



# Feasibility Study on Demand for Gender Related Studies at Tertiary Education

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Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Under collaboration between  
Gender and Development for Cambodia (GADC)  
and  
Centre for Population Studies (CPS) of Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP)



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## ACRONYMS

ACC	:	Accreditation Committee of Cambodia
BA	:	Bachelor Degree
BPFA	:	Beijing declaration and the Platform for Action
CEDAW	:	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CNCW	:	Cambodian National Council for Women
CPS	:	Centre for Population Studies
DPA	:	Development and Partnership in Action
GADC	:	Gender and Development for Cambodia
GMAGs	:	Gender Mainstreaming Action Groups
GMAPs	:	Gender Mainstreaming Action Plans
HBF	:	Heinrich Böll Foundation
LWD	:	Life with Dignity
MA	:	Master's Degree
MoEYS	:	Ministry of Education Youth and Sports
MoWA	:	Ministry of Women's Affairs
NGO	:	Non-Governmental Organization
PhD	:	Doctorate of Philosophy
PUC	:	Paññāsāstra University of Cambodia
PyD	:	PazyDesarrollo
RUA	:	Royal University of Agriculture
RULE	:	Royal University of Law and Economics
RUPP	:	Royal University of Phnom Penh
UNDP	:	United Nations Development Program
UNV	:	United Nation Volunteers
SPSS	:	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
STREI	:	Social Transformation through Resilience, Empowerment and Innovation
TWGG	:	Technical Working Group on Gender
UC	:	Universities of Cambodia
YSO	:	Youth Star Organization

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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This study would not have been possible without the kind support and help of many individuals and donors. We would like to extend our sincere thanks to all of them.

Firstly, special thanks to the donors: the Heinrich Böll Foundation (HBF) and the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) through Paz y Desarrollo (PyD). The CPS team also would like to express our profound thanks to GADC for their guidance, supervision, provision of information and their support in completing the project.

Lastly, our thanks and appreciation goes to the target groups (lecturers and students) from the eight universities in Cambodia involved in the research, and stakeholders from government and NGO institutions who willingly allowed us to interview them.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study aims to explore the demand for gender studies at the level of tertiary education, potential aspects of gender courses to be taught and potential barriers for universities to provide such courses. The study was conducted at eight universities in Phnom Penh, plus various work places where key informants were located. The target groups were academic staff, lecturers, students, Government staff, and executive staff from relevant local and international NGOs. The study employed a mixed approach, using semi-structured interviews, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and survey questionnaires, as its main data collection tools.

The study found that the large majority of the respondents (in all three target groups) expressed a high demand for gender related studies, which is a positive sign for introducing gender studies into higher education. In the case of student respondents, there was little difference in demand for gender studies between male and female students. Moreover, students of the three universities (RUPP, UC and PUC) that offered a gender course and gender related topics in their curriculum, expressed high demand for more gender courses as they perceived that the provided gender courses at their universities were not enough to understand key gender theories and issues, particularly related to Cambodia. In general, there were many reasons all three groups had a common perspective that gender studies should be introduced at tertiary level education. For details, refer to the research findings section.

In regard to what type/level of gender courses should be introduced to tertiary education, most respondents suggested introducing gender courses at the undergraduate level (Bachelor degree) as a priority, including the foundation year program, while there was also substantial support for postgraduate gender studies. They hypothesised that gender issues were a prominent factor in Cambodian society, such as domestic violence, discrimination against women and low levels of women's participation in social and economic development. All of these issues could be improved through increasing the level of gender awareness and understanding among students at tertiary level. All the target groups expressed optimism at the job opportunities of gender program graduates. However, the availability of such job opportunities in this field were perceived in relation to other factors, such as government gender strategies and policies, donors' interests and priorities towards gender related issues in providing funds to local and international NGOs, and the aspects of gender related projects implemented by local NGOs in Cambodia. The target group of

academic staff and stakeholders (Government officials, local and international NGOs) clearly identified this issue.

In the last finding of the study, some constraints in providing gender related courses in university education were reported by academic staff, including the lack of gender specialists among university staff, particularly female lecturers, and inadequate academic resources such as textbooks, research, and case studies focused on the Cambodia context. Generally, gender course materials depended on foreign textbooks with most of the examples of gender issues and case studies differing in varying degrees to the context of Cambodia. However, this is a challenge that will diminish over time, as more gender experts are educated in Cambodia.

## **I. Background**

GADC is a local non-governmental organization, whose mission is to promote gender equality in social, economic and political processes in Cambodia by means such as advocating policy and legislative reform to respond to women's needs. GADC and the CPS of the RUPP are collaborating to conduct this feasibility study to identify the needs for gender studies among academic institutions, and to develop a plan to integrate gender studies into the university academic program.

Within the development process of the proposed gender curriculum, the feasibility study is necessary in order to assess the need for gender studies in tertiary education; measuring the potential demand from students, academic staff and other key stakeholders for such courses; determining the availability and capacity of university lecturers/professors to teach the courses; and to demonstrate the level of cooperation and approval from university and ministerial administrators to accredit and incorporate possible gender courses into existing areas of social research within universities, particularly in the RUPP.

These activities are part of a project to integrate gender into university programs, in recognition of the Royal Government of Cambodia's policies and strategies, which explicitly promote gender equality in all social, political and economic sectors. The national constitution text guarantees equality between women and men, while the Cambodian Millennium Development Goals, the National Poverty Reduction Strategy and the Government's Rectangular Strategy for Growth, Employment, Equality and Efficiency all consider the provision of gender equality to be among their core aims. The reality of the situation often does not achieve the potential of these policies and strategies, as women continue to face many inequalities.

## **II. Research objectives**

The main objectives of this study are to identify the need for gender studies among academic institutions and to identify the feasibility to integrate gender studies into the university academic program. The specific objectives of the project are to:

- (a) Identify demand and interest for gender studies at tertiary level education in Cambodia;
- (b) Identify preferred areas of gender studies and potential challenges to introducing gender studies and;

- (c) Determine the importance and relevance of genders studies for Cambodia's development and job market.

### **III. Research methodology**

The study proceeded with three main stages before being written:

- *Desk review*: a review of current literature was conducted to guide the research process, illuminate the context of gender issues across Cambodian institutions and to identify where this research could bridge gaps in existing literature. The review indicated there is minimal literature focused on gender studies in tertiary education in Cambodia and that research in the area is urgently required.
- *Key informant interviews*: interviews with relevant stakeholders such as government officers, and NGOs who are working in related fields were conducted. The interviews captured information about the job prospects for graduates and uses of the training in their work environments.
- *Target group interviews*: a wide range of questionnaires and discussion guides were designed using the information derived from the desk review and key informant interviews. The questionnaires and discussion guides were used to interview the main target groups of university students and academic staff.

#### ***Technique***

The study employed mixed methods of both quantitative and qualitative techniques. The qualitative technique focused on in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, while these responses were then quantified.

#### ***Sample size***

➤ University students:

- University students from eight selected universities (four private and four Government universities) were interviewed. These included RUPP, RULE, PUC, NORTON, RUA, UC, BBU and NUM. The total sample size for the survey interviews was 181 students, while another 24 students were selected to participate in focus group discussions.

➤ Academic staff:



- A total of 78 academic staff were interviewed at the eight aforementioned universities.
- Key informants:
  - There were a total of 35 key informants, including Government officials and NGO staff, interviewed at their respective workplaces.

### ***Sampling procedure***

- University students:
  - *Procedure:* To reach the target group of students, snowball sampling was applied. The data collectors were university students recruited from the eight selected universities in this study. Each data collector randomly selected interviewees from their networks who were studying at the selected universities.
  - *Method used:* Focus group discussions (FGD) were conducted at four universities. Each FGD consisted of six students. The discussion guide was used to facilitate the FGD. A tape recorder was also used after permission was granted from the target groups. In addition, surveys were conducted with all selected students, totalling 181 students from the eight universities.
- Academic staff:
  - *Procedure:* The student data collectors from each university interviewed the university academic staff from their respective universities.
  - *Method used:* Semi-structured interviews (where some of the questions are set in advance, while others are adapted depending on the responses during the interview) were employed to understand academic staff experiences and perspectives about gender within the tertiary context. The target group included people who have taught gender courses at private universities, people in departments such as sociology, population, or other social sciences, and key department heads.
- Key informants:
  - *Procedure:* GADC staff arranged and conducted in-depth interviews with key informants.
  - *Method used:* The key informants were Government officials and NGO staff working in relevant fields. The purpose of these interviews was to understand

current gender programs in their respective workplaces and their perspectives about gender courses at the tertiary level, as well as future job demand in gender-related work.

### ***Data management***

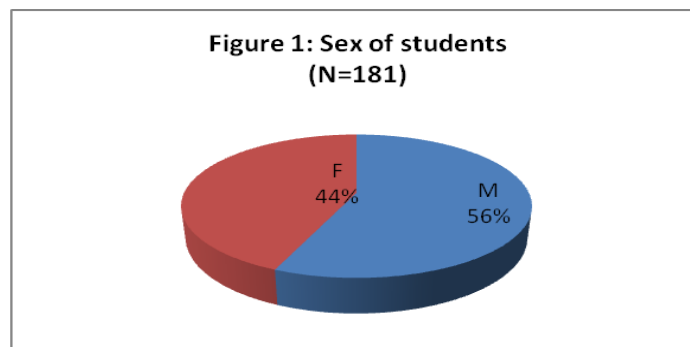
The survey data was tabulated and processed using SPSS. The semi-structured interviews and FGDs were analyzed using content analysis in Excel spread sheets to describe and categorize narrative information from the interviews.

## **IV. Research findings**

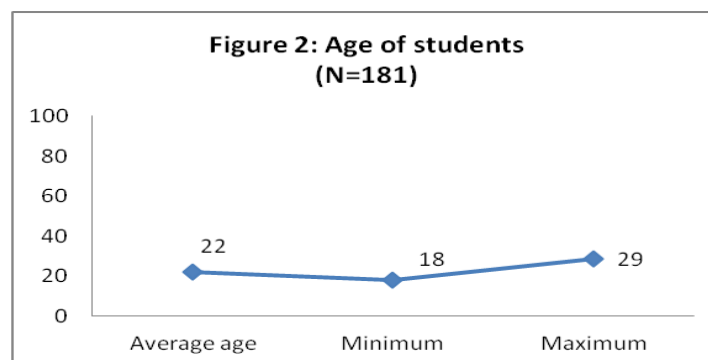
### **1. Population characteristics**

#### **1.1. Student profile**

The sex of sampled students for the study was well balanced at 44% female and 56% male. Females typically make up approximately 33% of the student population at tertiary level<sup>1</sup>.



The minimum age for the student sample was 18 years and the maximum age was 29 years, with an average age of 22 years.



