There are three organisations working on this, which are CCYMCR, CDPO, and WOMEN Organisation.

¹⁴ SOGIE stands for Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression

I would like to thank the organising committee and selection committee for this Inclusive Research Award. For CCYMCR, we will continue to work hard and strengthen our data collection to be more inclusive to encourage better practices of children's rights in the Cambodian community." — Ms. Neak Sokunthea, Team Leader of Executive Committee, CCYMCR

Inclusive Communications of Research Award

Recognising innovative communication efforts that present research through diverse, accessible formats so that everyone can engage with and understand the evidence.

The winner of the Inclusive Communications of Research Award went to **Ms. Nika Tath** for her contributions to the accessible communications of "**Our Ability Beyond Our Disability**" research through formats such as audio storytelling, braille, screen reader-friendly formats, and exhibitions, breaking barriers in understanding among persons with disabilities and the public as well as generating discussion and promoting awareness.

"I can't believe I am the winner of this Inclusive Communications Award. I came here to join the event and celebrate the winners. My tears fell with joy and excitement. I would like to thank the Women Peace Makers team, Ms. Suyheang and Ms. Chariya, as well as the Ponlok Chomnes program for their encouragement. I will continue to work harder to help people with disabilities, especially women. So don't lose hope—as long as we can breathe, we can make change." — *Ms. Nika Tath*

Inclusive Dialogue Award

Recognising efforts that foster meaningful participation of diverse groups by creating safe, respectful spaces where different voices are heard and valued.

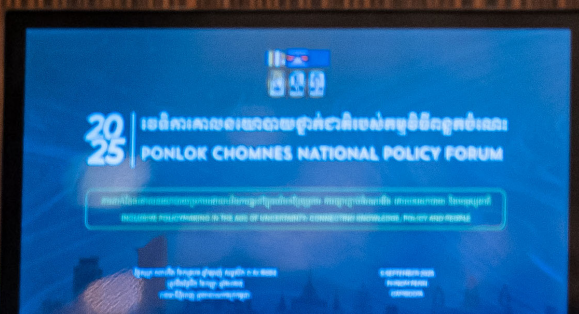
The winner of the Inclusive Dialogue Award went to **Chhloh Theatre** for their powerful community-driven art performances addressing social issues, from LGBTQI+ discrimination to the experiences of persons with disabilities and gender-based violence survivors, promoting awareness and understanding.

“Thank you so much for providing this award to our team. I represent the Chhloh Theatre Group. We have worked hard to produce results like this, focusing on sustainability and long-term change. Thank you to the selection committee. We want audiences to see the educational and social value in our performances, and we invite everyone to experience Chhloh Theatre’s productions.” — *Ms. Channy Ung, Chhloh Theatre representative*





Ms. Evangeline Larsen
Second Secretary, Australian Embassy



CLOSING REMARKS

“

It has been a privilege to join you today for the National Policy Forum 2025. On behalf of the Australian Government, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the Royal Government of Cambodia, the Office of the Council of Ministers, our partners at The Asia Foundation, and all the Cambodian research institutions, civil society organisations, and participants who have made this event possible.

Throughout the day, we have seen the real value of connecting knowledge, policy, and people. The discussions reminded us that inclusive policymaking is not only about writing policies but about ensuring they are informed by evidence, by dialogue, and responsive to the realities of Cambodian people, including women, youth, persons with disabilities, and ethnic minorities.

Australia is honoured to be a long-term supporter of Cambodia's valuable knowledge sector. Through the Ponlok Chomnes II program, we are helping to deepen collaboration between policymakers, researchers, and communities; strengthening the supply of robust and inclusive evidence; and supporting local leadership in tackling Cambodia's development challenges. This is part of Australia's wider contribution to sustainable development in Cambodia, supporting human development, climate resilience, inclusive governance, and economic growth.

”

Several highlights stand out from today's Forum:

- I am especially encouraged to that the agenda and discussion of today's Forum were shaped by our Cambodian research partners and civil society, a strong signal of how Cambodia's knowledge sector has shifted towards dialogue and co-creation¹⁵.
- The parallel sessions explored pressing issues: how data can guide responses to climate change, migration, and social protection; how community voices must be integrated into subnational development decisions; how academic institutions can strengthen research capacity to inform national policy; and how youth, and youth networks, are driving engagement today.
- The Forum also highlighted Cambodia's commitment under the Pentagonal Strategy, as well as Cambodia's new national strategies on gender equality, disability, social protection, and climate change and many other initiatives to support Cambodia's knowledge sector.
- We were also pleased to see the launch today of the Ponlok Chomnes Guidelines on Research Quality and Inclusive Dialogue.
- The Inclusive Awards Ceremony was another highlight of the day, clearly showing us what we strive for- such as those included in the Guidelines- are actually happening in real life. We hope their work will inspire all of us to making inclusion the norm in all of our work.

So the question becomes: *what comes next*? Forums like this are important, but the true test is what happens after the Forum ends.

