



Situation Analysis Report on Women, Peace and Security in Cambodia

For development of a National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security in Cambodia

October 2025




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Foreword

Cambodia believes that lasting peace and prosperity can only be fully achieved through the participation of all members of society. The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda addresses gender inequality in peace and security. It provides an opportunity to advance women's contributions, increase women's participation and leadership at the national, regional and international levels, and strengthen the role of women across all four pillars of the WPS agenda: prevention, participation, protection and relief and recovery.

Cambodia has been one of the champion Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Member States, driving the development and implementation of the WPS agenda in the region. The ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Women, Peace and Security (ASEAN RPA-WPS), adopted in 2022, and the Localization Toolkit and Guidelines on the ASEAN RPA-WPS, launched in 2023, represent significant achievements by ASEAN, particularly the ASEAN Committee on Women, in advancing the WPS agenda.

Cambodia is committed to advancing the WPS agenda internationally, regionally and nationally. Guided by the ASEAN RPA-WPS and its Localization Toolkit, a comprehensive situation analysis of WPS-related issues in the Cambodian context was conducted from August to December 2024. This process was a key step in informing the development of Cambodia's first National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (NAP-WPS). Looking ahead, the next steps include reviewing and further prioritizing key WPS issues for Cambodia; establishing multi-stakeholder coordination mechanisms with technical expertise and high-level political support and leadership; ensuring that proposed actions align with and address gaps in existing national policies, strategies and action plans; and strengthening engagement with a wide range of government institutions, civil society and development partners to further advance the WPS agenda.

We take this opportunity to thank all those who contributed to and supported the development of this Situation Analysis on WPS issues in Cambodia. This included meetings, workshops, interviews and training sessions with government ministries and institutions at the national and subnational levels; development partners and Embassy officials; UN agencies; civil society organizations, including women's organizations and youth networks; and women and youth in rural areas across three provinces, including those from ethnic minority communities. This engagement has been essential and invaluable.

As we move into the next stages of developing and implementing Cambodia's first NAP-WPS, we look forward to continued collaboration with government institutions, development partners and civil society organizations and to your ongoing support, participation and leadership in advancing the WPS agenda in Cambodia now and in the years ahead.

H.E. Koug Sorita



Secretary of State, Ministry of Women's Affairs

Acronyms and Abbreviations

AAC	Action Aid Cambodia
ACWC	ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children
ADD	Action on Disability and Development
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASEAN RPA-WPS	Regional Plan of Action on Women, Peace and Security
BPfA	Beijing Platform for Action
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women
CERD	Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
CDPO	Cambodia Disabled People's Organisation
CDRI	Cambodia Development Resource Institute
CHRC	Cambodia Human Rights Committee
CIPA	Cambodian indigenous People's Association
CMAA	Cambodian Mine Action and Victim Assistance Authority
CMAC	Cambodian Mine Action Centre
CNCW	Cambodian National Committee for Women
COMMIT	Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking
CPCS	Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies
CSDG	Cambodian Sustainable Development Goals
CSHL /RULE	Centre for Studies on Humanitarian Law, Royal University of Law and Economics
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
DV Law	Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Protection of Victims
ECCC	Extraordinary Chambers in the Court of Cambodia
GADC	Gender and Development Cambodia
GBV	Gender-Based Violence

GBViE	Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies
GEDI	Gender Equality and Disability Inclusion
GMAG	Gender Mainstreaming Action Group
GMAP	Gender Mainstreaming Action Plan
ICT	Information, Communication and Technology
LGBTIQ+	Lesbian Gay Bi-sexual Transgender Intersex Questioning
MEF	Ministry of Economy and Finance
MISP	Minimum Initial Service Package
MLMUPC	Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction
MoND	Ministry of National Defence
MoE	Ministry of Environment
MoEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
MoFAIC	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
MoH	Ministry of Health
Mol	Ministry of Interior
MoINF	Ministry of Information
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
MoLVT	Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training
MoPTC	Ministry of Post and Telecommunications
MoSVY	Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation
MoWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs
NAADR	National Authority for Alternative Dispute Resolution
NAP	National Action Plan
NAP DRR	National Action Plan – Disaster Risk Reduction
NAPVAW	National Action Plan for the Prevention of Violence Against Women
NAP WPS	National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security
NCCT	National Committee for Counter Trafficking
NCDD	National Committee for Subnational Democratic Development

NCDM	National Committee for Disaster Management
NCSD	National Council for Sustainable Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPMEC	National Centre for Peacekeeping forces, Mine and ERW Clearance
NSDP	National Strategic Development Plan
NSP-CTIP	National Strategic Plan for Counter Trafficking in Persons
PKO	Peace Keeping Operations
RCAF	Royal Cambodian Armed Forces
ROAP	Regional Office of Asia and the Pacific (UN Women)
RWI	Raoul Wallenberg Institute
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEA	Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
TAF	The Asia Foundation
TIC	Transparency International
TPO	Transcultural Psychosocial Organization Cambodia
TWGG-GBV	Technical Working Group on Gender-Sub-working Group on GBV
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNOHCHR	United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNRCO	United Nations Resident Coordinators Office
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls
VCSP	Village Commune Safety Policy
WCCC	Women and Children's Consultative Committee
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

Glossary of Terms

- Blue economy** refers to the sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods and job creation while preserving the health of ocean ecosystems.¹
- Care economy** refers to both paid and unpaid care work provided by individuals as part of human survival, well-being and the reproduction of the labour force.²
- Cham or Cambodian Muslims or Khmer Islam** are terms used for people practising Islam in Cambodia. Cambodian Muslims are generally recognized as comprising three main sub-groups: Cham Bani (traditionalist Cham), Cham-Cham (orthodox Cham) and Cham-Chvea.³
- Cybercrime** encompasses a wide range of offences and falls into two broad categories: cyber-enabled and cyber-dependent. Cyber-enabled crimes include traditional criminal activities conducted online, such as trafficking, fraud and incitement to violence and hate. Cyber-dependent crimes are those committed through the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) devices, including phishing, identity theft and the deployment of malware and ransomware. Perpetrators of cybercrime range from individual criminals to organized networks, all exploiting the anonymity and accessibility of the digital world.⁴
- Cybersecurity** refers to the strategies, policies, procedures, practices and measures that are designed to identify threats and vulnerabilities, prevent threats from exploiting vulnerabilities, mitigate the harm caused by material threats and safeguard people, property and information.⁵
- Digital** rights are human rights in the Internet era. Closely linked to freedom of expression and privacy, they encompass the rights to access, use, create and publish digital media and to use computers, electronic devices and communication networks.⁶
- Doxing** is a form of cyberbullying that uses sensitive or private information, statements or records for the harassment, exposure, financial harm or other exploitation of targeted individuals.⁷
- Essential services** refers to a core set of services provided by the health care, social services, police and justice sectors. At a minimum, these services must secure the rights, safety and well-being of any woman or girl who experiences gender-based violence.⁸

[1] https://www.un.org/regularprocess/sites/www.un.org.regularprocess/files/rok_part_2.pdf

[2] <https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/knowledge-products/SDD-How-Invest-Care-Economy-Primer.pdf>

[3] *Voice and Visibility: A participatory exploration of Minority Women human rights in Cambodia*, Women Peace Makers, January 2024

[4] <https://www.un.org/en/peace-and-security/basic-facts-about-global-cybercrime-treaty#:~:text=What%20is%20cybersecurity?,privacy%2C%20trust%2C%20and%20security>