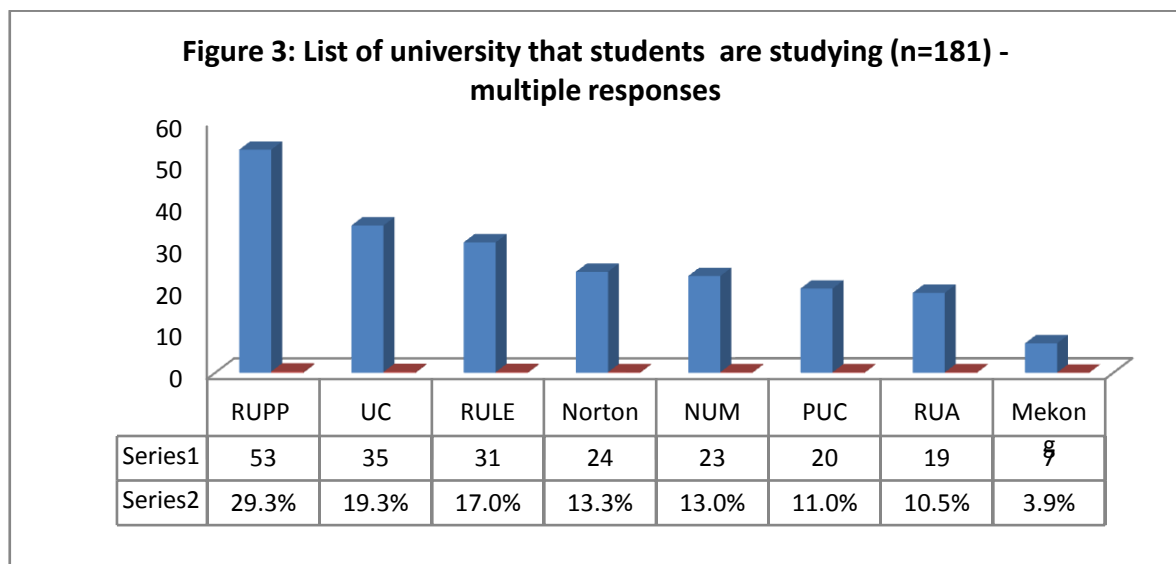
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<sup>1</sup>USAID/Cambodia 2010. *Gender Assessment 2010*.

Of the eight universities involved in the study, most students were from RUPP and UC, followed by RULE. This variation is not so much due to university size, but a combination of interviewer networks and confidence in seeking out interviewees, plus the willingness of students to be interviewed (see details of sampling procedures in the Research Methodology section).

The current field of study for students varied, based on the specific university students were attending, including the following:

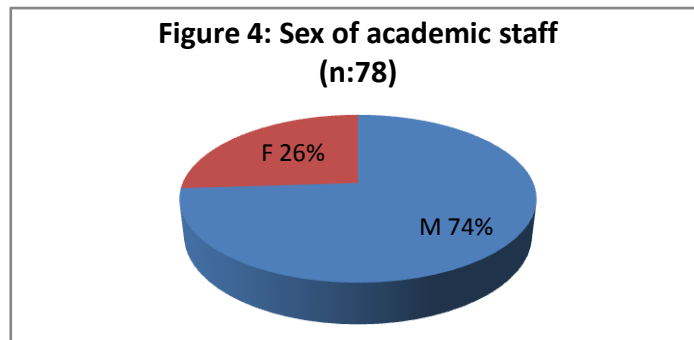
- For students studying at RUPP, almost all of them study the social sciences, particularly psychology, Khmer literature and sociology.
- For those studying at RULE, most are second and third year students. Nearly half of them are from Law and another half from Economics and Banking.
- For the 13% studying at NUM, they are predominantly third year students. Half of the students were from the fields of finance and banking. The remaining students were from fields of management, marketing, tourism, accounting, and English literature.
- For students at PUC, more than half of them were studying international relations. The remaining students were from the fields of business administration, business communication, finance, banking and political science.
- For those studying at UC, most were in their third year of study, primarily in the fields of English literature, law and international relations.
- Students at Norton were mainly studying hotel management and tourism.
- For those studying at RUA, most were in their third year of study, primarily in the fields of agriculture and rural development.



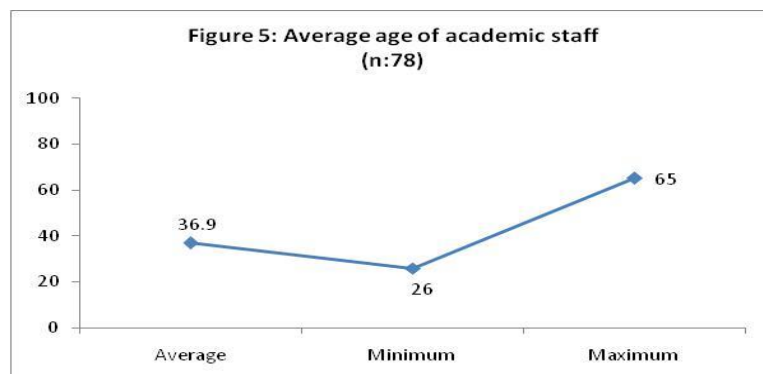
Generally, students had chosen their specific fields of study based on personal choice and in anticipation of market demand.

### 1.2. Academic staff profile

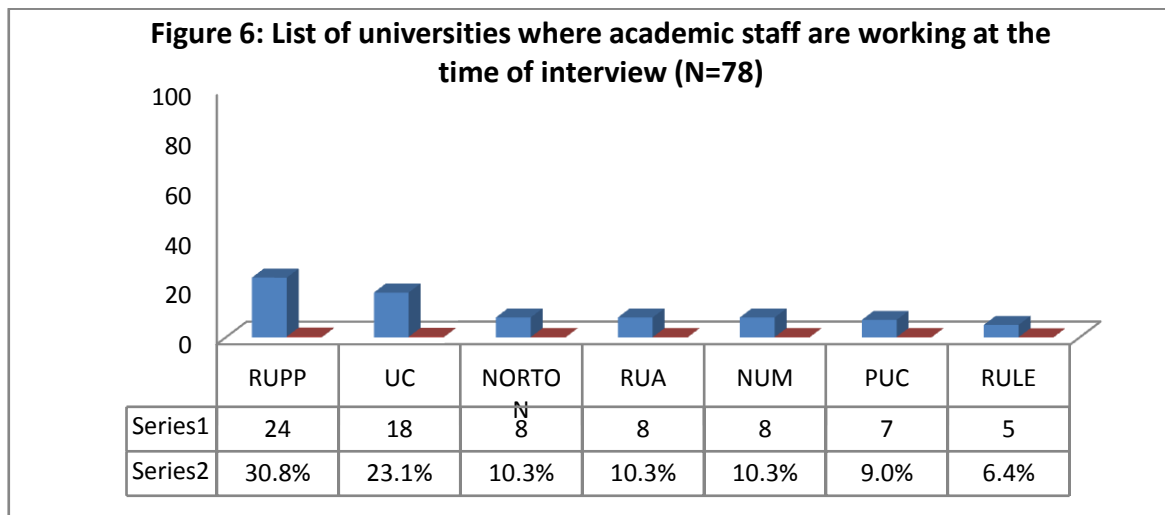
The original work plan was to achieve a gender balance in participants from all groups. In reality, a high majority of academic staff are male (this applies in many countries), which made it difficult to achieve a gender balance. Consequently, only 26% of academic staff interviewed for this research were females. This highlights the imbalance in higher educational achievement and a shortage of human resources, in terms of female academic staff.



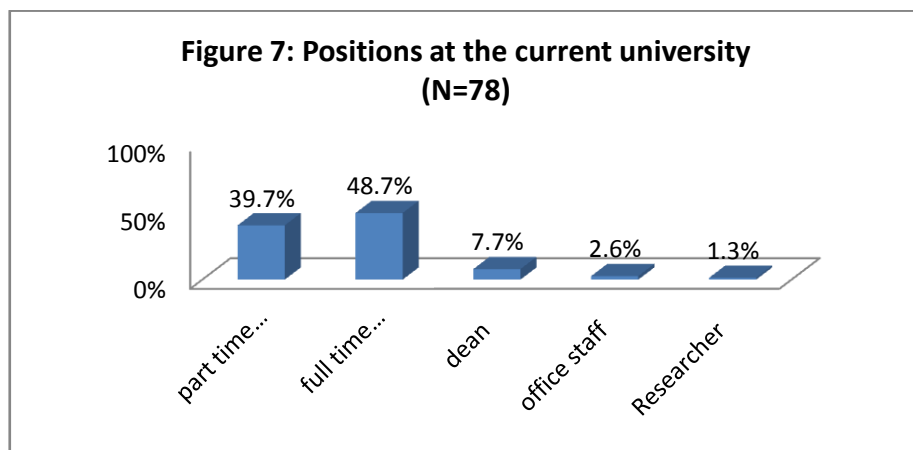
The average age of academic staff for this study was 37 years, while the minimum age was 26 years, which illustrates the high capability and potential of young generations who are moving into professional jobs in higher education.



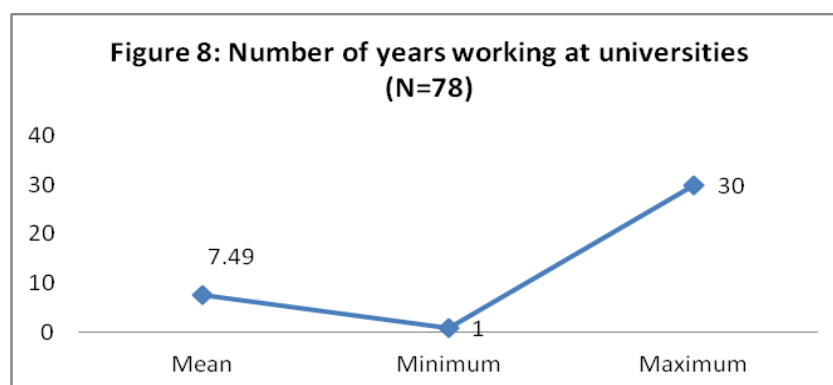
Despite the inclusion of eight universities in the study, most academic staff participants were from RUPP and UC.



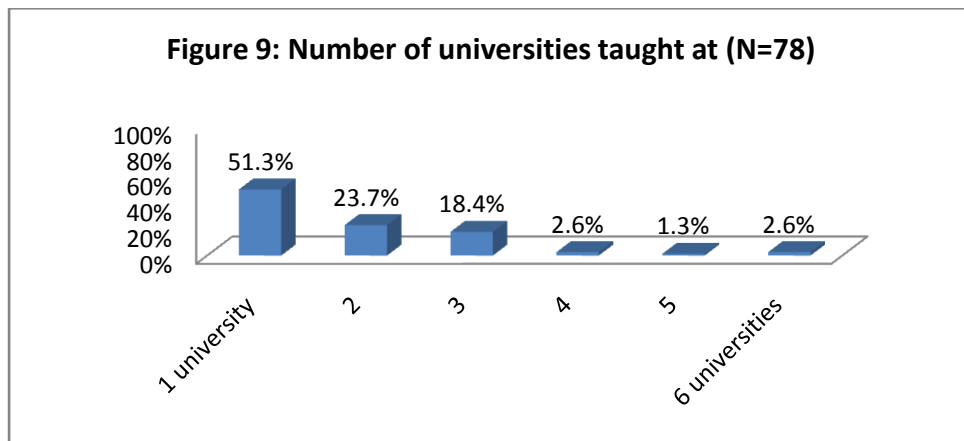
Almost half of the academic staff taught as full time teachers and nearly 40% taught as part-time teachers. The remaining interviews included deans and university office staff.



Tertiary teaching is not popular in Cambodia, mainly due to low pay, particularly at public universities. However, it was found that the average number of years of teaching at universities was around seven and a half years. This potentially illustrates a strong commitment of teachers to their profession.

