

LEADERSHIP OF WOMEN AND YOUTH IN CAMBODIA:



CURRENT STATUS AND CHALLENGES

About TI Cambodia

Transparency International Cambodia is the fully-accredited National Chapter of Transparency International and was officially founded on 5 July 2010 by a group of anti-corruption activists and professionals committed to the creation of transparent and accountable Cambodia. It has since built a strong institution arduously fighting corruption and promoting integrity, transparency and accountability in the country.

We work together with individuals and institutions at all levels including government, civil society, business, media and the wider public to achieve sustainable economic development, promote integrity and fight corruption.



Transparency International Cambodia

#13, Street 554, Sangkat Boeung Kak 1, Khan Tuol Kok,
Phnom Penh, Kingdom of Cambodia
Phone: (+855) 23 883 681/883 682

Website: www.ticambodia.org

Global website: www.transparency.org

Project Managers: Phearong Sdeung, Leaphea Yang and Norin Im

Researcher & Author: Nakagawa Kasumi

2020 Transparency International Cambodia. Except where otherwise noted, this work is licensed under CC BY-ND 4.0 DE: Quotation permitted.

DISCLAIMER

The report was produced with the financial support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the support of Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and the European Union (EU). The information containing in the report herein can in no way be taken to reflect the official opinion of our donors.



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The study has only been possible through the collaborative effort of many contributors, most notably our lead researcher and author – Nakagawa Kasumi – whose hard work and expertise have provided Transparency International Cambodia with the highest quality content. Furthermore, we would like to thank the field work researchers, Mr Lean Chhorvorn, Mr Min Chan Tokla, Ms Sam Sysoma, Ms Guek Huoy, Mr Boda Mok, Mr Choub Puthchomroeun, Ms Kun Sok Eng, and Mr Lim Taosin who conducted interviews to collect primary data in Phnom Penh and in the target provinces. Also, special thanks to Mr Richard Hocking who kindly spent his time in proofreading and editing the report.

We would also like to express our sincere appreciation to the participants to this study, many of whom were young people who actively participated in this study by freely providing their opinions and sharing their experiences and knowledge about youth and female leadership in Cambodia. We would like to thank other participants, including the state authorities, national and sub-national levels, civil society organisations, academics, researchers, lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, and transgender (LGBTIQ) people, who were all willing to share their views with the research team. We sincerely appreciate everyone's kindness in sharing information and their experiences, for providing input and suggestions, and for giving the team the opportunity to learn.

Also, special thanks to Transparency International Cambodia (TI Cambodia)'s Senior Management Team for providing the research team with the opportunity to conduct this study. Special thanks is given to Mr Pech Pisey, Executive Director of TI Cambodia, for his leadership and guidance for the study. We are mostly indebted to Ms Sdeung Phearong, Programme Manager and Ms Yang Leaphea, Programme Coordinator, who coordinated all the process of the research study, including their guidance on research process and efforts in arranging the logistics for field work in various locations and for sharing their insights and suggestions in a warm, open and constructive manner. Our indebtedness is also given to Mr Im Norin for his engagement throughout the research process, including drafting the concept note, guiding research process and providing inputs and reviewing several drafts of inception and final reports. We would also like to thank TI Cambodia staff members for their contribution; Mr Tein Samedy, Kampot Provincial Office Coordinator, Ms Chhorn Reakshar, Siem Reap Provincial Office Coordinator, Ms Chea Sreypov, Prey Veng Provincial Office Coordinator, Ms Eng Mouy Houn, Rattanakiri Provincial Office Coordinator, Ms Nouk Sreyleap, Battambang Provincial Office Assistant, Ms Ngorn Seavmey and Mr Phann Rathanakvichea, Programme Interns. Moreover, we would like to deliver our sincere appreciation to the members of the Advisory Committee, by ensuring the effective and appropriate methods and approaches for this study were used.