[5] *Ibid*

[6] <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2015/11/what-are-your-digital-rights-explainer>

[7] <https://www.fortinet.com/resources/cyberglossary/doxing>

[8] *Essential Services Packages for Women and Girls Subject to Violence, Core Elements and Quality Guidelines, Module 5, Chapter 1, pg. 7.*

Gender-based violence (GBV)

refers to any intentional act—or failure to act (whether threatened or actual) against a person or a group of people on the basis of their gender that results (or is likely to result) in physical, sexual or psychological harm. GBV encompasses violence against women and girls, as well as men and boys, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTIQ+) people, and others who do not conform to dominant gender norms.⁹

Human security

as noted in General Assembly resolution 66/920, is an approach to assist Member States in identifying and addressing widespread and cross-cutting challenges to the survival, livelihood and dignity of their people.” It calls for “people-centred, comprehensive, context-specific and prevention-oriented responses that strengthen the protection and empowerment of all people.”¹⁰

Peace

is not only the absence of violent conflict (negative peace), but also the presence of justice, equity and respect for human rights and the Earth (positive peace).¹¹

Security

within the context of women, peace and security, encompasses the protection of women’s rights and their meaningful participation in all aspects of peace and security from conflict prevention to post-conflict reconstruction. It refers to the state of being free from danger or threat, including threats to human security such as the rise of radicalization and violent extremism, trafficking in persons, the climate crisis, the global health crisis and other major global risks.¹²

Sexual harassment

“includes such unwelcome sexually determined behaviour as physical contact and advances, sexually coloured remarks, showing pornography and sexual demand, whether by words or actions. Such conduct can be humiliating and may constitute a health and safety problem; it is discriminatory when the woman has reasonable ground to believe that her objection would disadvantage her in connection to her employment, including recruitment or promotion, or when it creates a hostile working environment.”¹³

Sexual violence

refers to any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act or other act directed against a person’s sexuality through coercion, irrespective of the perpetrator’s relationship to the victim or the setting.¹⁴

Transitional justice

comprises “the full range of processes and mechanisms associated with a society’s attempt to come to terms with a legacy of large-scale past violations and abuses to ensure accountability, serve justice, and achieve reconciliation.”¹⁵

[9] ILO C190, https://gbv.itcilo.org/index.php/information_sheet/show/id/1.html

[10] <https://www.un.org/humansecurity/what-is-human-security/>

[11] <https://news.un.org/en/story/2014/09/476992>; <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/defining-the-concept-of-peace/>

[12] <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security>

[13] CEDAW General Recommendation No. 19, *Violence Against Women*, para. 18, XI session 1992

[14] <https://apps.who.int/violence-info/sexual-violence/>

[15] United Nations Security Council, S/2004/616, 23 August 2004

Trolling

in the context of social media, refers to the act of posting or commenting online with the intent to deliberately upset or provoke others.¹⁶

Violence against women

refers to “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.”¹⁷

Women and girls in all their diversity

as used by UN Women, signifies a commitment to recognizing and addressing the unique experiences and needs of all individuals who identify as women and girls, including those with intersecting vulnerabilities like disabilities, race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation and socioeconomic status.¹⁸ Neary Rattanak VI uses the term “inclusion” to emphasize the importance of ensuring all women are represented.

Women, Peace and Security agenda

Women, Peace and Security agenda refers to the agenda established by UN Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and the ten subsequent resolutions that promote the integration of gender perspectives into all aspects of peace and security.¹⁹

[16] <https://www.esafety.gov.au/young-people/trolling>

[17] [Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, Article 1](#)

[18] <https://www.unwomen.org/en/about-us/about-un-women>

[19] [Women, Peace and Security Handbook: Compilation and analysis of United Nations Security Council resolution language 2000–2012](#), New York: Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. The subsequent resolutions include: 1820 (2008), 1888 (2008), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 and 2122 (2013), 2242 (2015), 2467 and 2493 (2019) and 2538 (2020).

Executive Summary

Background

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) affirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding initiatives. The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda recognizes that women are often excluded from security processes and encourages their leadership and meaningful participation in peace efforts across all spheres of public and private life. Implementing the WPS agenda is recognized as essential to achieving sustainable peace and prosperity within the ASEAN region, including in relation to both traditional and emerging non-traditional security challenges, from conflict to climate change, trafficking to cybersecurity and transnational crime.

Cambodia has been at the forefront of championing efforts to localize the WPS agenda within the ASEAN region. In November 2022, ASEAN leaders adopted the first ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Women, Peace and Security (ASEAN RPA-WPS). The Ministry of Women's Affairs, as a member of the ASEAN Committee on Women, was instrumental in championing the development of the ASEAN RPA-WPS and the Localization Toolkit and Guidelines for the ASEAN RPA-WPS, which ASEAN finalized in December 2023 with UN Women support.

The Study

The aims of the situation analysis are to examine traditional, non-traditional and emerging security issues in the context of the WPS agenda in Cambodia; identify existing relevant policies, plans and mechanisms; draw lessons from Cambodia and other countries; and provide recommendations for formulating a National Action Plan on WPS (NAP-WPS) in Cambodia aligned with the ASEAN RPA-WPS.

The study took a human rights-based approach,

grounded in the principles of participation, inclusiveness, gender equality and gender sensitivity. The methodology included a literature review of relevant documents and group consultations and interviews with key stakeholders, conducted during July and August 2024.

Nearly 250 individuals (205 women and 43 men) participated, including policymakers and government officials at the national and subnational levels; NGOs and CSOs; UN agency personnel; development partners; Embassy officials; academic and research institutions; women from marginalized groups and rural areas; female and male youth; and women and men serving in UN peacekeeping operations in Cambodia.

The findings were discussed at a series of meetings and consultative workshops held from October 2024 to March 2025; stakeholder feedback was incorporated into the final report.

Key Findings

Consolidating peace, political stability and social order remains at the forefront of the Royal Government of Cambodia's national development agenda. In Cambodia, the range of security issues relevant to the WPS agenda includes sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in crisis, post-conflict, peacebuilding and humanitarian settings; trafficking of women and girls; transnational crime, including drug trafficking; cybersecurity and cybercrime; climate change and natural disasters; women's economic security and access to natural resources; social cohesion; and women's participation and leadership in decision-making.

1. Women and GBV in Conflict and Humanitarian Crises

Violence against women and girls stems from unequal gender power relations and

discrimination, and is exacerbated by conflict, humanitarian crises, poverty, economic stress and other factors. During emergencies such as conflict or natural disasters, the risk of violence, exploitation and abuse increases, particularly for women and girls, and especially those confined to their homes when movement is restricted.

The COVID-19 crisis is a clear example: data and reports indicated that all forms of violence against women and girls intensified. The crisis highlighted the need for the Royal Government to strengthen social protection systems, particularly for vulnerable women, and to ensure that GBV response measures are integrated into emergency plans.

Cambodia has a compelling recent history of peace making and development, having transitioned from armed conflict through UN peacekeeping and nation-building to economic growth over the past four decades following the fall of the Khmer Rouge regime. Sexual and gender-based violence is widespread during conflict, and Cambodia is no exception. Many survivors continue to suffer from psychological and physical symptoms of trauma.