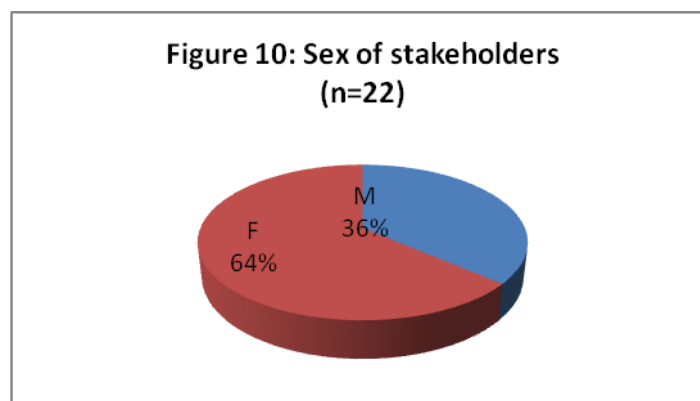


Approximately half of university teachers have taught at only one university, while many have taught at two or three universities. For those who have taught at only one university, they are mainly part-time teachers who also have full time jobs in the private sector.



### 1.3. Stakeholder profile

The interviews with stakeholders included a high majority of females. Of the interviews with Government officials, almost all of them were female (5 females and 1 male), while the interviews with NGO staff included 10 females and 6 males. This is likely a result of most gender specialists being female instead of male.



## 2. Current status of gender issues in Cambodia

This section focuses on the perspectives of various stakeholders in relation to gender issues in Cambodian society and progress on gender awareness, as a result of key actors efforts to promote greater gender awareness.

### 2.1. Stakeholders' perspectives

There are different perceptions, ideas and opinions about the awareness of gender issues in Cambodia today. A mixture of ideas and opinions were expressed by the stakeholders, which varied with the different educational backgrounds and work places of key informants.

The most common ideas regarding gender problems included rape, family abuse, violence, gender inequality, human trafficking, poverty and unemployment. Participants considered these issues as key social concerns (hot issues), which need to be studied and addressed immediately and comprehensively.

*“Value and social status given to women is very limited; women are provided an inferior role in society if compared with men, and women also face inequality in basic services if compared with men. Aside from these aspects, it is observed that discrimination against women, such as rape, human trafficking, domestic violence, women and infant mortality, and poverty are critical issues in society. Gender inequality not only affects women alone, but also men and children.” (Female Key informant two)*

*“Gender is a hot issue in Cambodia, and it involves many sectors and issues such as poverty and gender, HIV and AIDS, reproductive health, mother and child mortality, access to good care, abusive behaviours against women, gender based violence, women’s vulnerability and human rights. Also, women have a limited role and status in the society.”(Male key informant three).*

Some key informants expressed their perspectives about social issues by dividing the issues based on specific status. These included:

- *For social status or position in the government sector and non-government sector:* there are big gaps between women’s and men’s participation in society in the private sector and public sector, and from lower positions to higher positions. Men take majority control over nearly all key positions in the Government, including the legislative, executive and judicial branches of Government, despite the good will of the current Government to reduce gender representational gaps between men and women in all Government institutions.
- *For health care:* mothers’ and babies’ health care remains a significant concern in Cambodian society. Many married women take care of their husbands and children more diligently than themselves. Another key issue is that during pregnancy and delivery women usually do not come to see a doctor, instead using a traditional midwife in their home village.
- *For the education sector:* Despite NGO and civil society efforts to promote and give females opportunities for education, many parents still feel it is more important to support a son to receive a good education than a daughter. Parents often send

daughters to school for a few years, while sons tend to study for a longer period. If a job opportunity for a daughter arises, parents often send them to work to contribute income to the family.

- *For the legal sector, women in relation to legal protection:* many women are still influenced by cultural traditions. Women will often hesitate to seek legal help when violence or abuse happens to them, regularly staying silent about such matters.
- *For economic independence, women in economic activities:* the majority of Cambodian women are economically dependent on their husbands. Women (and men) are not educated to believe that housework should be considered as contributing to the family economy, although it is often regarded as unpaid labour. Thus, women are generally subject to low respect from their husband and society for their housework.

According to the findings, respondents believed that many women in society still express conservative views, traditions and habits, which pass from generation to generation. Most interviewed women felt that women considered their roles in society as inferior compared to men's roles because women thought of their lives as primarily focused on housework.

*One female key informant said: "Social and cultural influence in Khmer society on the role of women makes women see their role as lower than men. They get stuck in a tradition of women as housekeepers and child minders." She also pointed out that cultural and social influences lead to gender inequalities in all aspects of life. She explained that there were many gender issues in Cambodia society. People do not understand clearly about the term 'gender', including students and educators. Some people even misunderstand the term and they apply it in negative ways, which is due to social and cultural influences. It's not only men, but women also do not give value to and understand the role and status of women. Despite the many policies promoting women's empowerment, the real practice is different. Society tends to critically focus on mistakes and errors by women. Women work in the household for the sake of the family, but they do not get recognition for the importance of this role; people consider this as unpaid work, expected of women. Women have the problem of gender inequality in terms of education, capacity, freedom of expression (including making suggestions to men), decision-making, leadership, prostitution, and dependency on their husband. These are caused by cultural and social influences.*



Despite these challenges, many experts expressed their hope about the progress of gender awareness in Cambodian society in the future. This is because much effort has been made and the outcome of implementing gender policy changes and gender programs/projects show that men can gradually recognize and respect the role of women for social welfare and development of society. In addition, many women have also taken up more prominent roles in society. The number of women participating in leadership roles and at the managerial level has substantially increased within recent years, albeit from very low starting levels, such as Cambodian parliamentarians increasing to a still low 22% of all parliamentarians in recent years<sup>2</sup>. Women are employed from village chief up to some of the highest ranks in the Government, including Deputy Prime Minister, ministerial positions, Secretary of State, Under Secretary of State and General Director. Women in these roles help to improve awareness of the potential for women in the social, political and economic development of Cambodia.

*“In the future, gender issues will be better because assistance will be increased to programs or projects related to the promotion of gender education. In addition, since people have learnt that women have a significant role in society, the successful implementation of projects or programs cannot be achieved without the involvement of women, such as poverty reduction, education disparity and human trafficking” (female key informant one).*

## 2.2. Academic staff perspectives

Similarly to the stakeholders’ perspectives, academic staff believed domestic violence and human trafficking were key gender issues. Female teachers tended to talk more about these issues than male teachers. Other key gender issues identified by both female and male teachers focused on unequal rights between women and men in all aspects of life. This indicates that both male and female teachers have awareness of gender issues.

<b>Table 1: Important gender issues in Cambodia</b>	<b>Total N=78</b>	<b>Men N=58</b>	<b>Women N=20</b>
Domestic violence	61.5%	56.9%	75.0%
Human trafficking	39.7%	34.5%	55.0%

<sup>2</sup>USAID/Cambodia, Gender Assessment 2010.

Lack of equal pay for equal work	26.9%	25.9%	30.0%
Equal rights before the court	11.5%	10.3%	15.0%
Lack of equal participation and representation of women and men in politics/decision making positions	41.0%	46.6%	25.0%
Less equal access and control over resources/assets like land, houses and other property	17.9%	17.2%	20.0%
Others <sup>3</sup>	80.8%	74.8%	85.2%

### 3. Current gender programs implemented by NGOs and Government

This section focuses on the areas of gender programming that have been implemented by NGOs and Government institutions up to date. It will also mention the means of mainstreaming and dissemination of gender programs/projects carried out by public institutions and non-public institutions. In addition, the obstacles and strategies during program implementation will also be discussed here.

#### 3.1. Areas of gender program implementation

All stakeholders carry out different projects/programs on gender issues for common purposes, such as promoting gender awareness, improving women's roles in political-socio-economic development, gender empowerment, and dealing with gender-based issues. Target people and places cover very broad areas. This section describes these aspects in two categories; first examining NGOs' programs/projects' implementation and then Government programs/projects' implementation.<sup>4</sup>

##### 3.1.1. Gender program implementation of NGOs

The interviewed NGOs deliver a diversity of programs with a gender focus. The programs generally engage both women and men in efforts to improve gender equality. These programs are delivered throughout the country, with a major focus on rural areas for many of the NGOs. Improving gender equality is achieved through targeting many gender issues, such as gender-based violence, women's leadership and women's economic opportunities. Some of the NGOs work in collaboration with Government Ministries, while others work

<sup>3</sup>Unfairness and inequitable treatment between men and women; health care for women; social status; gender in politics; poverty; inequitable education; male domination in the family; traditional norms, inequality in marriage, prostitution; rape and lack of high ranking women in politics .

<sup>4</sup>Projects discussed here are a summary of interviews with key informants. For further details, please contact individual NGOs or Government bodies.

independently and directly with communities. Programs are achieved through a diversity of methods, such as capacity building, research and youth engagement. The diversity and complexity of programs requires a strong understanding of gender issues and analytical skills. While many practitioners have learned these skills through practice, it was reported that gender studies at tertiary level would certainly be beneficial for improving the impact of NGO gender-focused activities.

### **3.1.2. Government gender programs**

The Government's gender programs have primarily focused on mainstreaming gender awareness in Cambodia. The Government aims for men and women to be equally treated and achieve equal opportunities to participate in decision making at all levels. This is achieved through educational campaigns, training programs, including literacy training, gender mainstreaming activities, material support to rural female students, such as bicycles for travelling, health care training, gender advocacy programs, training for key gender officers in villages, network building in communities and national networking to protect women and children. Aside from implementable programs, the Government develops new legislation to improve the rights and opportunities of women. The Government plays an important role in improving gender justice, particularly due to its wide reach across the country. However, gender issues within Government institutions and inadequate funding can limit the potential for greater gender equality.

As with NGO programs, the wide range of Government gender-focused programs have a high demand for gender experts. In order to effectively mainstream gender throughout the Government, especially beyond just the Ministry of Women's Affairs, tertiary education in gender studies would be highly beneficial for many Government employees. Graduates with gender knowledge could bring much needed expertise to the different areas of Government.

### **3.2. Barriers in the Implementation of gender programs in the workplace**

All interviewed stakeholders reported having had various challenges in successfully carrying out their gender programs. Challenges included lack of budget, ineffective networking, poor education, and political interference during project implementation, lack of gender understanding and difficulty in changing people's attitudes.

*“The barriers that we face are a lack of good coordination and networking, and it being difficult to deal with very sensitive issues such as land conflict, and promotion of women among ethnic groups.”*

*“We had problems dealing with households that have domestic violence because they think that domestic violence is a family issue that should be hidden.”*

*“It is hard to change people’s attitudes, especially the values and social status of women in society. Women are discouraged from attending activities if their family is opposed or if workshops are in a distant place from their home. Most women have low levels of education if compared with men, due to family living conditions and because higher education institutions are far away from their home and it is not easy for women to live outside the home. Women do not want to work far away from home because they are afraid of many difficulties. These factors can be seen as barriers for women’s job opportunities.”*

*“Barriers in implementing gender programs are the degree of integration, promotion and advocacy of gender concepts in the education system. The level of implementation is still limited. There is also insufficient budget to support the program.”*

*“Although there may be a gender workshop, not all people understand the gender concepts clearly. Sometimes, trainees have problems due to misunderstanding and misuse of the gender concepts. There is limited budget to run the workshops and gender related programs. In the organization, there is competition between men and women. Men just want to take all opportunities for themselves and women face unfair conditions. There is less support for women in terms of material for instance and there is jealousy from the men when women are well positioned and treated well.”*

*“There is a lot going on with gender programs and at the same time, there is not a lot happening in Cambodia. Traditionally, there are a lot of policies and programs created, but just on paper rather than in practice. The MoWA is weaker than other Ministries in Cambodia. There is a need for the political will to bring programs and policies into action. Political will is also associated with financial capacity. There is a constraint there.”*

### **3.3.Strategies to overcome the difficulties with gender program implementation**

Although there are many challenges for gender programs, there are alternative measures and approaches to overcome such challenges. These measures and approaches vary from one institution to another, due to the variety of projects and the organization's goals and values. To achieve their goals, most organizations cooperate with relevant Government institutions and NGOs. Generally, cooperation with NGOs and Government institutions at various levels is viewed as a good means to reduce barriers to implementing a project.

