

Cambodia's knowledge sector: a growing partner in policymaking

Ponlok Chomnes II: Data and Dialogue for Development in Cambodia | Results 2023–2025

Across government, Cambodian institutions are **asking for research and inviting researchers into policy discussions**. Think tanks, universities and civil society are responding with evidence that is **more credible, more inclusive and easier to use**, a partnership worth sustaining for Cambodia's next stage of development.

1. Government demand for evidence is growing

41

government institutions engaged: 18 ministries, 18 subnational administrations and 5 public universities

18

institutions consulted or requested evidence from Cambodian research partners

17

policy issues with structured engagement between government and civil society through evidence-informed dialogue

Government institutions increasingly turn to Cambodian researchers for practical, timely evidence, moving from occasional consultation toward regular engagement.

2. Evidence is more credible and inclusive

23% → **65%**

of publications meet at least half of the gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) criteria

18% → **31%**

of publications led by a woman first author

94%

of assessed dialogues met the minimum standards of the Inclusive Dialogue Guidelines, launched with the Guidebook on Quality Research in 2025

Evidence that reflects women, persons with disabilities and rural communities gives decision-makers a fuller picture of who their policies affect.

3. A new generation of Cambodian researchers

72

young people supported: 30 undergraduates, 12 early-career and 30 mid-career researchers

54%

of Inclusive Policy Fellows from marginalised groups, including Indigenous people, sexual and gender minorities and persons with disabilities

36

researchers supported through fellowships, mentoring and the SheThinks Network

A sustainable knowledge sector depends on people: these researchers are building the skills and networks to contribute to Cambodia's policy debates for years to come.

Contributing evidence to government-led policy processes

Between 2023 and 2025, Cambodian research partners contributed research and inclusive dialogue to **11 government-led policy processes at national and subnational levels**, across 10 policy areas, at the invitation of ministries, provincial authorities and commune councils:

Rural development

Education and skills

Social protection and climate resilience

Agriculture and rice

Commune climate budgeting

National statistics

Climate-resilient water, sanitation and hygiene

Labour and returning migrants

Micro, small and medium enterprises

Public administration and open data

Inclusion in practice

Evidence that informs decisions for all Cambodians must include the voices of all Cambodians.

Speakers with disabilities and a government official share a panel at a Ponlok Chomnes disability-inclusive policy dialogue.



Inclusive dialogue

63

dialogues (50 national, 13 subnational)

4,853

participants

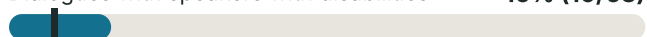
41%

of participants women

Dialogues with women speakers **65% (41/63)**



Dialogues with speakers with disabilities **16% (10/63)**



Dialogues meeting inclusion standards **94% (34/36)**



Black marker = baseline. All bars on the same 0–100% scale.

Inclusion is now planned from the start of each dialogue, not added at the end.

Women in research and leadership

Women as first authors **31% (19/62)**



Women as speakers **37% (117/315)**



Women as participants **41% (1,982/4,853)**



The SheThinks Network connects women researchers across institutions through mentoring, research grants and policy dialogue.

Women are moving from participants to authors and speakers, leading research and debate.

Persons with disabilities

13

speakers

73

participants

4

facilitators

75%

of dialogues in accessible venues

Disability inclusion is our priority for improvement: persons with disabilities are 1.5% of participants. Braille materials, sign language interpretation and accessible venues are now standard at major events.

Persons with disabilities are taking part as speakers, facilitators and researchers, not only as subjects of research.

Evidence that reaches people

1.77 million

views of Future Forum's Khmer "Small Ideas" series

401,000

organic views on Facebook

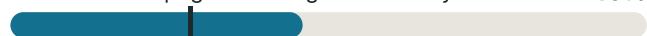
67,000

Policy Pulse users

16

media articles in 8 national outlets

Research web pages meeting accessibility criteria **46%**



Research in Khmer and accessible formats is reaching well beyond policy circles.

About Ponlok Chomnes II: Data and Dialogue for Development in Cambodia

- **Purpose:** helps Cambodian institutions produce and use credible, inclusive evidence in public policy (Phase I 2019–2023; Phase II 2023–2027).
- **Partners:** 25 Cambodian partners (4 Strategic, 8 Innovation, 4 Collaboration, 9 Policy Engagement Fund), a GEDSI Consortium and the SheThinks Network.
- **Governance:** a Technical Steering Committee of senior representatives from 13 institutions, including government ministries, experts and civil society, advises on strategy.
- **Results:** a knowledge sector becoming more credible, more inclusive and more connected to government.
- **Support:** funded by the Australian Government and implemented by The Asia Foundation.

Looking ahead: what will sustain these gains toward 2030?

Evidence for policy

Evidence requested and used as routine

Financing knowledge

A diverse funding mix, including public-interest research

Research workforce

Careers that attract and retain diverse talent

Knowledge ecosystem

A Cambodian-owned platform linking research and government