Finally, we are grateful to our donor for this project, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and the European Union (EU) who are always supportive of our work.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

Civil Society Organisation	(CSO)
Convention on the Elimination of All the Forms of Discrimination against Women	(CEDAW)
Focus Group Discussion	(FGD)
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	(ICCPR)
Key-Informant Interview	(KII)
Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgender, Intersex, and Queer	(LGBTIQ)
Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport	(MoEYS)
Ministry of Women's Affairs	(MoWA)
National Strategic Development Strategy	(NSDP)
Non-Governmental Organisation	(NGO)
Royal Government of Cambodia	(RGC)
Sub-National Administration	(SNA)
Sustainable Development Goal	(SDG)
Transparency International	(TI)
Union of Youth Federation of Cambodia	(UYFC)



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I. Introduction: Objectives, Methods and Scope of the Study

Empowering women and youth to participate in political and public life has been one of the core missions of Transparency International Cambodia since its inception. Through a variety of activities that TI Cambodia has carried out across the country, it was identified that women and youth are significantly under-represented in the public sphere, particularly in leadership positions at both the local and national levels. The overall objective of this study was to identify the main barriers and challenges facing Cambodian women and youth in participating in decision-making and leadership.

Specifically, this study aimed to:

- Document recent trends in women and youth leadership in Cambodia;
- Identify the progress and challenges in creating an enabling environment for youth and women to effectively participate in the decision-making process;
- Create concrete recommendations to the Government's institutions, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)/ networks, and academics (schools) to effectively promote women and youth in leadership positions for the improvement of the democratic system in Cambodia.



The study relied on three methods of data collection. Primary data was obtained from in-depth interviews/Key-Informant Interviews (KII) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), while secondary data was acquired through desk reviews.

The primary data collection (field work interviews) was carried out from June 2019 to January 2020 and in total, 569 people responded (female 244 and LGBTIQ 10). These included officers from the national government in Phnom Penh and officials from sub-national state authorities in five provinces; Ratanakiri, Siem Reap, Battambang, Kampot and Prey Veng. In addition to the general population (male and female), 16 monks and 10 LGBTIQ people were interviewed to obtain their in-depth opinions and ideas towards youth and women's leadership.

II. Key Findings from the Literature Review

2.1. Barriers to Women's Leadership

Social norms in a patriarchal system are discriminating against women: Unequal gender relationships and power dynamics underpinned by male domination and control result in expectations that leadership roles are expected to be filled by males.

Double burden for women: Women and girls are faced with a disproportionate amount of work in their households, including unpaid work such as care for the sick and children/elderly.

Educational attainment remains a challenge for women: Access to higher education remains a barrier for many women and without access to school and to higher education, many girls are not able to access opportunities to enter leadership positions.

Lack of positive discrimination in political parties: Cambodian elections are based on a party system, and there is no quota set for women in the candidate's list for the majority of parties.

Lack of financial and political support: The financial requirements of the parties for accepting their candidates' nominations for electoral campaigns is also a barrier for women.

Institutional barriers: Historically, the decision-making process has excluded women, and this has sets barriers preventing women from becoming leaders.

2.2. Barriers to Youth Leadership

The general public has limited trust in the capacities of youth: Historical barriers include the general public in communities having a lack of trust in youth's capacity.

Financial constraints: Frequent migration among youth seeking employment opportunities can also impede youth's systematic participation in decision-making processes.

Institutional barriers: The institutional barriers that youth face while trying to access leadership positions stem from societal and cultural norms that undermine their capacities.



III. Key Findings from the Field Work

The study identified seven primary barriers to female leadership, which are summarised in the following box.

Barriers	Details
3.1. Barriers to Women's Leadership	
Family burden	Women are expected to be responsible for household chores, and must prioritise family issues, such as childcare therefore they may face obstacles in balancing family life and public life.
Lack of encouragement/ support	Many girls grow up without positive encouragement from their parents or teachers to become a leader, and they are expected to be married and to take care of the household.
Male dominance of the public sector	Decision-making or leadership in public sphere is dominated by males, and such a culture makes it difficult for women to enter the public sphere due to a lack of safe spaces for women to assert their opinions in the decision-making process.
Limited education/capacities/ confidence of women	Young women are not yet able to be leaders due to age-discrimination, or they may lack confidence to serve as a leader because they lack proper work experience.
Discrimination by men and other women	Prejudice and discriminatory attitudes from men and even other women towards female leaders were raised as barriers. The field work results also show only 38% of the participants agreed that women could make good leaders.
Stereotypes – Some teachings from the Women's Code of Conduct	"Women's Code of Conduct" were raised as a barrier and many participants to the study pointed out that stereotypes of "what women should be" restrict women's freedom and prevents women from entering public life.
Health (physical weakness and pregnancy prevent women from concentrating on decision-making/leadership)	The common perception was reported that women are physically "weak" and are not fit for public work, including taking leadership roles. Also, pregnancy was raised by many participants as a barrier to women continuing their work duties.