The Royal Government has taken several steps to support remembrance, social healing and prevention of future atrocities. These include designating 20 May as the Day of Commemoration; establishing memorials such as the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum and Choeung Ek Killing Fields Memorial; and developing educational materials on the genocide to promote prevention, healing, intergenerational dialogue and reconciliation through the formal education system.

Cambodia's experience with the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) represented a significant step towards justice and reconciliation and provides a unique

opportunity to further consolidate peace and development in the country. NGOs have also played a key role in reconciliation and healing for SGBV survivors, undertaking outreach to survivors, providing access to justice and psychosocial support and promoting truth-telling, intergenerational dialogue and local capacity-building for conflict resolution.

Stakeholders interviewed in the study viewed Cambodia's history, experience with intergenerational trauma, violence against women and transitional justice as deeply relevant to its peaceful future. They also identified Cambodia's journey as a valuable example for other countries seeking to promote peacebuilding and conflict resolution as a basis for regional security and stability.

2. Women, Trafficking and Transnational Crime

Human traffickers exploit both domestic and foreign people in Cambodia, and Cambodian victims are also trafficked abroad. Cambodia's National Defence Policy 2022 identified human trafficking, drug trafficking and other illegal cross-border activities as issues of concern. Trafficking and transnational crime pose clear threats to international and national peace and security, undermining the safety of the Cambodian people, generating potential divisions and social tensions within and across borders, and heightening risks for communities that are vulnerable to these crimes.

A 2023 United Nations report revealed that hundreds of thousands of people are being forcibly engaged by organized criminal gangs in Southeast Asia in online criminal activities, from romance-investment scams and crypto fraud to money laundering and illegal gambling.²⁰ Online scam centres are also exploiting women in the region. Victims face a range of serious violations and abuses,

[20] <https://bangkok.ohchr.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/ONLINE-SCAM-OPERATIONS-2582023.pdf>

including threats to their personal safety and security.

The COVID-19 pandemic shifted the risks associated with trafficking in persons, with women especially vulnerable. Many returning migrant workers lacked sustainable employment opportunities upon their repatriation, increasing their susceptibility to trafficking. Women were more affected than men.

Interviews with subnational authorities, women and youth in rural areas, including Indigenous and ethnic minority groups, raised concerns about drug trafficking and youth drug abuse and the negative impact this has on communities and family safety.

3. Women, Peace and Cybersecurity

Cybersecurity is an increasingly prioritized area of international and national security policies, particularly in light of the rapid digitalization and threats posed by emerging technologies, cyberwarfare and attacks on critical infrastructure. Cambodia's National Defence Policy 2022 recognizes cybercrime as a major threat to both the country and the region. Cyberthreats undermine national security and social stability by targeting the economy, intelligence and critical infrastructure, including hospitals, telecommunications and transportation systems. Attacks on such systems can disproportionately affect women.

Women's access to and safety on digital platforms are essential to enabling gender-equal participation in public life. According to the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications (MPTC), only 30 per cent of Cambodians have basic digital skills. In Cambodia, fewer social media users are female (44.8 per cent) than male (55.2 per cent). Research conducted by EngageMedia found that the digital attacks that were of most concern to survey respondents in Cambodia were account takeovers, online impersonation,

surveillance, online harassment and hate speech. Over 60 per cent of respondents reported having low capacity to protect themselves from such digital threats.²¹

Digital technologies play a critical role in the work of women's CSOs and women human rights defenders. Cyberthreats can disrupt their work, damage reputations and cause physical or psychological harm. A 2024 UN Women study found that women's CSOs reported higher threat perceptions and experiences than non-women CSOs, especially in relation to online harassment (73 per cent vs 48 per cent), trolling (71 per cent vs 55 per cent) and doxing (61 per cent vs 32 per cent).²² While hate speech is prohibited under Articles 494 and 496 of the Criminal Code, discussions with NGOs, CSOs, rural women and youth confirmed that women are often the targets of cyberbullying, online harassment, discriminatory messages, hate speech and online financial scams.

4. Women's Participation and Leadership

The Royal Government of Cambodia is committed to increasing women's participation and leadership in public and political life. Targets for women's leadership are set under Cambodian Sustainable Development Goal (CSDG) 5.5 on gender equality (targets 5.5.1–5.5.5) and CSDG 16 (target 16.7).

As of 2024, female members of the National Assembly make up 14.4 per cent, including the President of the National Assembly and two committee chairs. In the Senate, women's representation increased from 14.8 per cent in 1999 to 17.7 per cent in 2024. Three women serve as ministers and others include the Auditor General and the Director of the National Bank—both holding ranks equivalent to Senior Minister. Women comprise 14.8 per cent of Secretaries of State and 15.7 per cent of Undersecretaries of State.

[21] <https://engagemedia.org/projects/gif-report-digital-safety/>

[22] [https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/cybersecurityCybersecurity Threats, Vulnerabilities and Resilience Among Women Human Rights](https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/cybersecurityCybersecurity%20Threats,%20Vulnerabilities%20and%20Resilience%20Among%20Women%20Human%20Rights)

Women's representation in the public sector has risen from 22 per cent in 2018 to 41 per cent in 2024. Women in decision-making roles in the civil service—ranging from Deputy Office Heads to Directors General and equivalent—rose from 24 per cent (2018) to 27 per cent (2023).

At the subnational level:

- Two women serve as provincial or capital governors (8 per cent);
- 29 women are deputy governors (13 per cent);
- 16 women are directors of procurement units in provincial/capital administrations (9.9 per cent);
- 80 women serve as deputy directors or deputy heads of procurement units (25.8 per cent); and
- Women account for 17.6 per cent of members of capital and provincial councils.

At the municipal, district and Khan levels:

- Seven women serve as governors (3.4 per cent);
- 243 women are deputy governors (21.2 per cent);
- 20 women are directors of administrations (10.6 per cent);
- 120 women are deputy directors of administrations (26.7 per cent); and
- Women comprise 6.2 per cent of council chairpersons and 19.3 per cent of council members.

At the commune and Sangkat level:

- 176 women serve as commune or Sangkat chiefs (10.7 per cent);
- 19.7 per cent of deputy commune chiefs or first-level Sangkat deputy chiefs are women;
- 11.3 per cent serve as second-level Sangkat deputy chiefs; and
- Women comprise 18.2 per cent of clerks and 22 per cent of council members.

Despite these gains, women remain underrepresented in decision-making positions, limiting the extent to which their priorities

and perspectives are reflected in policy and governance. Although women now make up 14.4 per cent of the National Assembly (2024) and 17.7 per cent of the Senate (2024), women's representation at the commune and Sangkat council level remains low, despite increasing to 22 per cent in 2022. Only 10.7 per cent of commune council chiefs are women.

A recent Cambodia Development Resource Institute study found that more female council members (37 per cent) than male members (13 per cent) reported that families played the biggest role in encouraging them to run for office.²³ Yet, even as families offer encouragement, discriminatory attitudes remain widespread: 46 per cent of male council members, compared to 21 per cent of female members, stated that men make better political leaders than women.

Senior women leaders in government emphasized the importance of support from male senior leaders and colleagues in fostering enabling environments and expanding opportunities for women to advance to decision-making roles.

Across Southeast Asia, concerns about substantive representation persist when women leaders are not closely connected to women's organizations or do not reflect the experiences of different groups of women, particularly those who are marginalized. A recent study on minority women's rights in Cambodia found that 61 per cent of respondents said women never or rarely participated in their communities to address local issues or development priorities.