- Will collaboration between the knowledge sector and government ministries deepen in policymaking and planning?
- Will research institutions continue to invest in inclusivity, not just as a value but as a practice?
- Will donors and development partners sustain the time, space, and flexibility needed for meaningful dialogue?

¹⁵ Those who designed the sessions are: CDRI-NISA, CPS – My village, CKS, Future Forum, and GEDSI Consortium

I believe the answer is yes, and I believe it because I see the commitment in this room. And I look forward to hearing more of the provincial forums that Ponlok Chomnes partners will organise.

On behalf of the Australian government, I want to close by reaffirming our ongoing commitment to supporting inclusive governance in Cambodia. We believe that strong institutions, accountable leadership, and inclusive processes are not luxuries. They are foundations for lasting development.

Finally, I wish to thank:

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The Ponlok Chomnes partners—from Strategic Partners to Innovation Partners, GEDSI Consortium members, and the SheThinks Network.	The dedicated researchers and facilitators who brought these sessions to life.	The government counterparts and ministry representatives who shared openly and constructively.	And of course, The Asia Foundation team for their coordination and vision.

As we conclude the formal program, I warmly invite you all to join the networking reception. It is an opportunity to continue these conversations, strengthen connections, and build the partnerships that will carry today’s spirit of dialogue and collaboration forward.

THANK YOU, AND I WISH YOU CONTINUED SUCCESS IN YOUR IMPORTANT WORK.

CONCLUSION

The Ponlok Chomnes National Policy Forum 2025 marked an important moment in Cambodia's ongoing efforts to strengthen evidence-based and inclusive policymaking. Convened under the theme "Inclusive Policymaking in the Age of Uncertainty: Connecting Knowledge, Policy and People," participants reaffirmed that Cambodia's knowledge sector plays a critical role in shaping policy decisions that are grounded in credible evidence and inclusive dialogue.

Throughout the discussions, sessions highlighted key areas of progress, from strengthening research capacity and bridging the gap between national and local evidence, to integrating climate change, migration, and social protection policies, and ensuring rural and marginalised communities are not left behind. The Forum also celebrated outstanding achievements in inclusive research, communication, and dialogue through the Inclusive Awards, recognising Cambodian organisations and individuals advancing accessibility and participation across the policy process.

Several cross-cutting lessons emerged from the event. First, collaboration between government, researchers, and communities remains central to ensuring that data and evidence are used meaningfully in policy formulation and implementation. Second, inclusion must move beyond consultation to become a standard practice, where women, youth, persons with disabilities, and ethnic minorities are active contributors to research and dialogue. And third, sustained investment in Cambodia's knowledge sector, from national data systems to local research networks, is essential to strengthening the country's resilience and adaptive capacity.





The Forum highlighted the shared commitment of the Royal Government of Cambodia, the Australian Government, and The Asia Foundation to fostering a policy environment grounded in openness, evidence, and inclusion. Importantly, it also reflected the growing leadership of Cambodian research institutions, civil society organisations, and local communities in shaping and sustaining this effort. Moving forward, Ponlok Chomnes and its partners will continue to strengthen these locally led collaborations, build capacity within Cambodia's knowledge sector,

and expand opportunities for inclusive policy engagement, including through the upcoming Provincial Policy Forums, which will bring these conversations closer to communities across the country.

By connecting knowledge, policy, and people, the Ponlok Chomnes National Policy Forum 2025 has strengthened the foundation for a more inclusive, evidence-informed, and responsive policy ecosystem—one that serves the needs and aspirations of all Cambodians.

Annex 1: Speakers, Panelists, and Moderators



Dr. Raksmei Ang
Research Fellow
*Cambodia Development
Resource Institute*

Dr. Raksmei Ang is a research fellow at the Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI). He earned his Doctoral Degree in Engineering from the Tokyo Institute of Technology, Japan, specialising in Global Engineering for Development, Environment, and Society. His research primarily focuses on climate change and environment-related issues. This includes assessing the potential impacts of climate and land-use changes on water resources, streamflow, sediment load, and water balance estimations, as well as drought assessment. The outputs of his research have led to several publications in leading international journals and presentations at conferences. Dr. Raksmei has extensive experience and skills in hydrological modeling and programming using various software. He is proficient in processing, analysing, and scientifically interpreting large datasets. His expertise also includes collaboration with local and international NGOs, civil society organisations, and national and local authorities, thereby creating impacts across diverse landscapes. He is adept at cross-cultural and interdisciplinary communication. Prior to joining CDRI, he worked as a consultant for a private engineering company, contributing to the development of a master plan for the urban drainage system.



H.E. Dr. Chankoulika Bo

Under-secretary of State,
*Ministry of Education, Youth
and Sport*

Member of Ponlok Chomnes
Technical Steering Committee

Dr. Chankoulika Bo, Under Secretary of State at Cambodia's Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, is a pivotal figure in the nation's educational transformation. With a PhD in Education from Flinders University and over a decade of experience in research and policy leadership, she is shaping impactful education policies. She is at the forefront of adapting Cambodia's education system to the digital age, collaborating across sectors for efficient service delivery. She actively seeks international partnerships, fostering cooperation and sharing best practices to advance education. Her visionary leadership and commitment to sound policy aim to equip Cambodian students with the knowledge and skills needed to thrive.