As with women, the study found seven major barriers preventing youth from achieving leadership roles.

Barriers	Details
3.2. Barriers to Youth Leadership¹	
Discouragement by parents	Many parents prevent their children from taking part in politics, including political events, for fear of security/safety or that their children may damage the family's reputation for any misconducts.
Age discrimination	Due to Cambodia's cultural and traditional patriarchal system, elders are tasked to make decisions, and they do not trust youth's capacities.
Limited space for youth to be leaders	The Cambodian political landscape is occupied by many experienced but elderly politicians. This gives the impression to the youth that there is no space for them to take leadership roles.
Migration for employment	Many youth are forced to drop out of school due to household financial constraints, and they migrate to work and they are busy making a living and do not have any spare time to take part in serving the public.
Limited space for freedom of expression	The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport prohibits university students from discussing politics, and this creates a significant barrier to youth engaging in the political sphere.
Nepotism	Nepotism linked to forms of corruption impede the youth from joining the decision-making process.
Lack of soft skills	Youth lack work experience and have limited soft skills but can be non-flexible to adopt themselves to the new work.

¹ Reflecting Cambodian patriarchal culture, many barriers to youth are connected to the barriers that women face.

IV. Recommendations

4.1. Recommendations - Women's Leadership

4.1.1. To State Authorities

To achieve Cambodia's Constitutional promises that a man and a woman are equal (Art.31) and equal in a family (Art. 45), take proactive measures to reduce women's burden from family responsibilities through some social protection mechanisms through the allocation of a separate budget exclusively for the use of women who wish to participate in politics, and carry out a national campaign to change society's mindsets and encourage everyone to share household work.

To facilitate the effective implementation of the Neary Rattanak V (2019-2023), the Ministry of Women's Affairs' (MoWA) five year gender mainstreaming policy and a new national policy on gender equality (2020-2030), provide women more chances to experience leadership roles by allocating sufficient budget for them through a variety of state-run programmes or special training courses and adopt more proactive policy measures to promote women in leadership roles by allocating a greater quota for women, 35% for example, in the election candidate lists for political parties. Additionally, utilise the national media network (TV and radio) and social media to promote women's leadership.

For accelerating the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on Gender Equality, consider accelerating positive discrimination in the hiring process for women to ensure that leadership opportunities will always be allocated to women and consider increasing the national budget to promote women's leadership, by ensuring effective mentoring and coaching for them.

To support achieving the National Strategic Development Strategy (NSDP) key goals to increase women's decision-making power, offer more scholarships to young girls and women in rural areas to allow them to have the opportunity to pursue higher education with increased numbers of safe dormitories for them, as well as encouraging parents to send their daughters to higher education.

In alignment with the principles of the Convention on the Elimination of All the Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), take immediate measures to address the traditional stereotypes of women, and implement a nationwide campaign to change people's discriminatory views towards women's roles by fully utilising respected current female leaders and celebrities as campaigners to motivate people to believe "women can do anything".

4.1.2. To Civil Society Organisations

To reduce women's family burden, offer training courses on gender sensitisation for women and men to change their mindset that housework and unpaid work are only for women and that men are also able to do this work. Additionally, raise awareness among men in the community to understand that both women and men have the same capacity to be leaders and to take care of the household responsibilities.

To encourage more females to be leaders, encourage women to participate in more community development activities by providing more workshops and training courses for women to inspire them to become leaders, and create platforms and networks for women to share information and feel connected.

To change the male dominated political culture, proactively encourage women to apply for jobs at CSOs and increase the numbers of female staff members. Moreover, ensure that in decision-making process all female participants to the process are provided with opportunities to share their ideas and opinions beyond being merely 'at the table'.

To assist women in gaining leadership skills and obtain confidence, provide more leadership training programmes oriented toward girls and women, and set up mentoring programmes to boost females' confidence and facilitate the formulation of networks amongst women at different levels of society through social media.

To eliminate the negative stereotypes associated with women's roles and to change misperceptions that women are "the weaker sex", organise conferences by inviting school principals from all levels (from pre-primary to university) to promote

female leadership so that teachers will pay more attention to promoting female leadership.

4.1.3. To Schools and Academics

To encourage more females to be leaders, take more proactive measures to promote females to be leaders in academic institutions in a systematic manner. Recruit more female teachers and professors in higher educational institutions to demonstrate female capacities to the younger generation and that females can be academic leaders.