For example, Silaka overcomes challenges of project implementation by providing education programs, information, policy guideline discussions, transparency and system setting through cooperation with organizations like GADC, human rights NGOs and Government institutions, such as the MoWA, MoI and the National Election Committee.

Other organizations negotiate their difficulties in the project implementation process through training their staff and volunteers to understand rural people's ways of living, particularly about the nature of families that experience domestic violence and/or rape. They teach them how to engage with these families and how to target people for information relating to these abuses, including the consequences perpetrators may face.

According to YSO, to negotiate challenges, they train volunteers to understand the reasons why domestic violence was committed, amongst other gender issues. The children of those households were then selected to play a role in presentations that campaign against domestic violence. At the presentations, the aim is for parents to see the presentation and then change their behaviour toward violence. YSO promotes community ownership of programs, who become responsible for the implementation of presentations.

### **4. Current gender topics<sup>5</sup> and gender related courses<sup>6</sup> in higher education**

From the literature review, it was found that there were not many gender related courses at university level, with only a few universities running gender related courses. However, all

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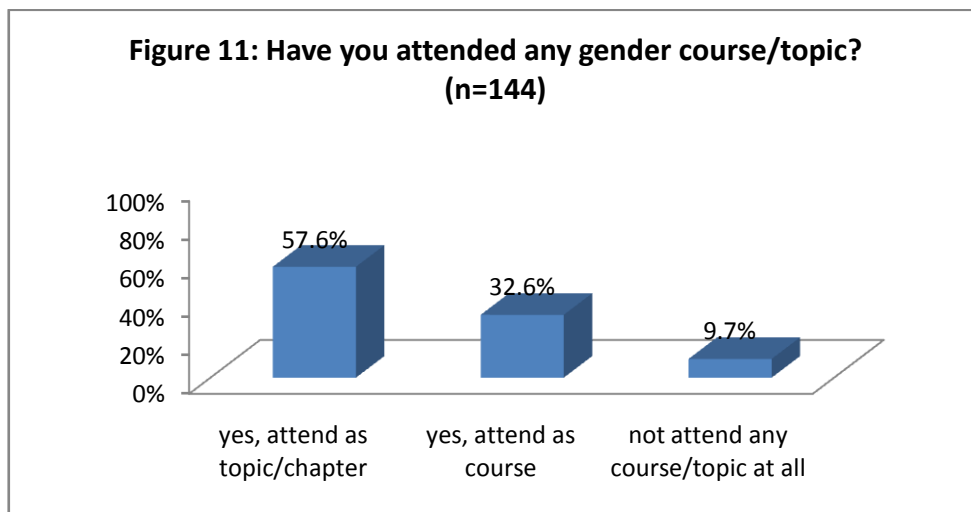
<sup>5</sup>Gender topic refers to any topic or chapter related to gender that is studied within any subject during the course of the study. For example, human rights study includes a small chapter on women's rights related to education or careers.

<sup>6</sup>Gender related course refers to a gender course that is integrated with other fields of study and it is named as the subject of the course, for example, gender and politics or psychology of gender.

universities have inserted topics or chapters about gender into many fields of study, especially in the social sciences. This study will discuss gender topics/chapters separately from gender related courses. It describes in detail the level of study and the subject fields of integration. The perspective of students will be described separately from teachers.

#### 4.1. Students' experiences

Nearly 80% (144 out of 181) of students reported there is at least one gender related course/topic offered at their respective universities. Over 50% of all students reported attending a gender related topic/chapter, with approximately one third of students having attended a gender course integrated into another field of study. Approximately 10% reported they had not attended any gender topic/course, even if it was provided at their university.



##### 4.1.1. Current gender related courses provided by each university

Gender course here refers to a course that is integrated with other fields of study. Only three universities (RUPP, UC and PUC) provide gender related courses that were reported by students.

Table 2: Name of gender course	Universities that are providing gender courses and the number of students reporting awareness of the course							
	RUPP	RUE	NUM	PUC	UC	Norton	RUA	MEKONG
Gender in Cambodia	5							
Gender and Politics				3				
Gender Study				1				
Gender Study and Political Science (Feminism)				2				

Table 2: Name of gender course	Universities that are providing gender courses and the number of students reporting awareness of the course							
	RUPP	RULE	NUM	PUC	UC	Norton	RUA	MEKONG
Psychology of Gender	8							
Perspectives on Women in Society					10			

*a) The gender courses provided at RUPP*

The gender courses provided at RUPP are only in the Bachelor degrees of psychology and sociology. The courses are described below:

- *Psychology of Gender*: this course was reported by eight RUPP students in the study. This course is provided as a part of the psychology degree in the first semester of year three.
- *Gender in Cambodia*: this course was reported by five RUPP students. This course is provided as a part of sociology degree in the second semester of year four.

*b) The gender courses provided at PUC*

The three courses at PUC were Gender Study and Political Science, Gender Study, and Gender and Politics. All courses were given as introductory courses. More than half of the students joined these courses during their foundation year, while the remaining students joined during their second or third year. Only a few respondents reported joining the course during their fourth year.

*c) The gender courses provided at UC*

The gender course most commonly reported was the course titled ‘Perspectives on Women in Society.’ This course is a social science class that was integrated in the fields of development studies, women studies, political science and international relations.

**4.1.2. Current gender topics/chapters provided by each university**

The following table displays students’ reporting of gender topics/chapters, which are included as a part of various fields of study. Human rights, Khmer literature and history were the most common identified topics involving a gender element.

The gender topics that are being provided are mainly integrated in Bachelor Degree programs (88.5%) in the fields of development studies, law, social sciences and English literature. The level of study reported was commonly an introductory course (75%), while gender topics featured much less in higher years of study, particularly fourth year.

Table 3: Name of gender topic	Universities that are providing the gender topic							
	RUPP	RULE	NUM	PUC	UC	Norton	RUA	MEKONG
Administration (rights of men and women to be a candidate for commune council voting)		1	1					
AIDs affecting women's jobs	1							
Anthropology				1				
Biology	1		1					
Business communication						1		
Chapter on Liv Ye, the queen who ruled Cambodia	1							
Citizenship of psychology	1							
Community management (agricultural work)							2	
Constitutional law (understanding of the importance of housework, which is equal to outside work)		2			2			
Course about life talent in relation to reproduction health and drugs					1			
Cross cultural management			3					
Culture and rights of men and women in historical times and the present time		1				2		
Domestic violence	1							
Economic geography	1	1						
English							1	
Equality between men and women			1					
Family (the role of women and men after getting married)					1			
Family law				1		2		
Gender studies (IR theory chapter 8: new issue of feminism)		2		5				
Gender, health psychology, social work, social science, advertising system	1							



Table 3: Name of gender topic	Universities that are providing the gender topic							
	RUPP	RULE	NUM	PUC	UC	Norton	RUA	MEKONG
General culture related to women in society		2						
Geography	2							
Giving value to women in the workplace			1					
High incidences of rape because of modern day fashion (is it appropriate to hang out at night)					1			
History	1		1			3	2	1
Human development	1							
Human geography	1							
Human rights	4	3	1		2			
Inclusion of gender mainstreaming in land registration							1	
International peace and security (women's equality)					1			
Khmer literature	1			1	2	7	1	
Labour law (an article about women and discrimination)		1						
Labour law (maternity leave and non discrimination)					1			
Labour law (equal rights in front of the law, equal pay for equal work, no discrimination in the recruitment process)		1			1			
Law (how to promote women's rights)		3						
Management						1		
Men and society						1		
Peer educators		1						
Philosophy						1	1	
Physical geography	1							
Psychology of labour	1							
Role of Khmer women in career development: comparison between historical periods and now	2							
Role of women in society		1	1				1	
Rural credit							2	

Table 3: Name of gender topic	Universities that are providing the gender topic							
	RUPP	RULE	NUM	PUC	UC	Norton	RUA	MEKONG
Rural development (community development)							3	
Rural social economy							1	
Khmer inscription	1							
Seminar (Gender Study in Society)					1			
Social science	1							
Sociology	3						1	
Sociology of economy	2							
Sociology of family	5							
Social work and gender	1							
Sociology of language	1							
Sociology of literature	1							
Theories of culture and civilization	1		4					
Women and literature		1			1			
Women and power				1	1			
Women in literature (related to gender)	1		1		2			
Youth development (roles between men and women)	1							

Nearly all students (130) reported that the reason that they attended a gender course was because they needed to fulfil a requirement for their degree or they needed to fulfil a requirement for the subject field (approximately 30%). There was no significant difference between male and female students studying gender courses or topics, which is likely influenced by the fact that the courses were compulsory.

#### **4.1.3. Student perspectives of whether the current provided course/topic is sufficient**

All students who attended a gender course were also asked if they think the course is sufficient to understand gender. 80% of the students said it was not sufficient. There was not a significant variation between female and male perspectives (see table below).

<b>Table 4: Are offered courses/topics sufficient for understand on gender?</b>	<b>Female (n=59)</b>	<b>Male (n=71)</b>
yes	20.3%	18.3%
no	79.7%	81.7%

Students justified their response with a few key reasons, including; the course they attended only had a narrow focus, there was a lack of documents/human resources to learn in-depth about gender and that teachers were not gender specialists. For students who believed the study was enough to understand gender, they responded that it was enough to understand that equal rights between women and men is sufficient knowledge about gender.

#### **4.2. Teacher's experience**

Of the 78 academic staff at the selected universities, 78% of them responded that their universities provided gender related courses/topics, while the remaining 22% said that there are no such courses provided to the students.

##### **4.2.1. Current gender related courses provided by each university**

As described in the finding of students, only three universities (RUPP, UC, PUC) offered any gender related courses to their undergraduate students (one or two courses).

###### *a) Gender courses provided at RUPP*

As mentioned in student findings, only the degrees of sociology and psychology provide gender courses. Subsequently, the researchers approached and interviewed RUPP academic staff in these majors in order to get a more detailed understanding about the courses. The academic staff descriptions of the courses are as follows:

- *Psychology of Gender*: This course was provided as a part of the psychology degree in year three during the first semester. The course was described as focusing on;
  - How gender influences beliefs, perception, behavior and sexual identity.
  - The relationship between biological and psychological dimensions of gender, gender-based human interaction, issues of power and identity, communication, sexual behavior, and susceptibility to disease.
  - To contextualize student knowledge by introducing the way in which political policies impact on the equality of men and women.

- *Gender in Cambodia*: This course was provided as a part of the sociology degree in year four, during the second semester. This course was described as focusing on:
  - Issues faced by Cambodian women in all aspects of life, including education, politics, labor and employment, family and marriage, domestic violence, spouse support, human trafficking and prostitution.
  - Analyzing the legal rights and responsibilities of women under both international covenants and Cambodian law
  - Analyzing the impact of law on the reality of women’s lives and developing ways to mitigate the challenges faced by women in Cambodia.

In addition, the academic staff in the sociology degree reported another gender course that was integrated into the Master of Sociology and Anthropology<sup>7</sup>. This gender course was described as follows:

- *Society, Gender and Development*: This course is taught at semester four. In this course, students examine various theories, which explain the relationships between society, gender and development. They explore the importance of gender awareness in both development theory and practice, and come to understand the gendered nature of power relationships and production of knowledge in a development context, and its implications on developing societies. Finally, students identify major gender and social issues in the Cambodian context, analyze their causes and work towards possible solutions.