Ms. Phoury Bun

Vice President, SheThink
Network

REDD+ Research and Impact
Advisor, *Wildlife Conservation
Society (WCS)- Cambodia*

Ms. Phoury Bun graduated with a Master of Education (Research) degree from the University of Auckland, New Zealand. She also holds dual honours degrees, a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed in TEFL) from the Institute of Foreign Languages (IFL) and a Bachelor of Accounting and Finance from CamEd Business School. Her research interests include the academic profession, Artificial Intelligence (AI), EdTech, Vocational Tech, TVET, the intersection of arts and science, edu-preneurship, the care and green economies, social psychology of the classroom, future skills development, learning evaluations, and inclusive teaching and training.



Mr. Rithy Bun

Junior Research Fellow
Future Forum

An Indigenous Tompuan from Northeast Cambodia, Mr. Rithy Bun is majoring in international relations at the Royal University of Law and Economics. He is currently working at an international organisation focusing on Indigenous peoples’ rights and environmental issues. He is also a junior research fellow at Future Forum, a Phnom Penh-based independent public policy think tank, where he writes about Indigenous development issues with the goal of informing the Cambodian public and advocating for better outcomes for Cambodia’s Indigenous communities.



Mr. Sophal Chan

Executive Director
Centre for Policy Studies

Mr. Sophal Chan is currently an Executive Director of the Centre for Policy Studies (CPS), a Cambodian think tank providing research services in the areas of economic development, mainly in the agriculture, rural development, and economic sectors. Over the past 30 years, Sophal has held senior positions in various institutions including the World Bank, a USAID-funded project called HARVEST, Leopard Capital (private equity fund), UN World Food Programme, Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI), and Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF). He has conducted many research studies, authored many papers, and led research networks including the Cambodian Economic Association (CEA) and regional Development Analysis Network (DAN). Mr. Chan received a Master of Science degree in Agricultural Economics from the University of London, Imperial College at Wye, after he completed Bachelor courses in Agribusiness from the University of Queensland, Gatton College, and has a Diploma in Hydrology from National Institute of Agriculture Prek Leap.



Mr. Sophorn Chhun

Senior Technical Specialist
for Food Security and
Livelihood
World Vision

Mr. Sophorn Chhun is the Senior Technical Specialist for Food Security and Livelihood with World Vision International in Cambodia. He has more than 10 years of experience designing and managing programs aimed at reducing hunger and enhancing livelihoods of the most vulnerable communities. He has expertise in sustainable agriculture, rural and urban development and has led initiatives using this technical approach to address economic vulnerability and food insecurity among Cambodia's most marginalised rural communities. Sophorn holds a degree in Agronomy and is certified as Business Development Plan Mentor, Agro-ecology, CAM-GAP, biodiversity and PPB; and has worked extensively with various international organisations, government entities, and NGOs to develop resilient



Mr. Dara Chea

Program Manager
Future Forum

Mr. Dara Chea graduated with honors from the Institute of Foreign Languages (IFL) with a Bachelor of Education in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (B.Ed TEFL). He also won the Student Research Excellence Award during his academic year 2017-2018. He currently works with Future Forum as the Program Manager for the Community of Researchers program. His interests lie in the area of lifelong learning education and the future of work and skills development. His latest policy research project focused on Cambodia's future education under a lifelong learning ecosystem and classrooms of the future.



Dr. Darith Ea

PhD, Director of Department
of Conservation and
Archaeology
*National Authority for Preah
Vihear*

Dr. Darith Ea received his Ph.D. from Osaka Ohtani University in 2010. He graduated with his Bachelor of Arts from the Royal University of Fine Arts in Phnom Penh in 1995 and received a Master's degree from Kyoto University in 2000. Since 2000, he has been working at the APSARA Authority and teaching the History of Khmer Ceramics at the Royal University of Fine Arts. He has long coordinated a spectrum of diverse projects between the APSARA Authority and numerous international teams. Darith's main research interests focus on Khmer stoneware ceramics from the ninth to the fifteenth centuries. He has published widely on this subject in particular and maintains an interest in the transition from the Angkorian to the Cambodian Middle Period at Angkor.



Mr. Duong Keo

Lecturer, *Royal University of
Phnom Penh*; Co-Instructor
Ponlok Chomnes Research
Fellowship (PCRF) Program

Mr. Duong Keo is a PhD candidate in Political Science at Bundeswehr University Munich in Germany, supported by the Gerda Henkel Foundation. For over a decade, he has worked as a lecturer and has supervised numerous BA and MA theses at the Royal University of Phnom Penh, Cambodia. He has published five peer-reviewed papers and a monograph with the Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University. In recognition of his scholarly contributions, he was awarded the 2022 Voltaire Prize for "Tolerance, International Understanding, and Respect for Difference" by the University of Potsdam, Germany.



