



KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA
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NATIONAL POPULATION POLICY



Royal Government of Cambodia
 15 August 2003

FOREWORD

The Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) takes great pride and pleasure in presenting the first National Population Policy of Cambodia. The policy has been formulated with the full commitment and dedication of the entire Government. In particular, the Ministry of Planning has shown great leadership and responsibility in the long participatory process of preparing drafts and incorporating comments received during revisions.

The policy process has involved the active participation of all stakeholders including other Government ministries and institutions, National Committee for Population and Development (NCPD), researchers from the Royal University Phnom Penh, donors and civil society organizations, who have all made their mark on the policy. Hence, the National Population Policy is about issues of immediate concern to the institutions and organizations who are dealing with population and development in Cambodia.

The National Population Policy is in no way a stand-alone effort. The challenges and policy directions have been mentioned implicitly in a series of key programmes, most notably the Socio-Economic Development Plan II for 2001-2005, the National Poverty Reduction Strategy 2003-2005, and the Cambodia Millennium Development Report 2001. In one way or the other, these plans and programmes recognize the central, critical and crosscutting role of population as is reflected in the special targeting of reproductive health and family planning services, opportunities for women in employment and education, and the identification of the relationship between poverty and rapid population growth.

This National Population Policy will be used by the Royal Government of Cambodia to influence population and development dynamics to be more commensurate with socio-economic development and with natural and human resources available in Cambodia. At the centre of the policy is the right for all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children. It also includes the availability of information and the means to do so.

The Royal Government of Cambodia is looking forward to receiving further active support and participation in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the National Population Policy and the National Population Strategy, which is yet to be developed as an action plan of the policy.

Phnom Penh, *15 August*, 2003



Hun Sen
Prime Minister of the RGC
Chairman of NCPD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

National Population Policy of Cambodia

The Royal Government of Cambodia is committed to addressing population issues based on the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo 1994 and subsequent revisions. Hence, the Royal Government recognizes the central role of reproductive health services, empowerment of women through equal access to education and public office, and the link between poverty and rapid population growth.

1. Overview of Socio-Economic Development

Cambodia remains one of the poorest countries in South-East Asia. Access to good quality health care and primary and secondary education for the large cohorts of rural poor is very limited. Poor coverage of critical child health services is one of the factors contributing to high infant mortality rates and high maternal mortality ratios. In terms of reproductive health care there is a large unmet need for contraceptives and birth spacing services.

2. The Demographic Situation and Its Implications for Development

Except for Laos, Cambodia currently has the highest population growth rate (at 2.49%) among ASEAN nations. At the same time the country has experienced a substantial fertility decline since the 1960s. Between the early 1980s and late 1990s the average number of children born to a woman decreased from six to four.

Cambodia is characterised by:

- High maternal mortality;
- High infant mortality; and
- High under-five child mortality rates.

About one in five Cambodian women in reproductive age (14-49) died of pregnancy or pregnancy-related causes. Infant and under-five mortality rates are disturbing. Almost one in every 10 babies does not survive to his or her first birthday, and after that one in thirty does not make it from the first to the fifth birthday. The latter figure is closely linked to the high levels of malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies among children, which is measured by levels of stunting, wasting, underweight and iron deficiency.

In the past, Cambodia experienced a lot of internal and international migration as the result of war, violent confrontation and political instability. Present day migration may be more positive in that it includes important linkages between rural communities and urban monetary economies as well as more opportunities and better family welfare for migrants. However, rural out-migration may also result in the loss of human and social capital in communities and lead to a vicious cycle of lower rural productivity.

The Cambodian population has a large proportion of children and adolescents, and according to the 1998 Census, more than 40 percent are under 15 years of age. This situation requires substantial investment into primary and secondary education as well as in adolescent reproductive health. This is even more important taking the HIV/AIDS epidemic into consideration. Even though the country has been successful in becoming only the third country to have reversed the spread of the epidemic, Cambodia is still the most affected country in Asia with the current prevalence rate at 2.6 percent.

Population growth and population structure determine the kind and extent of health and educational services needed. Rapid growth of a poorly nourished and disease-prone population heavily increases the burden on the health system. Cambodia's public health system is already unable to meet the needs of the population as indicated by the high levels of morbidity, mortality and fertility. What is needed is improved health care provision for the present population, including reproductive health services, which would improve the general health status and living standard of the population now and in future.