The responsibilities of unpaid care and domestic work remain among the greatest obstacles to gender equality in Cambodia, yet they are rarely addressed by public policies or development efforts. The highly gendered, undervalued and unsupported nature of unpaid care work limits women's meaningful participation in peace and security efforts, including conflict prevention,

[23] *The Status of Women in Commune/Sangkat Government*, CDRI, June 2024

response, peacebuilding and recovery and relief efforts. Families continue to perpetuate and reinforce the gendered division of labour by socializing women and girls to assume care responsibilities. Unpaid family work accounts for 25.7 per cent of rural women's work, compared to only 11.5 per cent for rural men. Climate change and disasters further increase the unpaid care burden in affected areas.

5. Women in the Security Sector, International Diplomacy and Peacekeeping Forces

Women in the security sector play a key role in improving the operational effectiveness of law enforcement. The percentage of women in law enforcement agencies in the ASEAN region remains low, ranging from 6 per cent in Indonesia to 20 per cent in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, with Cambodia at 11 per cent. The gender gap is more pronounced at higher ranks. This disparity has implications for critical gender-sensitive responses, especially in cases of domestic violence, rape and other crimes. Female police officers interviewed expressed strong interest in seeing more women in leadership positions, particularly in local administrative offices, noting that female officers have demonstrated the capacity to defuse potential conflicts peacefully and to serve women and families more effectively in their communities.

International cooperation is one of the key priorities outlined in Cambodia's National Defence Policy 2022. As of December 2024, Cambodia ranked among the top ASEAN Member States in the deployment of women to United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UN PKOs), with 21.4 per cent of its peacekeepers being women. A recent study found that there are no formal restrictions on women's participation in UN PKOs.²⁴ Men and women serve equally in leadership, combat and

operational roles while on mission. However, significantly more women (24 per cent) than men (8 per cent) reported facing social stigma when deployed, much of it from family members.

Pre-deployment training is mandatory and 93 per cent of women and men reported participating. However, gender training is not compulsory for senior leaders in the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (RCAF). Only 43 per cent of men, compared to 57 per cent of women, attended gender training, confirming findings from other studies showing that men rarely participate when such training is not mandatory.

The RCAF has a legal framework for preventing and addressing sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and pre-deployment training is in place. Nevertheless, a recent study of UN PKO personnel revealed low levels of reported harassment (4 to 9 per cent) and only 58 per cent of surveyed personnel were aware of any sexual harassment policies. There is currently no internal complaint mechanism.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MoFAIC) recognizes the important role of women in contributing to political stability, economic and social development and peace. MoFAIC also plays a vital role in protecting Cambodian citizens abroad, particularly women. Cambodian women's participation in diplomacy stands at 16 per cent, slightly above the global average of 15 per cent. However, more efforts are needed to accelerate women's promotion to leadership roles in international forums in order to meet the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Resolution 1990/15 recommendation of 30 per cent minimum for equal representation.

[24] <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2024/07/mow-2023-assessment#>

6. Women and Climate, Peace and Security

Climate security refers to the recognition that climate change poses significant threats to national and global security and that the impacts of climate change can trigger social, political and economic instability. Cambodia is among the countries most vulnerable to climate change. The Cambodia Women's Resilience Index found that women are less resilient to disasters than men due to several overlapping factors: unstable and insecure income sources, low access to structural protection from natural hazards, limited availability of safe shelters and early warning systems, poor housing and weak social safety nets and networks.

The effects of climate change, environmental degradation and natural resource scarcity are increasingly contributing to insecurity and instability worldwide, including in Cambodia. These challenges undermine security through multiple pathways, including shifts in mobility and displacement patterns; intensified competition over land, water and other resources; food insecurity and livelihood deterioration; public health risks; evolving dynamics in the blue economy; and changing patterns of organized crime (including environmental crimes).

Stakeholder interviews confirmed the negative impact of climate change on women's economic security.

In some cases, this led to heightened tensions over access to scarce water resources for agriculture and land rights. Empowering women through education, economic opportunities and leadership roles has a profound and multifaceted impact on strengthening community resilience to climate change and supporting conflict prevention and sustainable peace. Furthermore, female leaders often

prioritize community well-being and sustainable development, leading to more inclusive and effective climate resilience strategies.

7. WPS Agenda and Access to Economic Security, Livelihood Opportunities, Natural Resources and Human Security

Women play an essential role in peace and security, including in accelerating post-conflict economic revitalization and contributing to sustainable peace. In Cambodia, the agriculture sector plays a crucial role in supporting economic growth and alleviating poverty. Women's labour force participation stands at 78.9 per cent, among the highest in the region. However, interviews with rural women and youth revealed limited economic opportunities and difficulties accessing decent seasonal work near their homes. These conditions fuel food and livelihood insecurity and often compel migration in search of employment.

Migration serves as a vital economic lifeline and a driver of social mobility for Cambodian families. However, when migration occurs under unsafe or unregulated conditions, it can expose rural women to significant risks, including threats to their safety and family well-being—despite the existence of gender-responsive policies, as noted by government officials and NGOs/CSOs.

Landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) are a terrible legacy of Cambodia's decades of war. The Government has prioritized mine and UXO clearance, integrating mine action into national strategies, and has set a goal of becoming mine-free by 2025. Cambodian women have increasingly participated in demining and clearance work, representing 34 per cent of operational staff and 22 per cent of managerial or supervisory roles as of 2023.²⁵ The consequences of landmines differ for women, girls, boys and men. Women are more

[25] https://www.mineactionreview.org/assets/downloads/Cambodia_Clearing_the_Mines_2024.pdf

often indirect victims, assuming caregiving and financial responsibilities for survivors, while girls are more likely to be removed from school or forced into early marriage when family resources become strained following a landmine incident.²⁶ Women and girls also face a heightened risk of sexual abuse in insecure, contaminated areas.

Rural women in Cambodia are key gatherers and suppliers of natural resources and rely heavily on them for sustenance and livelihoods. Women, especially those in rural areas and Indigenous communities, carry a particularly heavy burden of household responsibilities, including farming, animal husbandry, weaving, housework and collecting forest foods, particularly during times of food insecurity. Research shows that women's rights and access to natural resources and related income streams remain precarious.²⁷ Their voices are largely absent from natural resource management and decision-making forums and they often lack the power to negotiate or mediate outcomes when natural resources are contested or depleted. While the government has made important strides in promoting gender equity in land tenure, many rural women continue to lack information on land rights and titling processes, gender bias often impedes them from exercising their rights. As a result, land-related disputes remain common.

Research indicates that better and more inclusive, gender-responsive natural resource management, drawing on women's knowledge and addressing their needs, can help keep communities more peaceful and secure.

The National Authority for Alternative Dispute Resolution (NAADR) was established by Royal Decree No. NS/RKT/1123/2381 on 2 November 2023. It functions as a national-level institution to complement existing dispute resolution mechanisms. NAAADR's mandate is to resolve

civil conflicts through mediation and conciliation outside the formal judicial system. It aims to reduce the duration of unresolved disputes, promote a culture of peace and mutual understanding and foster an environment of psychological and physical security. Women are already utilizing this service to resolve a wide range of disputes, including those related to land, property, loans, family matters, inheritance, work and commercial disagreements.