Dr. George Chigas

Associate Teaching Professor
Emeritus, *UMass Lowell*

Dr. George Chigas is an Associate Teaching Professor Emeritus in Cambodian Studies at the University of Massachusetts Lowell, where he teaches courses on Cambodian literature and cultural history. He earned his doctorate in Southeast Asian Languages and Cultures from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) at the University of London and his master's in Asian studies from Cornell University. He is the author of *Tum Teav, A Translation and Literary Analysis of a Cambodian Classic*. He currently lives in Siem Reap, Cambodia.



Ms. Onchan Keo

Women leader in
Samkhuy village
Stung Treng Province

Ms. Onchan Keo is a 39-year-old woman living in Samkhuy Village, located in the Samkhuy Commune of Sesan District in Stung Treng Province, Cambodia. As the women's focal point and the head of the Samakhuy Fishing Community, Ms. Onchan has become a vital leader in her community. Since 2020, Ms. Onchan has been deeply involved in community work, dedicating herself to improving the lives of those around her. She has participated in various training courses, focusing on community-based research related to climate change, fishing community management plans, and important social and gender issues. These experiences have provided her with the expertise needed to address the unique challenges her community faces. Ms. Onchan plays a crucial role in engaging with local authorities and is skilled in managing and conserving fisheries resources. She actively participates in village and commune planning, ensuring that the voices of her community members are heard. One of her most significant contributions is her ability to mobilise women in the community, encouraging them to take part in development initiatives and address pressing community issues. Through her leadership, Ms. Onchan has inspired many, fostering a spirit of collaboration and resilience in Samkhuy Village. Her commitment to sustainable practices and community engagement continues to benefit both the local population and the environment.



Mr. Donira Khan

Research Associate
*Cambodia Development
Resource Institute*

Mr. Donira Khan is a researcher at the Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI) whose work sits at the intersection of climate policy, household energy use, cross-border trade, and the social dimensions of climate change. He brings extensive experience in research design and has led impactful studies on topics such as liquified petroleum gas (LPG) consumption patterns, the nexus of climate change and migration, and cross-border agricultural trade dynamics. In addition, his expertise lies in advancing sustainable farming systems, fostering agricultural innovation, optimizing value chains, and promoting resource efficiency. He is particularly passionate about environmental economics and circular economy strategies that address climate resilience and sustainable development. Donira holds a distinguished double master’s degree: in Agricultural and Resource Economics from Kasetsart University, Thailand, and in Agronomy and Agrifood Science with a specialisation in Markets, Organisations, and Policies from Montpellier SupAgro in France, France. His diverse academic and research background equips him with a global perspective on sustainable agriculture and environmental resource management.



H.E. Finan Khim

Under-secretary of State,
*Ministry of Agriculture,
Forestry and Fisheries*
Member of Ponlok
Chomnes Technical
Steering Committee

H.E. Finan Khim is an Under-Secretary of State and spokesperson for the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF). Prior to his political appointment, he served as District Governor of Banteay Srei from 2019 until his promotion to provincial administration as Deputy Governor of Siem Reap in 2022. He used to be a lecturer at a local university from 2010 to 2012, where he taught courses on business management, entrepreneurship, and leadership. He was a serial entrepreneur himself with various start-ups in the hospitality industry. He holds undergraduate degrees in Business and Economics, and he received his MBA from a US university.



Sreymean Kouch

Junior Research Fellow
Future Forum

Sreymean Kouch identifies as nonbinary and uses she/her pronouns. Her passion for animals and the environment began in childhood, nurtured by yearly visits to Ta Moa Sanctuary and countless documentaries. Today, she channels that early curiosity into research on animal welfare, rights, and urban planning, interests deepened through her involvement with Future Forum. With a focus on underrepresented issues, Mean aims to use research and writing to raise public awareness. She is also the voice behind "Our Neighbor Blog", where she shares thoughtful stories and facts about animals to inspire compassion and understanding.



Ms. Suyheang Kry

Executive Director,
Women Peace Makers
Member of Ponlok
Chomnes GEDSI
Consortium

Ms. Suyheang Kry is a recognised practitioner and mediator in gender equality, peacebuilding, and feminist leadership. As Executive Director of Women Peace Makers, she co-developed the Facilitative Listening Design (FLD) methodology, used widely in conflict-sensitive research. She is a passionate advocate for inclusive governance and the meaningful participation of women and marginalised communities. Heang holds a Master’s in Peace and Conflict Studies from the University of Massachusetts Lowell and a Bachelor’s in education from Royal University of Phnom Penh.



Dr. Sithirith Mak

Scientist and Center
Director, Natural Resources
and Environment
Cambodia Development
Resource Institute (CDRI)

Dr. Sithirith Mak brings deep expertise in environmental and national resource governance, with a PhD in Geography from the National University of Singapore, where he received the prestigious Wang Gungwu Medal. His post-doctoral research at UNESCO-IHE and WorldFish focused on water and food systems in the Mekong Basin. Dr. Sithirith is a published scholar and professor at the Royal University of Phnom Penh.