*b) Gender courses provided at PUC*

The academic staff perspectives were slightly different from the students’ perspectives at PUC. From the teacher’s perspective, it was reported that there is only one gender course provided at PUC. The course is “Introduction to Gender Studies”, which is part of the foundation year studies program. Foundation year courses, required for all first-year students, consist of a liberal arts curriculum that will help students gain *vital general knowledge* to better prepare them for a rigorous university education.<sup>8</sup> There are eight *common* courses (the Introduction to Gender Studies course is one of the eight common

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<sup>7</sup>It was not reported from student findings because the researchers did not interview Master’s degree students.

<sup>8</sup>As part of this new requirement, by both ACC and MoEYS, students must successfully complete the Foundation Year Course in their first year before being allowed to continue their study at PUC.

courses) for all students in every major, and two *oriented* courses for those who choose a specific major field of study.

Aside from that course, PUC, in collaboration with other institutions provides several gender sessions and seminars. These include:

- *A session on 'Volunteerism and Gender-Based Violence'*: This session was provided by the UN Volunteer (UNV) program in Cambodia, in collaboration with UN Women. They conducted this session at PUC for three days during July 2011. Five groups of 50 to 80 students taking a gender course at PUC have been involved in these sessions. The main objective of the sessions is to raise awareness of students about the role and contribution of volunteering in tackling gender-based violence through introducing the concept of 'volunteerism for development' and exposing students to the research on an assessment of volunteer interventions addressing gender-based violence in Cambodia.
- *A seminar on 'Fighting Back through the Courts: CEDAW and the Challenge of Combating Violence Against Women'*: This seminar was held in September 2011 at PUC in cooperation with the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

c) *Gender courses provided at the UC*

The gender course that was commonly reported at the UC was the course titled 'Perspectives on Women in Society.' It was reported that students from any major or any year can take any given course if it is required to fulfil their degree because the UC uses a credit system. The gender course is designed for first year students. However, second, third and fourth year students also can take this course, if they have not yet taken enough courses at this level to complete the requirements for their degree. This course is for social science credit that was integrated in the fields of development studies, women studies, political science and international relations. Other majors, such as English literature and majors in the College of Management can take it as a general elective course.

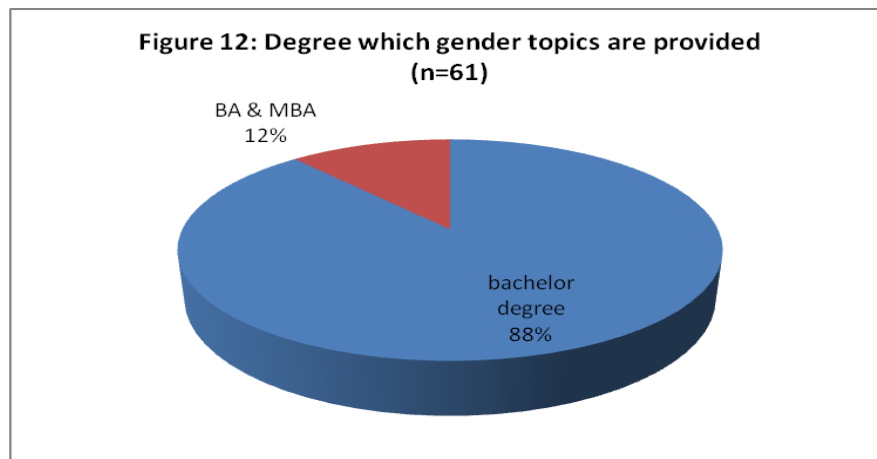
The course discusses the status of women in society in a contemporary globalized context. Theoretical views on how relations between women and men are constructed are presented along with discussions of social structures. The concept of feminism is also introduced during the course. Discussions explore how family and social structures change in a globalized context and the substantial role of women in world politics is also included.

#### 4.2.2. Current gender topics provided by each university

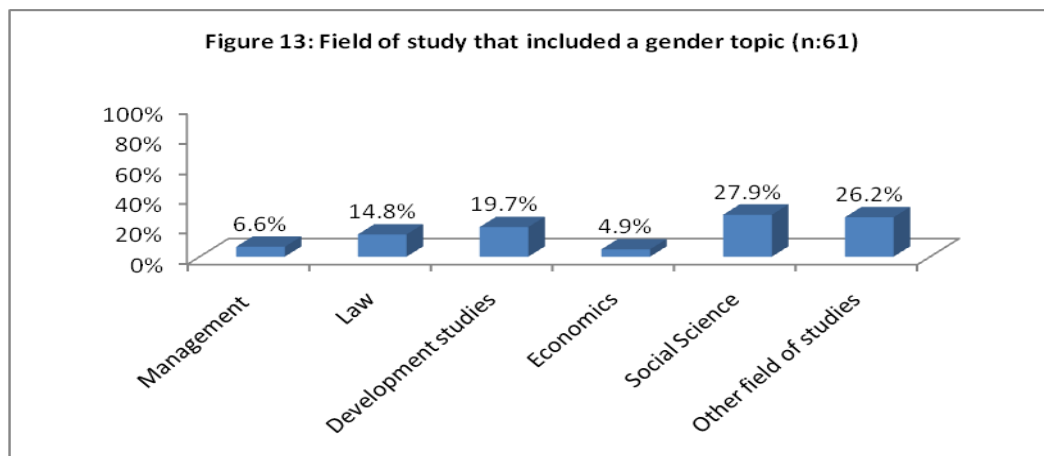
Similarly to student perspectives, academic staff said that gender topics within courses are more widely studied compared to standalone gender courses. According to academic staff, gender topics are mainly integrated into study programs in the social sciences, particularly in majors of sociology, psychology, Khmer literature, social work, and in general study programs (generally referring to foundation year classes). 30% of the academic staff could not provide an answer about whether gender topics are integrated into their study program, which may be due to a lack of clear information regarding the curriculums for each field of study. This can be problematic if staff are advising students on study options, without adequate knowledge of the available options, particularly for gender-related studies.

##### a) Level and year of study for gender courses

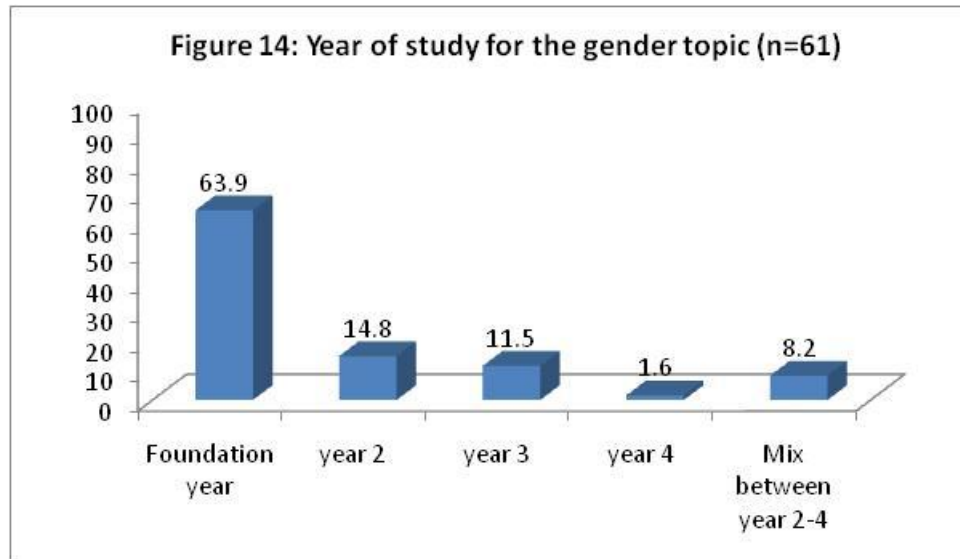
As shown in the graph below, of the 61 respondents who reported their universities offered gender related topics, 88% of the gender topics were integrated into undergraduate courses.



It was reported that gender topics are largely from the fields of study in the social sciences (28%), followed by development studies (20%) and law (15%). This is likely due to these fields of study covering a wide range of content, with gender a cross cutting issue.



These topics are mainly delivered to students in the foundation year (64%) and between year two and three (26%). As for the level of the gender topics offered by the university's academic staff interviewed in this research, almost 100% of the topics were at the introductory (foundation) level. Integrating these findings with students' opinions that the quantity and quality of gender-related topics was generally insufficient to understand gender issues, it can be concluded that there is a distinct lack of gender-related topics and courses at tertiary level to equip students with a sound knowledge of gender issues and theories.



*b) Course description of gender topics*

This research also explored the focus and descriptions of key gender issues in the reported gender related courses/topics. For the social sciences, the primary gender topics are Women and Health Education, Women's Roles and Rights in Society, The History of the Women's Revolution, Sexual Harassment, Women and Men in Public Opinion, Domestic Violence, Social Pressure Against Women, Gender Equity, Feminism, Women and Development in Asia and Europe, Women's Perspectives, Economic Participation, Women and Paid Jobs, Gender Concepts, Women in Theory and Practice, Women's Rights in Society, Gender Inequality, and Women, Politics and Law. For the agriculture sector, the primary gender topics are Women's Participation in Agriculture, Women and Livelihoods, Gender Mainstreaming in Promoting Agriculture, Women and Agricultural Management and Women's Rights and Equality in Family. For the field of law, the primary gender topics are Divorce, Laws Related to Gender, and Intellectual Law. For the field of Khmer Studies, the primary gender topics are Women's Roles and Values in Khmer society, Women, Family and Child Bearing, and Women's Roles in Ancient Society. In the fields of Management,

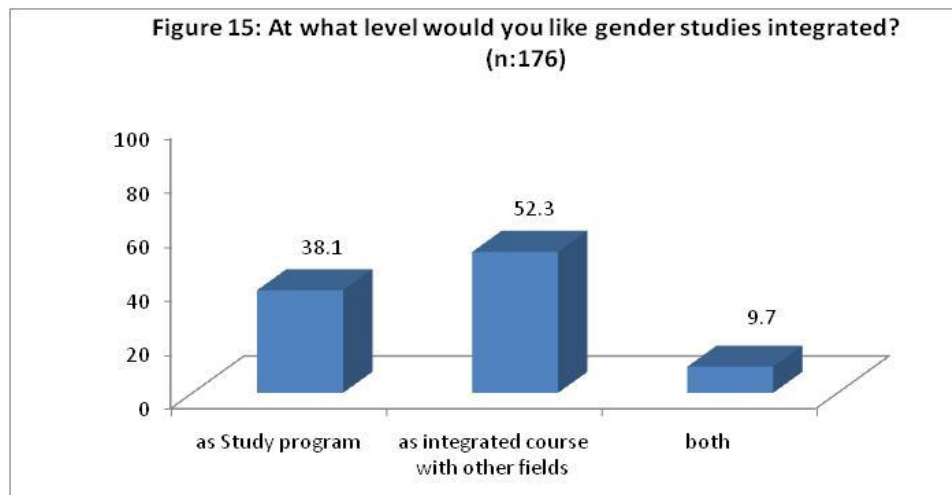
Development Studies and Economics, the primary gender topics are Human Resources and Institutional Management, and Women and Community Development.

## 5. Demand for gender courses in higher education

### 5.1. Students' perspectives

As the previous section stated, 80% of students reported that current gender topics/courses were insufficient for them to understand gender issues in Cambodia. When asked whether they wished to have a gender study degree/program at tertiary level, 97% of the respondents said they wished to have a program was available.