To change the male dominated political culture, to create a more female-friendly environment proactively recruit more female professors in the faculty of law and also provide a more gender-sensitive education to both boys and girls from an early age.

To assist women to gain leadership skills and confidence, offer specialised courses for girls and young women to learn about leadership, organise workshops and programmes to promote female leadership in the school curriculum starting from the early primary school grades.

To eliminate the negative stereotypes associated with women's roles and to change misperceptions that women are "the weaker sex", educate both boys and girls about gender equality by creating a gender-sensitive curriculum for all schools by using age-appropriate materials. Reach out to the older generation to gain support a change in their understanding that both boys and girls need to contribute towards the physical and emotional work of the household.

To understand more about the mentoring and coaching potentials in Cambodia, conduct research to identify what types of mentoring programmes have been implemented in Cambodia and create a Cambodian model for mentoring as it is not yet commonly available in the country.

To understand more about female leadership in the private sector, conduct research to identify enabling factors for females, especially young females, to become successful businesswomen, and inform the public about women's capacities as business leaders.

4.2. Recommendations - Youth Leadership

4.2.1. To State Authorities

To effectively implement the National Youth Policy of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, establish a committee of youth representatives from diverse backgrounds (ethnic minorities, youth with disabilities, young LGBTIQ people) in every ministry to systematically engage young people in the decision-making process.

To achieve Constitutional promises that everyone in Cambodia is equal (Art.31) and a principle of no discrimination enshrined in many international laws that Cambodia has ratified, promote more youth to be leaders by providing leadership training, and proactively recruiting and promoting youth in the state structure by providing more opportunities for young people to work through mentoring and coaching services to enable them to develop confidence and to learn from experienced and senior leaders.

To ensure the effective implementation of internationally agreed upon promises to uphold freedom of expression, such as in International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), remove a barrier to young people voicing their opinions of politics in academic institutions, and enhance dialogue about decision-making to inspire youth to join a decision-making process.

To facilitate its effort to accelerate anti-corruption measures by the Anti-Corruption Unit of the Royal Government of Cambodia, accelerate the process of reducing corruption and nepotism to make sure that all opportunities are equal, especially for female youth, from every background in all state institutions.

4.2.2. To Civil Society Organisations

To create more space for youth to be leaders, provide more internship opportunities for youth, especially targeting young females, help youth to gain more work and leadership experience, provide more training, and organise attractive workshops or short study courses by prioritising the needs of the youth. Provide systematic mentoring and coaching support as a part of the CSOs' programmes with the youth.

To eliminate age-based discrimination, create more campaigns and events, such as community gatherings, to increase older people's awareness and understanding of the importance of youth participation in leadership and in decision-making processes, especially by promoting young females to reach out to the older generation to change their mindsets.

To encourage inter-generational learning opportunities, organise seminars and meetings that invite and encourage both youth and elders to share their challenges, experiences, and hopes for the future of Cambodia.

4.2.3. To Schools/Academics

To create more space for youth to be leaders, create youth leadership programmes in the school system, such as school clubs or student unions, organise more attractive events where youth can develop and present their managerial, organisational and planning skills, and offer more volunteering activities to develop their abilities and gain work experience.

To assist youth in accessing job opportunities, provide an enabling learning environment for youth to be inspired to contribute to social development, especially for young females who have fewer opportunities, and create more attractive youth oriented events or activities to motivate more youth, especially young women, to be leaders.

To understand the power dynamics in Cambodian society and the intersecting discrimination against youth, conduct more research about youth engagement in decision-making by identifying promising practices and collecting good role models, especially from young female leaders, and share information through social media to motivate and inspire more youth to be leaders.

To improve parenting skills to promote the younger generation to be leaders, reach out to parents of students through a variety of means, such as hosting seminars and events at schools, to invite parents to learn about parenting skills, how they can encourage their children to pay attention to social issues, and how to actively engage their children in public issues as young leaders.

Key Terminology

Terms	Definition
Women Leadership	According to Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, there is no universally agreed definition of women's leadership.
Youth	According to the National Policy on Youth Development (2011), 'youth' is defined as between 15-30 years in Cambodia. On the other hand, for statistical consistency across regions, the United Nations defines 'youth', as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years, without prejudice to other definitions by Member States.
Equality between women and men (gender equality)	Gender equality refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same, but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognising the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a women's issue but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centred development. (https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/conceptsanddefinitions.htm)