Dr. Leang Un

Dean of the Faculty
of Social Sciences and
Humanities

*Royal University of
Phnom Penh*

Dr. Leang Un is the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities at the Royal University of Phnom Penh. He graduated with a degree in Social and Behavioral Sciences from the University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands. He served as the Chief of the World Bank's Innovative and Development Grants under the Higher Education Quality and Capacity Improvement Program (HEQCIP). He was a research fellow and visiting scholar at Makerere University (Uganda) in 2009, Northern Illinois University (USA) in 2011, a research fellow at Kyoto University (Japan) and University Sains Malaysia (Malaysia) in 2019, a visiting professor at Nagoya University (Japan) in 2022, and a senior research fellow at the Center for Khmer Studies in 2014 and 2024. Dr. Leang Un's academic reputation is evident in his invitations to speak at prominent academic institutions and development forums, both in Cambodia and internationally, including Education University of Hong Kong, Kyoto University, Nagoya University, Comparative Education Society of Asia, Swedish International Development Agency, Centre for Khmer Studies, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, Korean Studies Association of Southeast Asia, Cambodia Development Centre and Association of Asian Studies. He has led research teams for various projects related to education, social sciences, and humanities. His research focuses on comparative education, education policy, and the role of education in post-conflict development, with a recent shift towards social sciences and humanities.



Ms. Chanmonyneath Neth

Junior Research Fellow
Future Forum

With a degree in International Economics from the Institute of Foreign Languages, Monyneath sees the world as a deeply interconnected system where economic policies and decisions shape people's lives in many powerful ways. Now, at Australia Awards Cambodia, she is proud to support talented individuals to pursue their postgraduate degrees in Australia, a critical investment in human capital that will build support prosperous sustainable development and economic growth in Cambodia. Passionate about the concept of inclusive growth and economic development, she aims to conduct research on the challenges and impacts of Cambodia's post-least developed country (LDC) graduation status on women working in the informal labor force.



Mr. Kosal Nith

Future Forum's Research
Fellow & CDRI's research
associate
Future Forum

Mr. Kosal Nith is a research associate at the Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI) and coordinator of the East Asia working group of the Young Scholars Initiative. Before joining CDRI in July 2023, he held various positions at Future Forum (2020–2022), including Young Research Fellow, Junior Research Fellow, and Program Coordinator. In addition, he has worked as a field supervisor at WorldFish and interned and volunteered with the Youth Resource Development Program and Habitat for Humanity.



Dr. Narith Por

Researcher

My Village Organization

Dr. Narith Por is a Cambodian professional with expertise in management, development policy, and natural resource management. He holds a bachelor's degree in Fishery Science, master's degrees in development policy and management, and a Ph.D. in Management. His research and publications focus on organisational performance, sustainable development, digital learning technologies, and green business practices in Cambodia. He has contributed to both the academic and community development fields. Currently, Narith serves as an Advisor to My Village Organization (MVi), where he provides strategic guidance and technical expertise to advance community-based natural resource management, climate change resilience, and sustainable livelihood initiatives in northeastern Cambodia.



Mr. Savuth Run
Junior Research Fellow
Future Forum

Mr. Savuth Run is an administrative officer for the Cambodian Red Cross- Siem Reap Branch. He holds a degree in public administration and is passionate about governance, digital transformation, and the future of document recordkeeping. Savuth aims to modernise public sector operations by enhancing administrative efficiency and regulatory compliance through innovative digital solutions. His commitment to leveraging technology in governance not only streamlines processes but also fosters greater transparency and accountability within the organisation. By implementing cutting-edge digital tools, Savuth envisions a more effective response to humanitarian needs in the region.



Ms. Sophany San
President
SheThinks Network

Ms. Sophany San is a gender and development specialist with nearly a decade of experience as a researcher, advisor, and lecturer. At SheThinks Network, she champions women’s leadership in research and policymaking. In her advisory role at GIZ, she ensures gender-responsive planning within national governance systems. Her work focuses on advancing Gender Equality, Social Equity, and Inclusion (GESEI), particularly through decentralisation and local governance reform.



Dr. Chanthy Sam

Senior Researcher
*National Institute of
Social Affairs*

Dr. Chanthy Sam is currently a research team leader and senior lecturer and has more than eighteen years of professional experience, including in social protection, social work, climate change adaptation, water supply and sanitation, water resource management, energy, ecosystem services, environmental and social impact assessment, strategic environmental assessment, urban environmental management, solid waste management, project management and monitoring and evaluation, and social and finance accountability. He has also worked on the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs), environment, social, and governance (ESG) issues, project management, resettlement, gender, Ombudsman and one-window service, public policy, good governance, administrative reform and land degradation. He has five years of experience in national policy advocacy in environmental protection, hydropower development, public participation, mining, social media and communication, and other natural resources management. Additionally, Dr. Chanthy Sam has worked on natural resource and environmental research, biodiversity research, community participation, community action research, and environmental education and training. He also has extensive experience as a field research advisor and in project management.