As of 2012, there is no gender study program offered by any university in Cambodia at undergraduate or postgraduate level. The next question for students was whether there should be a gender program of study or gender courses. As shown in the graph below, 52% of respondents wanted a course integrated into an existing field of study, 38% wanted a separated degree, and the remaining 10% wanted to have it as both integrated courses and as a separate degree.



#### 5.1.1. Students preferring a separate study program

For this section, the respondents were split into two groups: one group that preferred to have gender as a separate program or as an integrated course and separate program (84 of 176) and a second group that preferred to have gender as integrated courses (92 of 176). All respondents had the option of choosing multiple answers from the provided answers in the questionnaire. Here are the results from the first group;



<b>Table 5: If a separate degree, at what level should the course be delivered?</b>	<b>Male (n=52)</b>	<b>Female (n=32)</b>	<b>Both (n=84)</b>
High school	28%	22%	26%
Bachelor degree	81%	78%	82%
Postgraduate certificate	11%	13%	12%
Master's degree	17%	22%	19%
Doctoral degree	6%	3%	5%

For this group, over three quarters of students believed a gender program should be available at undergraduate level, while approximately a third of students believed a gender program should be available at postgraduate level. In addition, approximately a quarter of students believed a gender program should be introduced at high school, although as high school level doesn't equate to a degree, the percentage may have been higher, as many respondents may have ignored that option. There was no substantial variation in female and male responses, except that females indicated slightly more preference for gender studies at postgraduate level, as opposed to males that indicated slightly more preference for gender studies to be at undergraduate and high school levels. Doctoral studies was the exception, where twice as many males would like a gender studies option available in comparison to women. These results indicate a strong interest in gender studies programs, regardless of sex.

### 5.1.2. Students preferring integrated courses

<b>Table 6: Name of the field that gender-related courses should be integrated into</b>	<b>Male (n=45)</b>	<b>Female (n=47)</b>	<b>Both (n=92)</b>
Gender related fields (gender and society, and sociology)	28%	33%	31%
Law (human rights, labour law, family law)	21.3%	24.4%	23%
Khmer studies (civilization and culture)	15%	4%	10%
All majors (unspecified)	9%	7%	8%

Of the 92 respondents preferring gender courses to be integrated into degrees, approximately one third believed gender courses should be integrated into gender-related fields of study, such as gender and society or sociology. Approximately one quarter of respondents believed gender-related courses should be integrated into law degrees. Only 8% of respondents believed gender studies courses should be integrated into all degrees. In

terms of variations in relation to gender, the only major variation was in preferences towards Khmer studies, with nearly four times as many males than females believing gender studies courses should be integrated into Khmer Studies. It is unclear why this is the case. In addition, the research found that students tended to name the course they were studying as their preference for where gender courses should be integrated. As there are more social science students than other fields, this has likely skewed the results.

a) Field, year, and level of study

In addition to the result shown above, the following table reports on the specific field of studies that gender courses/topics should be integrated with. The data illustrates that development studies (26%) and law (21%) are the main fields where respondents thought gender studies should be integrated into, followed by the fields of international relations and political science. However, it is noted that 20% of the respondents could not provide a specific field of study where gender courses should be integrated.

<b>Table7: Field of study which gender is integrated to</b>	<b>Male (n=45)</b>	<b>Female (n=47)</b>	<b>Both (n=92)</b>
IR and Political Science	16%	13%	14%
Management	7%	11%	9%
Law	22%	19%	21%
Development study	31%	21%	26%
Sociology	--	11%	5%
All majors (Unspecified)	18%	21%	20%

Finally for this group, it was asked ‘at which level and year should gender courses be offered?’ Based on this format, some respondents answered only the ‘level of the course’ or ‘which year.’ Focusing on the level of the course, a substantial majority (64%) believed the courses should be at the introductory level, while only 26% believed it should be at the advanced level, while a further 10% believed it should be at either level. This finding was replicated in questioning about the year of the course, as a substantial majority (62%) believed gender courses should be offered in the foundation year. These results could indicate that students believe gender studies should be available to all students and/or compulsory for all students, which would be the case in a foundation year. However, there still appears a strong demand for gender courses at various levels, with many students indicating it should be available at any level or advanced levels.

<b>Table 8: level of the course</b>	<b>Male (n=25)</b>	<b>Female (n=25)</b>	<b>Both (n=50)</b>
Introductory	68%	60%	64%
Advanced	16%	35%	26%
Either introductory or advanced	16%	5%	10%
<b>Which year?</b>	<b>Male (n=19)</b>	<b>Female (n=20)</b>	<b>Both(n=39)</b>
Foundation	68%	56%	62%
2 <sup>nd</sup> year	20%	12%	16%
3 <sup>rd</sup> year	8%	8%	8%
Any years	4%	24%	14%

## 5.2. Academic staff perspectives

Academic staff were also questioned to assess their views on the demand for gender studies. As the data in the table below shows, most of respondents (71%) reported that there was demand from students for gender courses, while 21% were not sure about demand and a remaining 9% said there was no demand. Integrating these results with the fact that nearly 100% of students responded that they would like gender courses, programs or both available, it is clear that there is a very high demand for gender studies at tertiary level. The discrepancy between academic staff and students may be due to academic staff being less aware of student preferences.

<b>Table 9: Perspective of academic staff if they think there is demand on gender course from students</b>	<b>(n=78)</b>
Yes	70.5%
No	9.0%
Not sure	20.5%

In the following table, only academic staff that reported demand from students for gender studies, were asked to specify the types of demand. Academic staff could choose from integrated courses, separate degrees or short courses/workshops. A vast majority (72%) of respondents believed gender studies should be offered through integrated courses, while only 16% believed it should be a separate degree and a final 12% believed gender studies should be offered through short courses or workshops.

<b>Table 10: Type of student demand for gender courses based on academic staff perspectives</b>	<b>(n=55)</b>
Yes	58%
No	42%
<b>If yes, what type?</b>	<b>(n=32)</b>
Integrated course	72%
Separate degree	16%
Short course/workshop	12%

Academic staff were also questioned about their personal feelings towards gender studies, as is illustrated in the table below. Nearly all teachers indicated they wanted gender courses, while the majority (55%) wanted these courses integrated into existing degrees. However, 28% wanted a ‘separate degree’, or ‘either integrated courses or a separate degree.’ This indicates a substantial demand for a gender degree, in addition to gender courses.

<b>Table 11: Do you want to have gender courses? (Academic staff perspectives)</b>	<b>(n=78)</b>
Yes	97%
No/NA	3%
<b>If yes, what type?</b>	<b>(n=76)</b>
Integrated course	55%
Separate degree	15%
Short course/workshop	4%
Either integrated or separate degree	13%
Either integrated or short course	7%
NA	7%

### **5.2.1. Reasons for wanting integrated and/or separate courses**

Academic staff provided many reasons for wanting integrated or separate courses. The most common reasons for having gender as an integrated course are that it involves cross-cutting issues and broad concepts that students (from all fields) should learn and know, students should be able to learn both gender issues and other skills required for their degree, and that we are currently dealing with many gender issues in society. A separate gender degree may not have been as highly preferred because respondents may have prioritised gender courses instead of degrees in their responses. If given the choice, many respondents may have

chosen both. In addition, respondents may be unfamiliar with a gender program, but familiar with gender courses, which may lead them to choose the option that is familiar. Meanwhile, some respondents argued that there should be a separate gender degree at the tertiary level, as integrated gender courses/topics are short, less focused and not exclusively focused on gender issues.

*a) Preferred field of study for introduced gender courses*

Of the 78 respondents who were asked whether a gender course should be added to tertiary education, a vast majority of the respondents (85%) agreed. This demonstrates further support for introducing gender courses at the tertiary level.

<b>Table 12: Should gender courses be introduced to tertiary education?</b>	<b>(n=78)</b>
Yes	85%
No	6%
NA	9%
<b>If yes, what is the priority level of those gender courses?</b>	<b>(n=66)</b>
High priority	14%
Priority	48%
Medium	14%
Low	3%
Not applicable	21%

Respondents were asked to give priority to the introduction of general gender-related courses to tertiary education. A majority of respondents (62%) believed it was a priority or high priority, while a further 14% believed it was a medium priority. This indicates not just a high level of academic support for introducing gender courses, but an urgent need for the introduction of these courses, as it is a priority need. Meanwhile, due to some misunderstandings, a fifth of respondents gave responses that were deemed undecided. Significantly, only 3% of academic staff believed the introduction of gender studies was a low priority, further reinforcing the urgency for introducing gender studies.

*b) Preferred field of study for gender courses*

<b>Table 13: field of study where gender course should be offered</b>	<b>(n=66)</b>
All Fields of Study	67%
Only Social Sciences	18%

Separate Degree	6%
Other Fields (law, economics, management, Development Study)	8%
Not Applicable	1%

After prioritizing the gender related course, academic staff were asked whether the gender related course should be provided in a specific field of study (degree), a separate degree or to all fields of study. As shown in the table above, 67% of the respondents suggested gender courses should be introduced in all fields of study, while 18% believed gender courses should be integrated into social science degrees. Only 6% of academic staff proposed a specific gender degree, which contrasts with 15% of academic staff supporting a specific gender degree in an earlier question, when given options relating to integrated, separate or short courses. It appears that academic staff responses are substantially influenced by the way questions are asked. Regardless, all responses from academic staff indicate strong support for introducing gender studies at tertiary level. Integrated courses are favoured, but there is still substantial support for a separate degree.

*c) Preferred name for courses that corresponds to the current needs of society*

<b>Table 14: Preferred name for courses that corresponds to the needs of society</b>	<b>(n=78)</b>
Women and political/economic/social participation	17%
Gender and development (social, community and rural)	13%
Gender issues (inequality and inequity)	17%
Gender and human rights	13%
Gender and discrimination (domestic violence and human trafficking)	14%
Gender and education, health, law, and business	21%
Gender roles in (society, family and culture)	14%
All courses	7%

Similar to the previous question, which required respondents to list fields of study for the integration of gender courses; this question explored gender-related themes for courses, which meet societal needs. As the above table shows, there is a fairly even spread of themes for gender courses, which highlights the many and diverse gender issues in Cambodia. Therefore, the introduction of gender courses into tertiary education will require broad expertise and diverse subjects to effectively address the many gender issues in Cambodia.

### 5.3. Stakeholders' perspectives

Many stakeholders strongly supported the idea that Cambodia should have gender studies at tertiary level. They observed that broadcasting of gender concepts in the media has increased gender awareness throughout the country, with people changing their attitudes towards gender. Stakeholders believed the introduction of more gender studies in tertiary education would improve people's understanding of gender issues and ultimately improve gender equality in Cambodia, including job prospects for women. One key informant explained his view:

*“It would be great if gender courses are introduced to the higher education program, so that students are able to acquire gender knowledge. However, whether gender courses should be integrated, and at which level, should be the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports because they know clearly about the situation in higher education. People should work closely with the Ministry to discuss gender education. Moreover, a lack of human resources, such as teachers, researchers and experts, majoring in the field of gender, and limited practice, means gender education will face difficulties.” (Key informant No.12)*

An expert from the UNDP also supported the idea of having gender studies at university level: *The UNDP has already given support, both financial and physical, to some developing countries. This is viewed as the first trial for the UNDP to put in place such study. It would allow the UNDP to identify how much interest there is in such study by the public. The curriculum should focus on ideas to create opportunities for students and growth of gender studies. This is a very crucial stage of gender study development. Therefore, we have to make what has not yet happened, happen.”*

Some stakeholders suggested that gender studies should also be introduced to the junior high school curriculum, particularly into Khmer Literature. As one informant explained:

*“It is a really good idea to integrate gender courses into tertiary education, but it should start from the junior high school, especially from grade seven. The teaching of gender related courses would change people's attitudes, promote human rights and women rights, and reduce domestic violence and conflict.”*

Offering a similar perspective, another informant suggested that gender studies should be mainstreamed at the high school level first because it would be learnt throughout the

country, providing high school students with a good understanding of gender. Following that process, it could be introduced to foundation year courses, before it is mainstreamed or integrated into Bachelor and Master's degree curriculums.