8. Women and Social Cohesion

Cambodia is home to approximately 22 Indigenous Peoples groups, along with other main ethnic minorities including Cambodian Muslims (Cham), Vietnamese and Khmer Kampuchea Krom. Indigenous and other ethnic minority women and girls in Cambodia face distinct forms of discrimination, marginalization and vulnerability to violence. They are subject to negative gender stereotypes from within their communities—which may discourage them from pursuing education, employment or leadership roles—and from the broader society, which can further isolate them.

Although the Cambodian Constitution affirms equal rights to freedom of movement, a recent study found that 64 per cent of ethnic minority women respondents reported having less freedom to go outside the home than men. Cham women interviewed noted limited access to information, minimal participation in community life and weak representation in local governance structures. Without meaningful representation and participation, these women risk being isolated and their needs neglected—circumstances that can contribute to rising tensions and insecurity within and between communities.

Women and girls with disabilities experience complex, intersecting forms of discrimination. This is especially acute in situations of conflict,

[26] https://unidir.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/UNIDIR_Factsheet_Gender_and_Diversity_in_the_APMBBC.pdf

[27] Gender, Peace and Natural Resource Management, Research Brief, UN Women, December 2022

disaster, post-conflict or transitional contexts, where they are not only significantly affected but their participation is also often overlooked or marginalized. Their involvement in conflict resolution processes, service delivery and aid, justice mechanisms and development processes is routinely limited. The National Disability Strategic Plan 2019–2023 provides a strong framework for action across ministries and agencies at national and subnational levels. Its objectives include advancing gender equality, promoting women’s leadership and ensuring disability inclusion and quality services for survivors of gender-based violence.

National Policies, Plans and Mechanisms relevant to the WPS Agenda

The Government has prioritized the promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment through its national policy agenda, strategies and plans. These include, but are not limited to, the Pentagonal Strategy Phase 1: 2024–2028; 5-Year National Strategic Development Plans; the Five-Year Strategic Plan on Promoting Gender Equality and Empowering Women and Girls (Neary Rattanak I–VI); the National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women (NAPVAW I–IV); the National Strategic Plan for Counter Trafficking in Persons (NSP-CTIP I–IV); Cambodia’s Village Commune District Safety Policy (2010/2021); the National Social Protection Policy Framework 2016–2025; the Framework for Social Protection Response to Emergencies (2023); the National Disability Strategic Plan 2019–2023; and the Cambodia Digital Government Policy 2022–2035. The draft Cybercrime Law, the draft Cybersecurity Law and the draft Law on Personal Data Protection all require incorporating gender perspectives.

Gender is mainstreamed in all sectoral plans and policies, such as the National Action Plan on Disaster Risk Reduction (NAP-DRR 2024–2028); the National Strategy on Disaster Risk Management for Health 2020–2024; the Gender and Climate Change Strategic Plan 2013–

2023; the Action Plan on Gender and Climate Change 2019–2023; the Gender Mainstreaming Policy and Strategic Framework in Agriculture (GMPSFA) 2022–2026; the Gender Mainstreaming in Mine Action Plan 2021–2025; the National Environment Strategy and Action Plan 2016–2023; the MPTC Gender Mainstreaming Action Plan 2019–2023; the ICT Development Strategy 2020; the Gender Mainstreaming Policy of the Ministry of National Defence (MoND); the National Programme for Public Administration 2021–2030; and the National Committee for Subnational Democratic Development (NCDD) Strategy 2024–2028.

Key government mechanisms promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment relevant to the WPS agenda include the Ministry of Women’s Affairs (MoWA); the Cambodian National Council for Women (CNCW); the Technical Working Group on Gender–Gender-Based Violence (TWGG-GBV); sectoral Gender Mainstreaming Action Groups (GMAGs); Women and Children’s Consultative Committees (WCCCs) at the subnational level; the National Committee for Counter Trafficking (NCCT); the National Committee for Disaster Management (NCDM); the National Council for Sustainable Development (NCSD); the National Committee for Subnational Democratic Development; the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Ethnic Minorities Development; and the newly established National Authority for Alternative Dispute Resolution (NAADR), among others.

Government ministries and institutions, NGOs/CSOs, youth organizations, academic and research institutions, UN agencies, development partners and other stakeholders—including the private sector and religious leaders—have a role to play in advancing the WPS agenda in Cambodia. A high-impact methodology was developed to guide the design and implementation of the NAP-WPS. Key elements and principles include: a) political will; b) results-focused design; c) coordination mechanism; d) civil society involvement; e) monitoring and evaluation systems; and f) allocated resources.

The following is a suggested list of stakeholders to be involved in developing a NAP-WPS and national coordination mechanism: the MoWA; MoFAIC; MoND; Ministry of Interior; MPTC; Ministry of Information; Ministry of Environment; Ministry of Economy and Finance; Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport; Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation; Ministry of Health; Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training; the National Centre for Peacekeeping Forces, Mine and ERW Clearance; and the Cambodian Mine Action Centre. Oversight and monitoring should be provided by the National Assembly, the Council of Ministers, the CNCW and the Cambodian Human Rights Committee. NGOs/CSOs—especially women’s CSOs and youth organizations or networks—should be integral to the NAP-WPS and its coordination mechanism, while development partners, UN agencies and academic or research institutions can provide strong technical, financial and advisory support.

- Women’s Participation and Leadership; and
- Women and Social Cohesion.

The ASEAN RPA-WPS should be reviewed in detail to identify synergies with existing national plans and strategies, and Cambodia should focus on a few key areas to maximize impacts. These may include: 1) increasing women’s participation and leadership across all sectors and levels of government and the public, especially in the security sector, including law enforcement, armed forces, UN PKO and justice; 2) enhancing cybersecurity and addressing cybercrimes targeting women and girls, including through digital literacy; 3) strengthening links between the WPS agenda and women’s engagement in climate change, disaster risk reduction and natural resource management; and 4) addressing sexual and GBV in crises and emergency settings, as well as post-conflict reconciliation and resolution.

Cambodia is well positioned to adopt a mixed approach to the NAP-WPS, as the WPS agenda is relevant to its national priorities on gender equality and the country’s commitment to promoting peace and stability at the community, national, regional and global levels.

Conclusions and Recommendations for Developing a NAP-WPS in Cambodia

The following topics have emerged as strong candidates for inclusion in the first NAP-WPS, in line with Cambodian government priorities:

- Women, Trafficking and Transnational Crime;
- Women, Peace and Cybersecurity;
- Women in the Security Sector, International Diplomacy and Peacekeeping Forces; and
- Women and Climate, Peace and Security.

Additional important topics covered in this report that could be integrated into the NAP-WPS or mainstreamed through other national action plans:

- Women and GBV in Conflict and Humanitarian Crises;
- The WPS Agenda and Economic Security, Livelihood Opportunities, Natural Resources and Human Security;

Given Cambodia’s many effective coordination mechanisms and national action plans on gender equality and women’s rights, it will be beneficial to build on these existing mechanisms in developing the NAP-WPS. The NAP-WPS can be designed to reinforce existing frameworks while addressing current gaps and emerging needs within the gender and security policy landscape. A critical success factor will be articulating the added value of the NAP-WPS relative to existing gender mainstreaming frameworks and action plans.

The key priority actions for Cambodia’s NAP-WPS should align closely with the ASEAN RPA-WPS strategic outcomes and outputs under the four pillars of the WPS agenda: Protection, Participation, Prevention and Relief and Recovery. Initial suggestions aligned with the ASEAN RPA-WPS are listed below:

Protection Pillar

ASEAN RPA-WPS Strategic Outcome 1:

Protection of the rights of women, young women and girls, including those from marginalized groups—through policies, practices and institutions related to peace and security, including protection from all forms of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in conflict, post-conflict, peacebuilding and humanitarian settings.