H.E. Mr. Boriraks Sar

President of National
Institute of Social
Affairs,
*Ministry of Social Affairs,
Veterans and Youth
Rehabilitation*

H.E. Boriraks Sar is currently the President of the National Institute of Social Affairs. He holds a master’s degree in business administration, majoring in International Business and Marketing from Hawaii Pacific University, USA, along with many other business and public related certifications in Cambodia. He joined the army with the rank of commander under the Ministry of National Defence and later transitioned to a civil servant role, serving as Deputy Administrator for Prey Veng Province for two terms (8 years). In 2023, he became Chief of Cabinet of the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation.



Seaklay Say (Pi)

Junior Research Fellow
Future Forum

Seaklay Say, known as "Pi," identifies as a transgender man with extensive experience advocating for LGBTQIA+ rights in Cambodia, focusing on research, community organizing and empowerment. He has also worked in a public institution. Pi is passionate about transgender rights, social welfare, and social justice, with a keen interest in digital policies.



Aronsakda Ses is an architect by training with a strong inclination towards research. He pursued his passion for research and completed the Future Forum's 2021 Young Researcher Program. He is a Research Fellow at Future Forum working to advance urban policy, planning, and design to enable livable urban spaces. He hopes that his experience in the design field, combined with his emerging skills in research and writing, will add to the discussion for building a better Cambodia.

Mr. Aronsakda Ses

Research Fellow

Future Forum



Mr. Sona Long is Deputy Director at the Department of Climate Change and the National Project Manager for NDC 3.0 Development. He has extensive experience in climate change policy development, international cooperation, and climate financing. He successfully supports the Agricultural and Rural Development Bank (ARDB) in accessing the Green Climate Fund on the private window under the Cambodia Climate Finance Framework in Cambodia. He also specialises in green financing.

Mr. Sona Long

Deputy Director of the Climate
Change Department

General Directorate of Policy
and Strategy

Ministry of Environment



**Mr.
Sophornreaksmey
Sreng**

Deputy Secretary
General of the General
Secretariat
*National Council for Social
Protection*

Mr. Sophornreaksmey Sreng is currently the Deputy Secretary General at the General Secretariat for the National Social Protection Council (NSPC), under Cambodia’s Ministry of Economy and Finance. He has been with the Ministry since 2016, holding several roles including Director of Policy, Director and Deputy Director of Social Assistance, and Economist. He is an alumnus of the Australia Awards Scholarship program and holds a Master of International and Development Economics from The Australian National University (ANU). He also holds two bachelor's degrees: one in Economics from the Royal University of Law and Economics, and another in International Relations from Paññāsāstra University of Cambodia.



Mr. Siphath Touch

Deputy Director General
of Administration and
Finance
*Ministry of Rural
Development*

Mr. Siphath Touch holds a bachelor's degree in Sociology and a master's degree in Sustainable Development. As the Deputy Director General of Administration and Finance at the Ministry of Rural Development, he has been a pivotal figure in the rural development sector since the early 2000s. His extensive experience includes leading initiatives in capacity building, community development, climate change, and gender equality. Mr. Siphath has been instrumental in the preparation of rural policy and the Climate Change Action Plan for Rural Development. His work also includes implementing climate-proof integrated rural community development and infrastructure projects, and he has contributed to research on topics such as China's influence in the Mekong Region and post-disaster climate change adaptation in Cambodia and Fiji.

ANNEX 2: AGENDA

Ponlok Chomnes National Policy Forum 2025⁴
“Inclusive policymaking in the age of uncertainty: Connecting knowledge, policy and people”

5 September 2025
Hyatt Regency Phnom Penh
Language Medium: Khmer Language with English Interpretation

MORNING

● 7:30 – 8:15 am	Registration Ponlok Chomnes Team
● 8:25 – 8:30 am	National Anthem MC
● 8:30 – 8:40 am	Welcome Remarks Ms. Dolgion Aldar, Program Director, The Asia Foundation, Cambodia
● 8:40 – 8:50 am	Opening Remarks H.E. Derek Yip, Australian Ambassador to Cambodia
● 8:50 – 9:20 am	Keynote Address H.E. Mr. Vongsey Vissoth, the Permanent Deputy Prime Minister and Minister in Charge of the Office of the Council of Ministers
● 9:20 – 9:40 am	Ceremonial Launch of Ponlok Chomnes Guidelines (<i>Research Quality, Inclusive Dialogue</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ms. Dolgion Aldar• Mr. Mean Vibol Ratanak, Project Coordinator, Cambodian Disabled People’s Organisation• Ponlok Chomnes II Working Group on guidelines
● 9:40 – 10:10 am	Coffee/tea Break and Exhibition Visit All participants

MORNING

• 10:10 – 11:40 am

Plenary Panel Discussion:

The Role and Future of Cambodia's Knowledge Sector in Strengthening Inclusive Policy Processes