At this moment in time Cambodia does not have the human and monetary capital to satisfy the educational needs of its people. The current trends in population growth and population structure increase the need both for primary, secondary and tertiary education. Already the educational system is characterized by:

- Lack of facilities and teachers;
- Low attendance due to distance and poverty; and
- Low enrolment of girls

Meeting the educational needs of all the boys and girls who have been born to date demands increased investment into classrooms, teachers etc. A continued rapid population growth will put heavy demands on an already strained educational sector.

Rapid population growth is also likely to have a negative impact on the environment. Agriculture remains the biggest employment sector in the country, and therefore population growth will have a direct impact on the environment. In terms of employment opportunities, rapid population growth means many more people looking for income and employment opportunities in the future. This growth in the labour force is likely to result in a substantial increase of the subsistence agricultural sector, which will not contribute to economic growth and sustainable development.

In general, Government recognizes that a continuing high growth rate of population could create serious difficulties in the implementation of its programmes for poverty alleviation and sustainable economic development. Accordingly, the following 10 priority population-related issues were identified for intensified development efforts:

- High population growth;
- High fertility;
- High mortality;
- HIV/AIDS epidemic;
- Migration with a magnitude, direction and composition that hamper development processes;
- Imbalances in age and sex structure;
- High incidence of poverty as a result of demographic vulnerability;
- Low levels of human resources development;
- Gender inequalities; and
- Population pressure on natural resources.

3. Government Efforts in Addressing Population Issues

Through the Ministry of Health's Health Sector Strategic Plan 2002-2007, Government has adopted the birth spacing programme as a major policy to protect the health of mothers and newborn children and help reduce rapid population growth. One policy on Birth Spacing was formulated and adopted in 1994, whereas another one on Safe Motherhood was developed and adopted in 1997. Furthermore, the Second Socio-Economic Development Plan recognizes that high fertility has detrimental effects on the health and nutrition of mothers and their infants.

With regard to HIV/AIDS, Government has established The National AIDS Authority, which plays a key coordinating role in the response to the epidemic. With regard to gender equality and female empowerment, Government has upgraded the former State Secretariat for Women's Affairs to become the Ministry of Women's and Veteran Affairs.

4. Principles, Goals and Objectives of the Population Policy

Through the policy Government would like to reaffirm its respect and support for the right for all couples and individuals to have the basic right to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children, and to have access to the information, education, services and means to do so.

5. Population Policy Measures

The National Population Policy identifies 7 policy measures in order to:

- Support couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children, and to have access to the information, education, services and means to do so;
- Reduce infant, child and maternal morbidity and mortality rates;
- Reduce potential negative impact of rural-urban migration;
- Promote gender equality and equity and enhance human resource development;
- Alleviate the impact of population pressure on the environment and natural resources;
- Further strengthen the reversal of the spread of HIV/AIDS; and
- Integrate population variables into social and economic policies, plans and programmes at all levels.

6. Institutional Arrangements for Implementation and Monitoring of the National Population Policy

Population issues can only be adequately addressed by concerted inter-agency action. The central and local Government, in collaboration with civil society and the private sector, hold responsibility for implementing the policy in an effective and efficient way.

After the adoption of the National Population Policy, an action plan called the National Population Strategy will be developed. The targets of this strategy will be in line with national priorities as set out in the Socio-Economic Development Plan II, the National Poverty Reduction Strategy 2003-2005, and the Cambodia Millennium Development Goals Report.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD	Error! Bookmark not defined.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
LIST OF ACRONYMS	vi
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. OVERVIEW OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	2
3. THE DEMOGRAPHIC SITUATION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT	5
3.1 <i>Overview of Demographic Trends</i>	5
3.1.1 Fertility & mortality	5
3.1.2 Migration and urbanisation	6
3.1.3. Age structure	7
3.1.4 HIV/AIDS	8
3.2 <i>Population and Development Interrelationships</i>	8
3.2.1 Population growth and economic development	8
3.2.2 Population, food sufficiency and nutritional status	9
3.2.3 Population growth and health services	9
3.2.4 Population growth and education	10
3.2.5 Population and the environment	10
3.2.6 Population and employment	11
3.2.7 Population and Infrastructure (public transport system, water supply and electricity)	12
3.3 <i>Key Population Issues</i>	12
4. GOVERNMENT EFFORTS IN ADDRESSING POPULATION ISSUES	13
4.1 <i>Improving Data Collection and Training</i>	13
4.2 <i>Reducing Fertility and Mortality</i>	13
4.3 <i>Programmes for Youth and the Elderly</i>	14
4.4 <i>Combating HIV/AIDS</i>	14
4.5 <i>Promoting Gender Equality</i>	15
5. PRINCIPLES, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE POPULATION POLICY	16
5.1 <i>Guiding Principles</i>	16
5.2 <i>Overall Goal</i>	16
5.3 <i>Objectives</i>	16
6. POPULATION POLICY MEASURES	18
6.1 <i>To support couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children, and to have access to the information, education, services and means to do so</i>	18
6.2 <i>To Reduce Infant, Child and Maternal Morbidity and Mortality Rates</i>	18
6.3 <i>To Reduce Potential Negative Impact of Rural-Urban Migration</i>	18
6.4 <i>To Promote Gender Equality and Equity and Enhance Human Resource Development</i>	19
6.5 <i>To Alleviate the Impact of Population Pressure on the Environment and Natural Resources</i>	19
6.6 <i>To Further Strengthen the Reversal of the Spread of HIV/AIDS</i>	20
6.7 <i>To Integrate Population Variables into Social and Economic Policies, Plans and Programmes at all Levels</i>	20
7. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING OF THE NATIONAL POPULATION POLICY	21
7.1 Institutional Arrangements for NPP Implementation	21
7.2 Institutional Arrangements for Monitoring the Implementation of NPP	22

