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DEUTSCHE ZUSAMMENARBEIT

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Aid

Improving Social Protection and Health II

Strengthening responsiveness to climate related risks, gender-equity, and disability inclusion

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

1 NO POVERTY

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES

Background

Cambodia benefitted from remarkable economic development over the last two decades where per capita gross domestic product rose from USD 300 (1999) to USD 1,760 (2022).[1] Despite this, around 18% of Cambodia's population was living in poverty in 2019. They remain vulnerable to life-shocks such as illness or disasters.

Over the past decade, Cambodia's social protection system has matured. Approximately 4.5 million poor and near poor (30% of the population) are registered in the IDPoor database and regularly receive some forms of social assistance from the government.[2] Cambodia has enhanced access to essential health services, leading to a significant decline in maternal and infant mortality rates. However, climate change poses a significant threat, endangering hard earned development gains and threatening to pull vulnerable population groups back to poverty. More shocks are anticipated as climate change brings about extreme weather events. Women and persons living with disabilities being the most vulnerable. Catastrophic health expenditure is a persistent burden while quality of health services and health professions education must be further improved. Building an adaptive social protection system and further reforming the health sector are crucial for safeguarding gains in human capital development from future crises and shocks.

Our objective

The project aims to improve the conditions for better access to social protection services and quality-assured health services in Cambodia, particularly with regard to climate-related risks, gender equity, disability inclusion and poverty reduction.

Project name	Improving Social Protection and Health II
Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)
Project region	Cambodia
Lead executing agency	National Social Protection Council
Duration	October 2024 – September 2027

Our approach

The project adheres to the strategic direction set out in the National Social Protection Policy Framework and works closely with the General Secretariat of the National Social Protection Council (GS-NSPC) to provide technical support to a range of stakeholders in two complementary areas of work, namely social protection and universal health coverage.

In the field of social protection, policy advice is provided to strengthen the strategic framework. Areas of focus include shock-responsiveness, gender equity and inclusiveness. Work is underway to enhance the public communications system so that the general population can better understand their social protection rights, entitlements, and participation possibilities. This includes building the capacity of the commune/sangkat councils and village chiefs who are often the people's main source of social protection related information.

Technical support is provided to operators of the social protection system, such as the Identification of Poor Household (IDPoor) programme of the Ministry of Planning, the National Social Assistance Fund (NSAF) which is mandated to operate all social assistance programmes, the National Social Security Fund (NSSF), and the

[1] World Bank: https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/cambodia/overview
[2] Ministry of Planning (2024) IDPoor database, at https://app.idpoor.gov.kh/

Photo (L): Poor household was being interviewed via digital plateform

Photo (R): An elderly beneficiary of the cash transfer programme

Photo: © GIZ / Conor Wall

Contact person

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Photo (L): Nursing Class

Photo (R): Pregnant woman accesses to free health care via Equity Card

Social Security Regulator which works towards improving oversight, especially in the areas of fiscal health and programme effectiveness. The project facilitates exchange among social protection and climate stakeholders in order to expand the use of social protection as an instrument that helps ensure that the climate crisis does not deepen existing inequalities and exclusion in affected communities.

The project supports the vision for digital transformation and improved interoperability across the digital social protection landscape and contributes to the further development of a Social Protection Registry and the Digital Social Protection Platform.

In the field of health, the coordination and implementation of the Universal Health Coverage (UHC) roadmap will be supported by the project. In addition, the project provides technical support to stakeholders such as the GS-NSPC, National Payment Certification Agency, NSSF and Ministry of Health to enhance access to affordable and quality health services. Furthermore, efforts are being made to strengthen the capacity of the health workforce by enhancing pre-service education for medical doctors, nurses, and laboratory technicians at health sciences training institution. The project supports the introduction of competency-based education in compliance with the newly updated national curriculum standards. In this context, the project continues to collaborate with the Health Science Institute of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces for theoretical instruction and partners with two hospitals - the Khmer-Soviet Friendship Hospital and the Cambodia-China Preah Kossamak Friendship Hospital for clinical practice of students.

The project cooperates with the Ministry of Health's Human Resource Development Department to develop accreditation standards for specific health training programs.

The benefits

With more climate-induced shocks anticipated, it is imperative for Cambodia to quickly advance its national social protection system, especially in aspects such as governance, policy making, effectiveness, efficiency, and capacity of national actors to carry out their responsibilities. Contributions from the ISPH II project will help strengthen these aspects.

Having an inclusive age- and gender-responsive national social protection system will help cushion life-shocks, thus enabling destitute households to better lift themselves out of poverty and to have a chance of living a dignified life. Social protection is an important tool for the government not only in poverty alleviation efforts but also in the reduction of inequities and improving overall human development. The national social protection system thereby contributes to Cambodia's resilience, social cohesion, and economic development. Strengthening the pre-service education will help Cambodia to further improve the quality of healthcare in the long run.

Success Factors

The project focuses on strengthening the foundational aspects of Cambodia's national social protection and health systems, particularly in response to the growing pressures of climate change and widening income and health inequalities. By tailoring the system to prioritize those most in need, we aim to enhance its ability to protect vulnerable populations. With a strong emphasis on gender and inclusion, the project addresses the root causes of poverty and vulnerability, improving targeting and helping individuals transition out of poverty.

A core value of the project lies in building institutional capacity and fostering effective governance within Cambodia's social protection and health systems. Well-designed systems are critical for mitigating the impacts of poverty, inequality, and social exclusion, which in turn contribute to greater social cohesion. Ultimately, the project seeks to 'future-proof' Cambodia's social protection and health systems to meet emerging challenges.