Moderator:

- Ms. Suyheang Kry, Executive Director, Women Peace Makers

Panellists:

- H.E. Finan Khim, Under-secretary of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries
- H.E. Dr. Chankouluka Bo, Under-secretary of State, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
- Mr. Sophal Chan, Director, Centre for Policy Studies
- Dr. Sithirith Mak, Director of Center for Natural Resources and Environment, Cambodia Development Resource Institute
- Ms. Sophany San, President, SheThinks Network

• 11:40 am – 1:00 pm

Lunch Break

All participants

AFTERNOON

1:00 – 2:20 pm

Parallel Session Round 1 *(Two Concurrent Sessions)*

1A. Integrating Climate-Induced Migration and Social Protection into Climate Change Responses

Moderator:

- Dr. Raksme Ang, Research Fellow, Cambodia Development Resource Institute

Presenters:

- Mr. Donira Khan, Research Associate, Cambodia Development Resource Institute
- Dr. Chanthy Sam, Senior Researcher, National Institute of Social Affairs

Panellists:

- H.E. Mr. Boriraks Sar, President, National Institute of Social Affairs
- Mr. Sophornreksmey Sreng, Deputy Secretary General of the General Secretariat for the National Council for Social Protection
- Mr. Sona Long, Deputy Director for Department of Climate Change, Ministry of Environment

AFTERNOON

1:00 – 2:20 pm

Parallel Session Round 1 (*Two Concurrent Sessions*)

1B. Inclusive Rural Development: Community and Social Group Participation in Local Planning and Impacts of Local Investments in Addressing Social Groups' Needs in the Context of Climate Change

Moderator:

- Mr. Sophal Chan, Executive Director, Centre for Policy Studies

Panellists:

- Mr. Siphath Touch, Deputy Director General, Ministry of Rural Development
- Ms. Onchan Keo, Women leader in Samkhoy village, Samkhoy community
- Mr. Sophorn Chhun, Senior Technical Specialist for Food Security and Livelihood, World Vision
- Dr. Narith Por, Researcher, My Village Organization (MVi)

2:20 – 2:30 pm

Coffee Break

All participants

AFTERNOON

2:30 – 3:50 pm

Parallel Session Round 2 *(Two Concurrent Sessions)*

2A. The Humanities & Social Sciences in Cambodia’s Evolving Research Landscape

Moderator:

- Dr. George Chigas, Associate Teaching Professor Emeritus, UMass Lowell

Panellists:

- Dr. Leang Un, Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Royal University of Phnom Penh
- Dr. Darith Ea, Director of Department of Conservation and Archaeology, National Authority for Preah Vihear
- Ms. Phoury Bun, Vice President of SheThinks Network, and REDD+ Research and Impact Advisor of Conservation Society (WCS)
- Mr. Duong Keo, Lecturer, Royal University of Phnom Penh

2:30 – 3:50 pm

Parallel Session Round 2 *(Two Concurrent Sessions)*

2B. Lightning Talk: “Small Policy Ideas for Cambodia’s Future”

Moderator:

- Mr. Dara Chea, Program Manager, Future Forum

Speakers:

- Aronsakda Ses, Research Fellow, Future Forum
- Chanmonyneath Neth, Junior Research Fellow, Future Forum
- Seaklay Say (Pi), Junior Research Fellow, Future Forum
- Rithy Bun, Junior Research Fellow, Future Forum
- Savuth Run, Junior Research Fellow, Future Forum
- Kosal Nith, Research Fellow, Future Forum & Research Associate, Cambodia Development Resource Institute
- Sreymean Kouch, Junior Research Fellow, Future Forum

AFTERNOON

● 3:50 – 4:00 pm	Coffee Break All participants
● 4:00 – 4:10 pm	Plenary Keynote: <i>Reflections on Inclusive Policy Practice</i> Ms. Monika Mak, Director, Cambodian Disabled People's Organisation
● 4:10 – 4:50 pm	Inclusive Awards Ceremony: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Inclusive Research- Inclusive Communication- Inclusive Dialogue Awards Presented by Ms. Chandy Eng and Ms. Chanthida Som, representatives of the Inclusive Award Selection Committee
● 4:50 – 5:00 pm	Closing remarks Ms. Evangeline Larsen, Second Secretary, the Australian Embassy
● 5:00 – 6:00 pm	Networking Reception All invited guests

ANNEX 3: MEDIA COVERAGES

Ponlok Chomnes National Policy Forum 2025 ‘ Inclusive Policymaking in the Age of Uncertainty: Connecting Knowledge, Policy and People’, [05092025-Media Release-Ponlok-Chomnes-National-Policy-Forum2025.English.pdf](https://www.ponlokchomnes.org/2025/09/05/media-release-ponlok-chomnes-national-policy-forum-2025-english.pdf)

Ponlok Chomnes National Policy Forum 2025 ‘ Inclusive Policymaking in the Age of Uncertainty: Connecting Knowledge, Policy and People’, [Australian Embassy, Cambodia | Facebook](#)