LIST OF ACRONYMS

APPC	Asia-Pacific Population Conference 2002
ARI	Acute Respiratory Infection
ASFR	Age-Specific Fertility Rate
ARH	Adult Reproductive Health:
ASEAN	Asian South East Association Nation
CEDAW	Convention of Elimination all form of Discrimination Against Women
CNIP	Cambodia Nutrition Investment Plan
CMDGR	Cambodia Millennium Development Goals Report
CDHS	Cambodia Demographic and Heal Survey:
HSSP	Health Sector Strategic Plan
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
IATWG/PDP:	Inter Agency Technical Working Group/Population and Development Policy
IDHS	Indonesia Demographic and Health Survey
MOP	Ministry of Planning
MOEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports
MoSALVY	Ministry of Social Affairs, Labour, Vocational Training and Youth Rehabilitation:
MWVA	Ministry of Women's and Veteran Affairs
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NSMP	National Safe Motherhood Policy
NCPD	National Committee for Population and Development
NRHP	National Reproductive Health Programme
NPRS	National Poverty Reduction Strategy:
NPP	National Population Policy
NPS	National Population Strategy
NIS	National Institute of Statistics
NAA	National AIDS Authority:
NCHADS	National Centre for HIV/AIDS, Dermatology and STDs
PDPST	Population and Development Policy Support Team
PAU	Population Analysis Unit
TFR	Total Fertility Rate
TB	Tuberculosis
RH	Reproductive Health
RUPP	Royal University of Phnom Penh
RGC	Royal Government of Cambodia
STD	Sexually Transmission Diseases
SEDPII	Second Five Year Socio-Economic Development Plan
UNFPA	United Nation Population Fund
UNESCO	United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization

1. INTRODUCTION

In 1991, following more than two decades of war and internal turmoil that caused widespread devastation, Cambodia embarked on rebuilding its political, social and economic structures. Such rebuilding included forging a spirit of peace and national reconciliation, restoring traditional cultural and social values, recreating institutions and reintroducing the rule of law. Concerted efforts resulted in the restoration of political stability and the strengthening of democratic institutions. The country regained international recognition and its rightful place in the international community, as exemplified by its formal admission to ASEAN in April 1999. Relations with neighbouring countries were gradually harmonised and civil society and NGOs became increasingly visible and involved in development activities.

The progress Cambodia has achieved is brought about by a number of socio-economic development efforts during the past 10-15 years. A number of factors have facilitated development while other factors have acted as constraints. The Government's commitment and reform process, coupled with international assistance, have helped in the country's development efforts. On the other hand, a number of demographic factors, particularly the high rate of population growth, high fertility and high mortality have been identified as major constraints to development and poverty reduction (Ministry of Planning, 2002).

The document entitled "Towards A Population and Development Strategy for Cambodia" published by the Ministry of Planning (2002) provides a review of the key population issues that need to be addressed to ensure faster, equitable and sustainable economic development. The Government has over time introduced selected measures to address some of the population issues, but such measures have had limited impact on development. Therefore, there is a need for a comprehensive National Population Policy (NPP), as recommended by the Second Socio-Economic Development Plan of the Royal Government of Cambodia 2001-2005, so that all population-related issues can be addressed in a coordinated manner. In turn, this would contribute towards achieving the goals of the National Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2003-2005 and the Millennium Development Goals.

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