Suggested Actions:

- Ensure that survivors of SGBV in crisis and emergency settings, including past, current and potential future conflicts or disasters, can access legal, judicial, social protection and transitional justice mechanisms.
- Strengthen the capacity of frontline responders in the peace and security sectors to prevent and respond to SGBV, in line with NAPVAW priorities and multi-sectoral coordination mechanisms.
- Expand opportunities for CSOs and women's organizations to collaborate with government stakeholders on managing and implementing referral networks for SGBV survivors, especially in conflict and emergency settings.
- Enhance cybersecurity measures and leverage digital technologies to address cybercrimes and threats to women's safety and security, which destabilize communities.
- Ensure the protection and support of women's livelihoods, particularly during crises and disasters, including by addressing the demands of unpaid care work as a barrier to women's economic participation and security.
- Explore ways to integrate the WPS agenda into educational and training curricula to raise awareness and promote understanding of peace and security objectives within families, communities and training programmes.
- Intensify gender mainstreaming in governance and security sectors, including the national police, the defence sector, UN PKO and mine action, and build the capacities of GMAGs to implement GMAPs.

- Build the capacities of security sector personnel, including national police, armed forces and UN PKO, to protect women's rights, including those of women with specific risks or concerns, such as Indigenous and ethnic minority women, migrant workers, women with disabilities and older women, ensuring their safety and dignity.

Participation Pillar

ASEAN RPA-WPS Strategic Outcome 2:

Women's full, meaningful and equal participation in institutions, organizations and decision-making processes related to peace and security, including in leadership positions.

Suggested Actions:

- Promote women's participation and advancement to leadership roles, especially in peace and security sectors, by creating enabling work environments and applying temporary quotas to meet SDG 5 and SDG 16 targets, in line with CEDAW's 2019 Recommendations 31a and 31b to Cambodia.
- Introduce mandatory gender equality training for men and male leaders across sectors, while encouraging male champions to support women's leadership in decision-making, peacebuilding and conflict prevention, resolution and mediation.
- Strengthen the role and participation of women and young women at subnational, community and local levels in promoting social cohesion, conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding within and between communities.
- Support the engagement of women's CSOs and youth organizations, including both young men and young women, in the consultation, planning, implementation and evaluation of peace, security and humanitarian initiatives, including institutional mechanisms for civil society and youth input.
- Partner with media, academic institutions, faith-based organizations and the private

sector to enhance women's participation and leadership in national peace and security efforts and to increase visibility of women role models in these sectors.

- Consider programmes and initiatives that build capacity and train women as mediators and negotiators across thematic areas related to peacebuilding, conflict prevention, resolution and recovery at the regional and national levels.
- Continue promoting digital literacy, cybersecurity and technology training for women leaders and women in law enforcement so they can apply their skills and perspectives to identifying effective solutions.
- Strengthen women's leadership and meaningful participation in cyber-related legislation, policy, decision-making and enforcement, particularly in developing responses to cyber threats aligned with WPS principles.
- Identify norms and practices that can be changed or introduced to improve women's representation, particularly in leadership roles, and to improve gender balance in the peace and security sectors and to further promote the full inclusion of women (including those from marginalized and minority groups).

Prevention Pillar

ASEAN RPA-WPS Strategic Outcome 3:

ASEAN sectoral bodies, institutions and Member States actively contribute to global, regional and national conflict prevention, as well as to preventing violence, disasters and other threats to peace and security, with WPS principles central to their activities.

Suggested Actions:

- Foster technical cooperation across ASEAN on mainstreaming gender and engaging women in peacebuilding and conflict prevention including disaster risk reduction, emergency response, cybersecurity threats and other emerging risks.

- Conduct evidence-based research to identify how women, men and youth, including those from marginalized communities, are currently involved, or can be supported to engage, in mitigating violence, conflict, SGBV and environmental threats such as poor natural resource management.
- Build partnerships through coordinated mechanisms that include women mediators, women peacebuilders, women's CSOs, youth and faith-based organizations to ensure that conflict prevention policies reflect women's needs and perspectives.
- Identify and address capacity-building needs of first responders, practitioners and policymakers to ensure they can deliver WPS-aligned interventions aimed at preventing escalation and reducing harm.
- In line with CEDAW and CERD commitments and to prevent hate speech that may incite tensions, continue to raise awareness and provide training to law enforcement officials and the public on preventing gender-based and racial discrimination in the justice system, including complaints mechanisms.
- Develop public awareness campaigns and targeted interventions to prevent cybersecurity and cybercrime threats, especially those affecting women, girls and vulnerable communities, while promoting digital literacy.
- Strengthen capacities to identify and prevent gender-related impacts of digital security threats, harms and ICT-facilitated crimes.

ASEAN RPA-WPS Strategic Outcome 4:

Peace and security institutions, mechanisms and processes are successfully preventing SGBV.

Suggested Actions:

- Capitalize on lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and GBV response efforts to ensure that emergency response and disaster preparedness policies and plans include SGBV prevention and response in emergency standards.

- Ensure that the National Strategy on Disaster Risk Management for Health 2020–2024 supports the needs of women and girls by fully incorporating the Inter-Agency Working Group on Reproductive Health in Crisis' Minimum Initial Service Package.
- In line with CEDAW General Recommendation No. 37 (2018), institutionalize women's leadership in disaster prevention and preparedness, including in the development and dissemination of early warning systems, response and recovery measures and climate change mitigation and adaptation. Ensure that early warning information is delivered in ways that meet the needs of diverse groups of women and that first responders have access to sex-disaggregated data and capacity-building to ensure that the peace and security sector adopts interventions to prevent SGBV in emergency response.
- Incorporate the findings and recommendations of the 2023 Royal Cambodian Armed Forces Study on MOWIP into NAP-WPS priority actions for UN PKO and broadly disseminate findings applicable to women in law enforcement.
- Strengthen women's participation and leadership in multi-sectoral coordination mechanisms, networks and partnerships at the international and regional levels to ensure that the WPS agenda is integrated into relief and recovery efforts, promoting social cohesion and inclusive stakeholder engagement.
- Promote and implement programmes that address the economic rights and needs of women, including women in the informal economy, in order to enhance the safety and security of women, families and livelihoods—particularly with regard to access to income-generating opportunities during relief and recovery.
- In line with CEDAW's 2019 Recommendation 13a to Cambodia, build on Cambodia's achievements through the ECCC in advancing justice and reconciliation processes related to past conflicts, including support mechanisms for survivors of genocide attempts, SGBV and intergenerational trauma affecting women, families and communities. This includes local initiatives such as community dialogues on peace building and conflict transformation, intergenerational dialogues between survivors of SGBV and education programmes to foster deeper understanding of past conflicts as a foundation for preventing future ones.
- Develop gender-responsive programmes to deliver appropriate psychosocial support to survivors of conflict and violence, addressing trauma, including the intergenerational effects of violence on women and families, through conflict resolution and peacebuilding approaches.

Relief and Recovery Pillar

ASEAN RPA-WPS Strategic Outcome 5:

The needs of women and girls are met in relief and recovery processes at regional, national and local levels, and women have equal and meaningful participation in these processes, including in positions of decision-making and leadership.