The MoEYS and MoWA also supported the idea of integrating gender courses into the higher education curriculum. They proposed that gender courses or topics should initially be mainstreamed into foundation year courses because in the foundation year, students from all different fields of studies can take this course. As a result, most students at tertiary level would at least gain some understanding about gender issues. Following that first step, the Ministries suggested it should be introduced to second, third and fourth year students in the field of social sciences, arts, humanities and relevant disciplines. The Ministries also welcomed the introduction of a separate gender degree, at undergraduate and/or postgraduate level, as the Ministries lack human resources with gender expertise. As the Ministries have limited human resources, when they conduct gender programs, research or policy development, they are usually required to hire external consultants, who can be expensive, while international consultants may not always understand the Cambodian context as thoroughly as a Cambodian national.

In summary, although there are different views on how gender studies could be established, there is common ground amongst stakeholders wanting gender studies to be introduced to higher education in Cambodia, as integrated and separate courses. In addition, there is significant support for a gender-focused degree, which would provide much needed human resources and gender knowledge in Cambodia.

### **5.3.1. How to Add Gender Studies into the Higher Education Curriculum**

This section analyses stakeholders' perspectives on what kind of gender courses should be created and how they could be utilized in tertiary education. The results of these interviews suggested that most respondents preferred the name 'Women's Studies' as opposed to 'Gender Studies.' 'Women's Studies' was perceived to be a much broader discipline than 'Gender Studies.' However, a gender expert suggested that 'Women's Studies' is part of 'Gender Studies' and that most academic institutions use the term 'Gender Studies.' To avoid complication, the rest of this report will continue to use the term 'Gender Studies.'

The following sections explore stakeholders' perspectives in response to the question; "if gender studies is introduced in tertiary education, should it be an integrated course (in other fields of study or included into the foundation year) or a separate program?" Similar to



academic staff, there were a range of views, with some stakeholders preferring integrated courses and others preferring a separate program. The following are some of the perspectives:

- ***Integrated into a foundation year:*** gender studies should include study of gender concepts, basic rights, conventions, roles, sex, equality, women's leadership, theories of women's studies and women's empowerment. Gender studies should also include current Cambodian-specific social issues, such as women's issues in the garment sector, domestic workers, migration and women and economics. Universities that want to set up gender studies as a degree program should cooperate with other universities, such as conducting joint research and curriculum development. In addition, gender studies should be integrated into all fields of study and the Government should mandate it as a compulsory course.
- ***Integrating into all fields of study:*** this model of gender studies should be included in the fields of finance, banking, management, economics, construction and engineering, as gender topics are relevant to these fields of study. The course work should provide students with a basic grounding in the subject in their foundation year. Courses at the upper levels should concentrate on more specialised study with fieldwork because students will be able to analyze gender issues in their fields of study, as they enter later years of study.
- ***As a separate gender degree/program:*** this model proposes a gender-focused Bachelor degree, Master's degree and/or Doctorate degree. During the curriculum design, courses from other universities globally and in the region should be analysed and influence the structure of the curriculum in Cambodia.

*“Information about the importance of gender studies in higher education institutions should be broadly disseminated to students, the public, communities and all relevant sectors before a degree program is set up and launched. A gender studies curriculum should be practical for the Cambodian context, not just focusing on theory. Students should be able to analyse the issues and learn more about the lives of women. The Chbab Pros (men's moral discipline) and Chbab Srey (women's moral discipline) should be modified to be appropriate to the current social development of Cambodia, but should not be omitted.”*  
(National Radio of Cambodia)

*“Some key courses should be; introduction to gender, women’s rights, women’s empowerment, gender and development, and women’s leadership. The level of the courses depends upon the field of study; there should be a study focus linked to the field of study, such as gender in agriculture. There should be a thesis or essay that analyses gender issues in practical fields, not just making hypotheses. The courses shall be offered from the second year to the fourth year, and they should be integrated into the student’s major. The courses need to be interconnected, not separate.”(OGB)*

*“It would be good to integrate gender related courses into the curriculum; it would mainstream the ideas. It should be integrated into the Faculty of Law and the Faculty of Education. Gender related courses should also be integrated into high school, especially in civics.” (Room to Read)*

## **6. Barriers to having gender courses at higher education**

All respondents, even though supporting the integration of gender courses at the tertiary level, expressed concerns about challenges in introducing such courses. Below are the perspectives from different informants about these challenges.

### **6.1. Academic staff perspectives**

Of the 78 respondents, approximately three quarters of respondents believed there would be challenges introducing gender related courses into higher education, while only 20% believed there would be no challenges. In defining these challenges, academic staff could write multiple challenges. 55% of respondents believed a lack of lecturers specialising in gender (including a lack of female lecturers) was the primary challenge, while 28% believed it would be challenging to attract students to the courses. A further 20% believed there would be challenges in curriculum design, 18% believed there would be a lack of textbooks focusing on Cambodian issues and in Khmer text, while a further 13% of academic staff believed it would be difficult to change students’ attitudes towards gender and 13% believed that there are limited job opportunities in the gender field.

*“The curriculum is full of other critical subjects, and there is a lack of human resources and text books, and it is against our customs (to challenge the idea) that men are dominant.” (ID4)*

*“It is the same for other subjects. Once a subject can be successfully created, we have to think of the pros and cons, obstacles and opportunities, social context, level of understanding of the subject, human resources who are female, budgeting and text books.” (ID39)*

*“The critical points are: 1. Does the MoEYS agree to introduce the curriculum? 2. Do we have enough accurate textbooks? 3. Do teachers have a specific skill on this subject? 4. Will society as a whole benefit from gender studies implementation?” (ID 45)*

<b>Table 15: Barriers to having gender courses</b>	<b>(n=78)</b>
Yes	77%
No Challenges	18%
NA	5%
<b>The most important challenges to offering/teaching gender courses (multiple responses)</b>	<b>(n=60)</b>
Lack of lecturers	55%
Lack of textbooks	18%
Curriculum design	20%
Not attractive to students	28%
No potential job market	13%
Hard to change student’s attitudes toward gender	13%

## **6.2. Students’ perspectives**

Students from four universities offered similar perspectives to academic staff on the challenges of introducing gender studies. Students were concerned about a lack of demand from students and a lack of human resources. The other concerns were about the shortage of job opportunities, budgeting obstacles and a lack of textbooks. In addition, some students were concerned about their lack of understanding about the subject, as well as how time consuming it would be to create a new curriculum.

*“Textbooks nowadays are brought from western countries. It is hard to understand these case studies because it does not link to real situations in Cambodia.” (PUC students)*

### 6.3. Stakeholders' perspectives

NGO and Government stakeholders tended to look at the big picture of barriers that mainly related to cultural obstacles, while some were also concerned about human resources.

*“There will be a challenge in setting up a degree program or gender related courses since many people misunderstand that gender studies is a cultural revolution. It is not easy to translate the gender terminology into Khmer language, such as (the term) stereotypes, and there are not many human resources majoring in this field.” (IDI23)*

In summary, the primary concern for respondents was the perceived lack of human resources and relevant teaching materials, while attracting students is also an important concern for this study, particularly as it was students that had this concern.

## 7. Perspectives about jobs related to gender

As stated earlier, some respondents were concerned about market demand for gender related jobs. This section will explain the perspective from all respondents relating to job prospects for students studying gender studies.

### 7.1. Students' perspectives

When asked about the potential benefits of a gender degree (program) in relation to job opportunities, 87% of the students agreed (agreed and strongly agreed) that gender studies graduates could get employment. Only 13% of students believed gender studies would not lead to career opportunities, which replicates earlier findings about job prospects. These concerns, while valid, remain a minority view. There was no substantial difference between male and female perspectives. This indicates that students are generally confident in the relevance of gender studies for employment prospects after graduation.

<b>Table 16: Would a gender studies degree lead to career opportunities?</b>	<b>Male (n=92)</b>	<b>Female (n=65)</b>	<b>Both (n=157)</b>
Strongly disagree	3%	2%	3%
Disagree	9%	12%	10%
Agree	76%	65%	71%
Strongly agree	12%	21%	16%

Note: there were 24 respondents in NA category (10 males).

These findings are supported by qualitative results from the focus group discussions among four selected groups of students. Each group reported that having a gender degree would help with getting a job. In addition, all groups reported that there were gender-related job opportunities with the Government and NGOs. As a group member during a discussion stated:

*“There really is a demand for gender (graduate students) in the job market, as our country is a developing country, and there is support from international institutions on gender issues. In addition, the government has been focussing on gender. I expect there will be demand.” (IDI 2)*

However, the current demand for gender skills in the job market is perceived as not particularly wide, as business sectors, such as banks, seemingly have less need for gender specialists. As a group discussion member reported:

*“The job market does not have a high need for gender (graduate students) as there are not many gender projects. Most of the gender projects are within NGOs, whereas the business sector does not need such skills. The demand is low.” (IDI4)*

This is a valid point, as compared to the high demand for gender specialists in the NGO sector and Government, businesses do not have as seemingly a strong need for gender specialists. However, as businesses employ more women and engage more women with goods and services, gender specialists can play a vital role in the success of businesses.

## **7.2. Academic staff perspectives**

The issue of job opportunities was also raised with academic staff, as they are aware of the potential market for gender studies graduates. More than half of the respondents (54%) reported that there were job opportunities for gender studies graduates, particularly with strong demand from Government institutions and civil society organisations. In a striking contrast to students’ perspectives, 43% of academic staff believed job opportunities would be neutral or narrow for gender studies graduates, as job opportunities do not necessarily depend on gender knowledge. This may reflect differences in confidence and understanding of the job market between students and academic staff, while academic staff were more concerned about Government and NGOs’ abilities to absorb gender studies graduates.

<b>Table 17: Job opportunities for gender studies graduates</b>	<b>(n=78)</b>
Yes	54%
Neutral	19%
Narrow	24%
NA	3%
Total	100

### 7.3. Stakeholders' perspectives

The majority of interviewees from the Government and NGOs expressed optimistic views about the job market for gender studies graduates. They believed that gender studies graduates could work in many sectors, such as the Government, NGO and other relevant sectors. They highlighted jobs for graduates in gender-related areas, such as consulting, teaching and research. However, some interviewees suggested that it depends on the quality of the gender studies program and the students. They believe it is important that a gender program responds to the real needs of society, while building relevant skills for the individual student. An informant explained their perspective:

*“It does not mean that those who graduated from gender studies will find jobs. They need to be skilful and knowledgeable with their specialization. There are more skills that need to be provided to students, and students themselves need to take the opportunity to learn and gain as much experience as possible. Skills and courses provided to them in a gender degree should include economics, political science and governance. Besides jobs related to gender, they can work as academic lecturers, and officers in NGOs or Government institutions. They can also be authors, researchers, consultants, advisors and moderators.”*

Another informant expressed a positive view regarding job prospects for gender graduates because there are not many people with tertiary education focusing on gender in Cambodia:

*“If students have gender knowledge, they can find a job easily because many NGOs include gender knowledge in their recruitment and selection process. But, the students should have other skills such as management, administration, leadership and technical skills.”*(Key informant 18)

Similarly to these statements, another key informant believed gender studies graduates would have strong job prospects because there is a lack of human resources in the gender field. Graduates would be able to apply their gender knowledge in specialised areas, as well as broader areas, such as economics and social sciences.