កម្ពុជាត្រៀមលក្ខណៈជាស្រេច ដើម្បីដោះស្រាយស្ថានភាពនៅក្នុងសង្គមទៅនឹងការប្រែប្រួលក្នុងពិភពលោក https://youtu.be/L_EDbfBbGhw?si=amJ6Zenjl7cQAusK (BTV)

Visoth: Vision 2050 Demands Smarter Policy, Stronger Evidence, Broader Dialogue, <https://www.kampuchearthmey.com/kpt-english/982608>

Cambodia Pushes Evidence-Based Policy at National Forum Backed by Australia, Asia Foundation, <https://cambodiainvestmentreview.com/2025/09/05/cambodia-pushes-evidence-based-policy-at-national-forum-backed-by-australia-asia-foundation/>

Cambodia Struggles to Build Research Capacity as Evidence-Based Policy Lags Behind. [Cambodia Struggles to Build Research Capacity as Evidence-Based Policy Lags Behind | Cambodianess](#)

Beyond STEM: Why Cambodia Can’t Ignore Social Science in Its Drive for Innovation. [Beyond STEM: Why Cambodia Can’t Ignore Social Science in Its Drive for Innovation | Cambodianess](#)

វីដេអូ៖ លោក ដេវីក យ៉ីប ឯកអគ្គរដ្ឋទូតអូស្ត្រាលីប្រចាំកម្ពុជា លើកឡើងថា នៅឆ្នាំក្រោយនេះ គណៈប្រតិភូធុរកិច្ចអូស្ត្រាលីនឹងមកកម្ពុជា ដើម្បីស្វែងរកឱកាសវិនិយោគទៅលើវិស័យកសិកម្ម និងកែច្នៃចំណីអាហារនៅកម្ពុជា។ <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1121339889525214&rid=3X9o1HPdCtB88PMK>

Australia, Asia Foundation Back Cambodia's Knowledge Sector at National Policy Forum 2025. <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/501751994/australia-asia-foundation-back-cambodias-knowledge-sector-at-national-policy-forum-2025/>

Australia Envoy Highlights Growth Potential in Cambodia Trade, Calls for Greater investor Awareness. <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/501752032/australian-envoy-highlights-growth-potential-in-cambodia-trade-calls-for-greater-investor-awareness/>

Cambodia Strengthens Evidence-Based Policymaking at National Forum. <https://kiripost.com/stories/cambodia-strengthens-evidence-based-policymaking-at-national-forum>

ឯកឧត្តមឧបនាយករដ្ឋមន្ត្រីប្រចាំការ វង្ស វិសុភ ផ្តល់នូវអនុសាសន៍ដល់ក្រុមការងារក្នុងវិស័យកសិកម្ម រុក្ខាប្រមាញ់ និងនេសាទ ថ្នាំប្រឆាំងជំងឺ ឆ្នាំ២០២៥
<https://www.facebook.com/story.php?storyfbid=1205114908313624&id=100064453789645&rdid=qQKDGx5083HGxY7>

From Data to Decision: Australia-Cambodia partnership powering evidence-based policy. <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/from-data-to-decisions-australia-cambodia-partnership-powering-evidence-based-policy>

Australia and The Asia Foundation Support Cambodia's Knowledge Sector. <https://asiafoundation.org/australia-and-the-asia-foundation-support-cambodias-knowledge-sector/>

Highlights from the Ponlok Chomnes National Policy Forum 2025 <https://policypulse.org/events/policy-forum/highlights-from-the-ponlok-chomnes-national-policy-forum-2025/>

ANNEX 4: Working Groups on Ponlok Chomnes Research Guidebook and Inclusive Dialogue Guidelines

1	Dr. Ang Raksmeay Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI)
2	Ms. Sak Sreynoch Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI)
3	Ms. Chhaing Marong Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI)
4	Ms. Suong Samedy Center for Khmer Studies (CKS)
5	Mr. Soun Ponleu Center for Khmer Studies (CKS)
6	Ms. Ros Sophallin Centre for Policy Studies (CPS)
7	Mr. Chea Dara Future Forum (FF)
8	Ms. Say Puthy Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace (CICP)
9	Mr. Mean Vibolratanak Cambodian Disabled People’s Organisation (CDPO)
10	Ms. Rimphat Bophaphoung Gender and Development for Cambodia (GADC)
11	Ms. Chhun Chakriya Women Peace Makers (WPM)
12	Ms. Chey Maramy The Asia Foundation
13	Ms. Sim Sovachana The Asia Foundation

Building on the achievements of Ponlok Chomnes I (2019-2023) which aimed to strengthen the capacity of Cambodian knowledge sector institutions for quality research, The Asia Foundation is implementing the Ponlok Chomnes II: Data and Dialogue for Development in Cambodia Program (2023- 2027). Supported by the Australian Government, this program's goal is to contribute to public policy decisions, based on evidence and informed by inclusive dialogue, are operationalised and become the norm in Cambodia.

CONTACT US

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