

Cambodia

Despite decades of civil war and political turbulence, in the 1960s to the 1970s, Cambodia has made an impressive recovery, averaging 7 percent annual economic growth over the past two decades. The benefits of the development, however, have been uneven. Women and poor communities remain especially vulnerable. The Asia Foundation is committed to developing programs that leverage the use of technology to empower women and youth, strengthen governance, promote international cooperation, and build environmental resilience for a prosperous Cambodia.



EMPOWERING WOMEN AND YOUTH

Given a labor market influx of 270,000 first-time workers each year, many young Cambodians are unable to secure employment opportunities in the formal sector, as they lack the necessary skills. Access to education for disadvantaged young women and girls is also an ongoing challenge. Girls tend to be able to complete primary school; however, only 80 percent continue to secondary school and only 50 percent eventually graduate.

Limited data has been collected on the topic of women's safety in urban spaces where many of the garment factories are located. Women comprise nearly 80 percent of this workforce and often migrate from rural areas to live in temporary housing which may be in unsafe neighborhoods. The Asia Foundation works to empower women and youth in the areas of educational opportunities, economic inclusion, and safety and security.

EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

Since 1955, approximately 1 million English books have been distributed to schools, NGOs, government institutions, and public libraries across Cambodia through The Asia Foundation's Books for Asia program.

Through the Cambodia Secondary Education Scholarship program and the Cambodia Tertiary Scholarship Program, the Foundation has empowered more than 500 young women and men to pursue formal education, employment, and entrepreneurship since 2010.

Recognizing advances in technology, the Foundation recently launched the *Let's Read!* initiative, which aims to provide access to high quality children's books in the Khmer language to children across Cambodia. The *Let's Read!* digital library contains stories produced locally as well as translations from different parts of the world, all of which can be accessed for free.

ECONOMIC INCLUSION

Young startups have gained momentum in Cambodia in recent years, but they still need a lot of support and mentorship in their initial stage. Tek4Good was established in 2016 to support tech startups in Cambodia by providing physical office space, networking, mentoring, and business coaching opportunities. Since its establishment, Tek4Good has hosted four startups that have grown and gained recognition for their success and employ more than 80 young Cambodians.



CAMBODIA

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The Foundation's work on economic inclusion also involves the applied labor sector. In early 2018, the Foundation launched a public private partnership with Krawma called Bong Srey, a job listing and referral service platform, initially focusing on the garment industry, that contains links to employment opportunities to increase accessibility to job information and improve choices for job-seekers and employers.

Skills gap in Cambodia remains a major challenge. A recent Asia Foundation study showed that many students find it hard to choose a career because they simply don't have the necessary information to set career goals. On the flip side, many employers complain that they cannot get the qualified applicants they need for available jobs. To address this challenge, Career on Camera was started involving university students to create short career introductory videos about jobs that are available and in demand in Cambodia's market.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

In 2015, The Asia Foundation began its work on Preventing Intimate Partners Violence (PIPV) by addressing two risk factors—alcohol abuse and negative media exposure. As a result, a local decree was issued in 47 communes to regulate the sale and consumption of alcohol. Through PIPV, the Foundation also monitored violent content on TV and worked with the Cambodian government to draft and implement the Media Code of Conduct on reporting of violence against women.

Working with the Phnom Penh Municipality and the National Police, the Foundation is piloting a map-based mobile application and online platform called SafetiPin, which gathers user feedback on safety-related information. Information collected could be used by relevant public authorities to improve public safety, particularly for women.

STRENGTHENING GOVERNANCE

The Asia Foundation has worked with partners in government, civil society, academia and the private sector in Cambodia to strengthen democratic practices, decentralize decision-making processes, and build the capacity of the government to be transparent and responsive to citizens' needs.

The Foundation helped design and recently completed a process audit of Cambodia's Social Accountability Framework and its three-year implementation plan, together known as ISAF,

where citizens are provided with information on performance standards and budgets of local service providers. This allows citizens to monitor service delivery performance and decide which development projects they want to see implemented in their locality.

Policy Pulse, formerly named the Reform Inventory Initiative, started in 2015, to constructively engage with government ministries to catalogue and publicize policy reforms. The aim of this project is to encourage more effective, accountable, and transparent government institutions.

PROMOTING INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

The Asia Foundation enables highly qualified Cambodians across different development sectors to participate and contribute in various seminars and workshops abroad. Recently, the Foundation facilitated a study tour to South Korea for Cambodian delegates working in the public and private sector, to explore challenges and solutions surrounding women's economic participation; a Cybersecurity workshop in Singapore to encourage more effective and sustainable cybersecurity practices in the ASEAN region; and a STEM workshop under the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI). This workshop brought 50 young ASEAN leaders to Phnom Penh to explore opportunities and challenges in STEM Education, build capacity, and create a network for STEM enthusiasts in ASEAN.

BUILDING ENVIRONMENTAL RESILIENCE

Cambodia consistently ranks as one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change due to a heavy reliance on agriculture and the lack of capacity to deal with extreme weather such as droughts and floods.

In 2017, The Asia Foundation implemented an initiative to create a Gender Atlas on gender and climate change in Cambodia that provides a comprehensive understanding of how gender informs environment-related vulnerabilities, and the impact of climate change and disaster risks on livelihoods in Cambodia. The Foundation is exploring new opportunities in the area of strengthening environmental resilience.

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The Asia Foundation is a nonprofit international development organization committed to improving lives across a dynamic and developing Asia. Headquartered in San Francisco, The Asia Foundation works through a network of offices in 18 Asian countries and in Washington, DC. Working with public and private partners, the Foundation receives funding from a diverse group of bilateral and multilateral development agencies, foundations, corporations, and individuals.

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