In summary, there is optimism amongst all interviewed groups towards job prospects for gender studies graduates, particularly due to a lack of human resources with gender expertise. It is important to note that many people highlighted the need for gender studies graduates to also have skills in other areas, such as social sciences and management.

## **8. Benefits of gender studies for individuals and society**

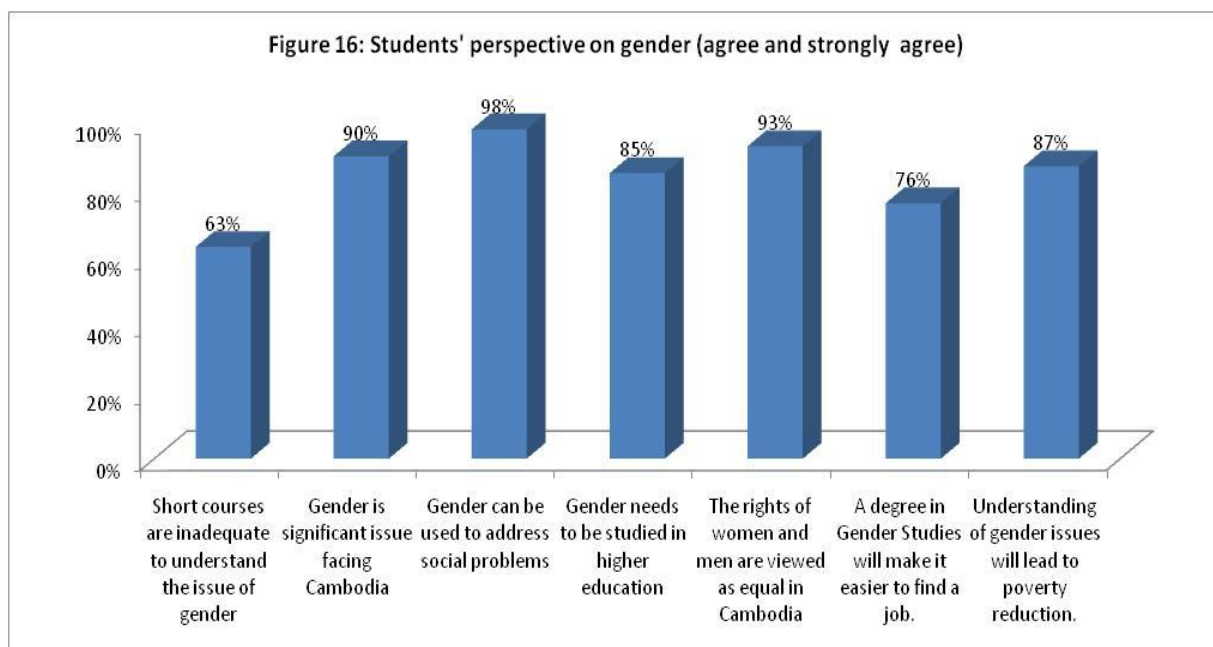
For the last element of the research, each group was queried about their perspectives on the potential benefits of gender studies for individuals and society.

### **8.1. Students' perspectives**

Students believed gender studies at tertiary level could benefit society by contributing to national policy on gender equity promotion and reducing discrimination against women (69%), promoting the value of women and a culture of respecting gender (60%), and contributing to respecting and promoting women's rights (51%). However, only one third of students reported that having gender studies at tertiary level might lead to more studies on women being conducted. In reality, the introduction of gender studies should lead to substantially more research on gender issues.

105 students also detailed the societal benefits of tertiary level gender studies beyond the currently provided options, including the elimination of discrimination and stigmatization, and promoting women's rights in politics, economics and social affairs (37%), improving gender knowledge amongst peers and family (23%), significant declines in various forms of violence against women and human trafficking (13%), poverty reduction (10%) and improving women's participation in the workforce and other forms of social development (13%).

Figure 16 demonstrates that students are engaged in and think constructively about gender issues. Nearly 100% of students believe a better understanding of gender can solve social issues, which correlates with 90% of students believing there are significant gender issues in society. In addition, nearly 90% of students felt that a better understanding of gender would reduce poverty in Cambodia. In general, students demonstrated an acute awareness of the different impacts of gender inequities and the diverse benefits of improving gender equity in Cambodia.



## 8.2. Stakeholders' perspectives

Stakeholders' also displayed positive views towards the introduction of gender studies, albeit with some concerns about the challenges for implementing gender studies. Some of the main perspectives are indicated below:

- If gender studies is introduced to higher education in Cambodia, people will have better foundations for effective decision making. (Silaka)
- It would be good for society because people will change their attitudes toward gender issues. (Oxfam Great Britain)
- If gender studies is introduced to higher education, it will help to improve people's capacity to analyze and localize gender issues to the Cambodian context. People can develop analytical skills and there will be a growing literature about gender in Cambodia. It will inform policy and advocacy. Men and women will be living together equally. (VBANK)

## V. Discussion and recommendations

### Discussion

Many social problems in Cambodia derive from gender inequalities, which are often rooted in Khmer traditions and perpetuated by unequal power relationships between women and men. The average higher education and income of men perpetuates inequality, as they enjoy higher social, economic and political status than women. Traditional gender roles and expectations not only preference men, but they perpetuate women's inferiority to men, as



women are encouraged to focus on domestic duties, be submissive to husbands and not go outside the local community. Despite many recent changes that have improved women's status and influence in Cambodia, particularly civil society and Government programs, there is a long way to go for improving gender equity in Cambodia. Changing the roots of gender inequality is difficult and will be well served by the introduction of gender studies, particularly by equipping a growing workforce with the gender skills to create positive social change.

This study highlights the strong interest in and support for the introduction of gender studies into tertiary education from students, academic staff and relevant stakeholders. The introduction of gender studies is viewed as an important step for improving understanding of gender issues in Cambodia, equipping students with gender expertise and supporting graduates to find gender-related work. While limited gender topics and courses currently exist, it is the overwhelming view of students that these offerings are inadequate. Such is this belief, that 97% of students indicated they would like more study options related to gender studies. This view was shared across female and male students. Furthermore, a vast majority of academic staff indicated that introducing gender studies was a priority.

One aim of this research was to identify at what level gender studies should be introduced to education in Cambodia. A significant number of respondents believed it should be introduced at high school, but an overwhelming majority of students (82%) believed gender studies should be introduced at Bachelor degree level, while there was also substantial support for the introduction of postgraduate gender studies. The broad support for gender studies at different levels suggests the need for further investigation and action, regarding the potential introduction of gender studies at different levels, including high school. Approximately two thirds of respondents believed gender studies should be introduced into the foundation year for all students. Respondents favoured introducing integrated gender courses, although there was still substantial support for standalone gender programs (degrees). Upon students' completion of gender studies, both students and academic staff felt graduates would have good job prospects, with students more confident about these prospects than teachers.

Currently, there are very limited opportunities for gender studies at tertiary level in Cambodia, with gender-focused topics or courses found predominantly in the social sciences, arts, humanities and law. Gender topics are common across universities, but only three universities, RUPP, UC and PUC, offer specific gender-related courses, which are

generally at the undergraduate level. The lack of available courses is likely the core reason behind 80% of students reporting that current gender studies options are inadequate to understand gender issues, further highlighting the need for gender studies at tertiary level. RUPP was the only university of the three to also offer gender courses at postgraduate level, while PUC was the only university to have a compulsory gender-related subject in the foundation year of study. Consequently, RUPP and PUC could play an important role in the introduction of further gender studies in tertiary education.

The demand for gender studies is not just from students, but also academic staff and stakeholders. Stakeholders highlighted the need for graduates with gender-specific skills to meet workforce demands in civil society and Government institutions. Improving graduates understanding of gender issues was considered very important for Cambodia's development. The widespread nature of gender issues likely influenced respondents to propose that gender studies should be introduced into all fields of study, particularly foundation year studies. There was also strong support for introducing gender studies extensively into social science degrees. Accordingly, the integration of gender studies into academic institutions should focus on women's participation in politics, economics, and social development, while also addressing issues such as gender-based violence, gender inequality and human trafficking. Improving understanding of these important issues will help to improve the gender situation in Cambodia and alleviate social problems now and in the future.

Despite variations in perspectives on the introduction of tertiary level gender studies, there is common support amongst all groups interviewed for this research. Students, academic staff, civil society and Government view the introduction of gender studies as an important step in Cambodia's education development that will meet the needs of students, the job market and society. Job market demand for gender study graduates does vary, with NGOs and Government providing the greatest demand, while the private sector currently has less demand for such skills. However, the opportunities for gender specialists in the business sector should continue to grow, as businesses attempt to further engage women with goods and services, while employing increasing numbers of women. For institutions, such as the MoWA, the hiring of gender-focused consultants is expensive and a substantial drain on limited public resources. The MoWA has expressed keen interest in employing potential gender studies' graduates. Other societal benefits of gender studies were also indicated through the interview process, including the following:

- People will have improved foundations for decision-making.
- People will change their attitudes toward gender issues.
- Domestic violence will reduce, as people improve their understanding of gender issues.
- It will improve the capacity of Cambodians to analyse and contextualise gender issues in Cambodia, which in turn will increase the available literature focusing on gender issues in Cambodia. This literature will help to inform policy and advocacy initiatives.

Of the many people interviewed for this research, very few believed there would be significant resistance to the introduction of gender studies into tertiary education. Some respondents did highlight constraints at academic institutions, which require attention, such as a lack of academics specialising in gender studies and Cambodian-specific textbooks. These are common challenges for the introduction of any subject and will reduce over time, as gender studies graduates build Cambodia's human resources of gender specialists and result in more Cambodian-specific literature for study purposes. A collaborative approach between universities, in addition to support from civil society and Government, will be essential to realising these possibilities and overcoming challenges, such as the lack of human resources.

In summary, the broad support for introducing gender studies, the need for gender expertise in Cambodia and the importance of gender studies for the job market, suggests that the introduction of gender studies to tertiary education would be very beneficial for Cambodia and should be treated as a high priority for lawmakers and universities. Integrated courses, separate programs and postgraduate gender studies should all be considered.

## **Recommendations**

- Gender courses should be included in foundation year programs in all higher education institutions and more thoroughly integrated into many existing degrees, such as social sciences. Due to the prominence of gender issues in Cambodia, providing gender studies for all university students can play a pivotal role in improving gender equity in Cambodia. Students can apply gender skills to different fields of work and study, which will create a broad foundation of gender knowledge and literature relevant to the Cambodian context.

- Separate gender studies programs (degrees) should be developed and implemented at different universities, with the prioritisation of undergraduate Bachelor degrees.
- Postgraduate programs in gender studies (Master's and Doctoral studies) should also be developed to offer study opportunities for people that have already graduated and to develop advanced gender specialisation.
- All gender courses and programs should have a strong Cambodian focus, while also drawing on international theories and research.
- Links should be made between gender studies programs and potential employers, as this will improve employment outcomes for graduates and improve the dissemination of graduates' skills into the broader workplace and society.

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