Suggested Actions:

- Ensure that policies and implementation measures are gender-responsive to women's priorities during relief and recovery phases, including through consultations with community women with diverse needs and abilities. Collect and analyse sex-disaggregated data to inform evidence-based policies and interventions.

Next Steps

Establish the coordination mechanism at the outset of the NAP-WPS development process to ensure strong ownership and political commitment to its implementation. The Terms of Reference should clearly establish the lead and participating line ministries and institutions.

In line with global best practices, the coordination mechanism for a NAP-WPS in Cambodia should operate at both the political (senior) and technical levels, with high-level oversight. It should make use of Gender Mainstreaming Action Groups (GMAGs) and Technical Working Groups on Gender, involving NGOs/CSOs and the private sector.

Conduct awareness-raising on the WPS agenda, including the ASEAN RPA-WPS and its relevance to Cambodia, with government institutions,

NGOs/CSOs, academic and research institutions, media and subnational authorities, while emphasizing security issues beyond violence against women and girls.

Prepare a timeline for the development of a NAP-WPS in Cambodia, aligned with the Localization Toolkit on ASEAN RPA-WPS. This should include the coordination mechanism, Terms of Reference, stakeholder participation and inclusive processes.

Overview

Since the 1991 Paris Peace Agreements, the Royal Government of Cambodia has successfully managed the post-conflict period following years of conflict and destruction under the Khmer Rouge. It has done so by prioritizing national reconciliation, peacebuilding and reconstruction.

Cambodia experienced strong economic growth during the two decades before the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. The economy expanded at an average annual rate of 7.6 per cent between 1995 and 2019, and the national poverty rate dropped to 17.8 per cent by 2019, placing Cambodia in a much stronger position than two decades earlier. After attaining lower-middle-income status in 2015, the country set its sights on reaching upper-middle-income status by 2030 and high-income status by 2050. Cambodia's Vision 2050²⁸ is broadly aligned with the “5 Ps” of the 2030 Agenda through its emphasis on Peace, Prosperity, Planet and Partnership, while upholding the human rights, dignity and equality of its People.²⁹ Gender equality is one of the Royal Government of Cambodia's key priorities, as outlined in its national policies, strategies and plans.

Cambodia became a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1999, marking its commitment to regional cooperation in trade, labour mobility, peace and security. In recent years, the country has played a leading role in advancing the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda within ASEAN and has demonstrated its strong commitment to this agenda at both regional and international levels, including through its enhanced deployment of female personnel in UN peacekeeping missions. Cambodia has also made significant commitments and efforts towards advancing gender equality domestically. Gender mainstreaming is now incorporated into nearly all national policies, strategies and plans. Government actions have also prioritized increasing women's participation and leadership across sectors and eliminating violence against women.

In this context, developing a National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (NAP-WPS)—aligned with the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Women, Peace and Security (ASEAN RPA-WPS)—represents an opportunity for Cambodia to further its commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment and to strengthen its contributions to peace and security at national, regional and international levels.

Objectives of the Report

The main objectives of this situation analysis report include:

- Examining traditional, non-traditional and emerging security issues in Cambodia in the context of the WPS agenda;
- Identifying existing policies, plans and mechanisms relevant to WPS;
- Highlighting lessons learned and good practices from Cambodia and other countries in the peace and security sector; and
- Proposing next steps in formulating a NAP-WPS in Cambodia, aligned with the ASEAN RPA-WPS.

[28] <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/cambodia>

[29] Royal Government of Cambodia, *Pentagonal Strategy—Phase 1 (2024–2028) for Growth, Employment, Equity, Efficiency and Sustainability: Building the Foundation towards Realising the Cambodia Vision 2050*, Phnom Penh, August 2023

This report is intended to provide concrete evidence and demonstrate the added value of the WPS agenda in Cambodia. It can serve as an advocacy and reference tool for the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) to mobilize political support, secure buy-in and encourage ownership from other line ministries and institutions. It will also serve to raise awareness and build support for the WPS agenda among UN agencies and development partners, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society organizations (CSOs), organizations led by women, youth organizations and networks, local communities and other stakeholders, including the private sector.

Structure of the Report

Section I: Introduction and Background

This section reviews global and regional WPS frameworks, including Cambodia's role in developing the ASEAN RPA-WPS. It also describes the approach and methodology used in the situation analysis report.

Section II: Women, Peace and Security Issues in Cambodia

This section identifies traditional, non-traditional and emerging security issues affecting women in Cambodia. It also describes policies, plans and mechanisms in place to address WPS, identifies potential stakeholders and presents good practices and lessons learned that can serve as a foundation for further action.

Section III: Opportunities, Challenges and Lessons Learned

This section explores the opportunities and challenges for developing a NAP-WPS in Cambodia. It also highlights lessons learned from the experiences of other countries in designing and implementing national action plans, particularly regarding coordination mechanisms.

Section IV: Conclusions and Recommendations

This section presents conclusions from key findings and offers a set of recommendations to guide the development of a NAP-WPS in Cambodia, in line with the ASEAN RPA-WPS and the Localization Toolkit and Guidelines for ASEAN RPA-WPS.

SECTION I

Introduction and Background



Photo: UN Women/Lim Sophorn



Photo: UN Women/Lim Sophorn

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

1.1.1. International Frameworks

In October 2000, the United Nations Security Council (UNSCR) adopted the groundbreaking Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325), affirming the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflict and in peacebuilding initiatives. The WPS agenda rests on four pillars: prevention, participation, protection and relief and recovery.³⁰ The Security Council has since adopted 10 additional resolutions to provide detailed guidance on specific aspects of conflict and its impact on women.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is a foundational international human rights instrument focused on women's rights. General Recommendation No. 30 (2013) on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations affirmed the Convention's applicability to a broad range of settings affected by conflict and political crises. It also underscored the Convention's linkages with WPS-related UN Security Council resolutions.³¹

In addition, General Recommendation No. 37 (2018) on the gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change³² and the draft General Recommendation No. 40 (2024) on equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems³³ are highly relevant to the WPS agenda. Together, CEDAW and the UNSCRs on WPS form a substantive framework for integrating gender equality into conflict prevention, peacebuilding, post-conflict reconstruction and accountability.

[30] UNSCR 1325 Available at: <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/1325>

[31] <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2015/8/guidebook-cedawgeneralrecommendation30-womenpeacesecurity>

[32] <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/general-comments-and-recommendations/general-recommendation-no-37-2018-gender-related>

[33] <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/general-comments-and-recommendations/draft-general-recommendation-no-40-equal-and>

Cambodia is a signatory to all core international human rights treaties, including CEDAW, and has made substantial progress in recent years in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment through national laws, policies, strategies and plans. Cambodia ratified CEDAW in 1992 and the Optional Protocol to CEDAW in 2010. The CEDAW Committee's Concluding Observations on Cambodia's sixth periodic report, issued in November 2019, included a recommendation to adopt a comprehensive national action plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and subsequent WPS resolutions.³⁴ The CEDAW reporting cycle provides an important framework for advancing WPS and strengthening its linkages to Cambodia's broader gender equality agenda.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA), adopted by consensus at the 1995 United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, serves as a blueprint for advancing women's rights and ensuring their full and equal participation in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making. Among its 12 critical areas of concern, the area on Women and Armed Conflict addresses the impacts of armed and other forms of conflict on women, including those living under foreign occupation. It outlines six strategic objectives and associated actions to be taken by governments, intergovernmental institutions and NGOs.³⁵ BPfA has played a central role in driving global progress on the WPS agenda since its adoption.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted in 2015, complement the WPS agenda and reflect the aims of the BPfA, UNSCR 1325 and its subsequent resolutions. Efforts to implement these commitments will contribute to the achievement of:

- SDG 5: Gender Equality
 - Target 5.1: End violence against women
 - Target 5.2: End discrimination against women
 - Target 5.5: Increase women's role in decision-making
- SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth
 - Target 8.5: Promote decent work
 - Target 8.7: End forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking
 - Target 8.8: Promote safe working environments, including for women migrant workers
- SDG 13: Climate Action
- SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
 - Target 16.7: Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels

The SDGs aim to reduce all forms of violence and call for lasting solutions to conflict and insecurity, including strengthened rule of law, reduced arms proliferation and greater inclusion of developing countries in global governance. Cambodia is committed to achieving the SDGs and has localized them into 18 Cambodian Sustainable Development Goals (CSDGs), including an additional Goal 18: End the negative impact of mines/ERW and promote victim assistance.³⁶

[34] CEDAW/C/KHM/CO/6

[35] <https://www.icspe.org/system/files/Beijing%20Declaration%20and%20Platform%20for%20Action.pdf>

[36] CSDGs 2016–2030, July 2022

1.1.2. ASEAN Framework and Cambodia

Implementing the WPS agenda has been recognized as essential for achieving sustainable peace and prosperity across the ASEAN region. All ASEAN Member States have adopted or endorsed regional commitments on gender equality and the protection of women's rights. The ASEAN RPA-WPS builds on decades of political engagement within ASEAN on issues relevant to the WPS agenda.

In November 2017, ASEAN leaders adopted the Joint Statement on Promoting Women, Peace and Security in ASEAN, reaffirming this commitment.³⁷ The ASEAN Gender Mainstreaming Strategic Framework 2021–2025, spearheaded by the ASEAN Committee on Women and the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC), acknowledges the complex interplay of structural inequalities,³⁸ institutional constraints and social norms that perpetuate gender inequalities. The framework recognizes that implementing the WPS agenda requires significant involvement from other ASEAN sectoral bodies, particularly within the Political-Security and Economic Communities, and calls for a coordinated and strategic approach to leverage their mandates, capacities and constituencies in support of gender mainstreaming.³⁹

On 22–23 August 2019, ASEAN organized the first Regional Symposium on the Implementation of the WPS Agenda. Held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, the Regional Symposium was hosted by the Ministry of Women's Affairs in collaboration with the ASEAN Secretariat, the ASEAN Committee on Women and the ACWC, with support from ASEAN-USAID PROSPECT and UN Women. Since the adoption of the Joint Statement on Promoting WPS in ASEAN in November 2017, this was the first regional inter-sectoral dialogue to demonstrate ASEAN's commitment to advancing the WPS agenda. It also marked an important starting point for establishing cross-sectoral collaboration on WPS between the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community and the ASEAN Political and Security Community pillars. In addition, the Regional Symposium advanced inter-sectoral dialogue on operationalizing the ASEAN Women for Peace Registry under the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation.

One of the key outcomes of the Regional Symposium was ASEAN's commitment to producing a regional study on WPS—to take stock of progress, analyse trends, examine persistent and emerging challenges, and capture lessons learned. The recommendations of this study paved the way for the region to develop the ASEAN RPA-WPS.⁴⁰

Cambodia was an original member of the ASEAN Advisory Group on WPS (and served as its Chair in 2022). The Advisory Group began as an informal ad hoc working group, comprising the ASEAN Committee on Women and ACWC representatives from five ASEAN Member States, committed to supporting the WPS agenda. In 2022, Cambodia chaired ASEAN and took full leadership in advancing the development of the ASEAN RPA-WPS.

During Cambodia's ASEAN Chairmanship, ASEAN leaders adopted the first ASEAN RPA-WPS at the ASEAN Summits in November 2022, followed by its official launch on 5 December 2022 in Phnom Penh. The ASEAN RPA-WPS outlines strategies for implementing the four pillars of the WPS agenda:

[37] https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/8.-ADOPTION_Joint-Statement-on-Promoting-Women-Peace-and-Security-in-ASEANACWC-Endorsed_rev2.pdf

[38] ASEAN Gender Mainstreaming Framework 2021–2025, September 2021; available at: <https://asean.org/book/asean-gender-mainstreaming-strategic-framework-2021-2025/>

[39] *Ibid*

[40] See, ASEAN, ASEAN Regional Study on WPS. Available at: <https://wps.asean.org/resources/asean-regional-study-on-women-peace-and-security/>

protection, participation, prevention and relief and recovery. It provides a broad and flexible framework for ASEAN Member States to localize the WPS agenda and prioritize actions suited to national and local contexts. It also aims to strengthen and operationalize regional commitments to the WPS agenda. The ASEAN RPA-WPS represents a major step forward in ASEAN's efforts to recognize and leverage women's participation and leadership in violence prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

ASEAN and UN Women jointly produced the Localization Toolkit and Guidelines for the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Women, Peace and Security under Cambodia's leadership as Chair of the ASEAN WPS Advisory Group and proponent of the Localization Initiative. The Toolkit was launched in Phnom Penh on 14 December 2023 and used to raise awareness of the WPS agenda among government stakeholders. It provides practical guidance for translating ASEAN RPA-WPS priority actions into tangible results and ensuring that no one is left behind.⁴¹ MoWA, as a member of the ASEAN Committee on Women, played a leading role in championing and supporting the Toolkit's development.

Within the ASEAN Political and Security Pillar, the Cambodian Government has demonstrated a strong commitment to promoting gender equality in peacekeeping, with a goal of increasing the deployment of military women to UN Peacekeeping Operations to 20 per cent by 2024.⁴² By May 2024, Cambodia had achieved this target, with women comprising 21.4 per cent of deployed peacekeepers as of December 2024.⁴³ Cambodia currently ranks among the top ASEAN Member States in both advancing the role of women in UN peacekeeping operations and in the proportion of women personnel deployed to peace missions.⁴⁴

Cambodia is also the first ASEAN Member State—and the second country in the Asia-Pacific Region—to conduct an assessment on Measuring Opportunities for Women in Peace Operations (MOWIP). The assessment was conducted with support from the Elsie Initiative Fund for Uniformed Women in Peace Operations.⁴⁵ This reflects a strong governmental commitment to identifying challenges and opportunities for enhancing women's meaningful participation in peacekeeping. It also provides a platform for Cambodia to show leadership and share lessons learned with other ASEAN Member States prioritizing women's roles in peacekeeping.⁴⁶

At the national level, Cambodia has a unique post-conflict recovery experience, particularly in recognizing the crucial role of women in relief and recovery. In recent years, unprecedented momentum has emerged to localize the WPS agenda at both national and subnational levels, driven by an increasing sense of urgency to address traditional and non-traditional security challenges—from conflict and climate change to trafficking, cybersecurity and transnational crime. Women and girls are significantly impacted by and involved in these issues in ways that are often overlooked or misunderstood. Moreover, they are not meaningfully included in the design and implementation of solutions or in broader peace and security policy and decision-making processes.

The Royal Government of Cambodia's overarching goal, as articulated in its National Strategic Development Plans, is to build a peaceful, politically stable and secure society by pursuing a sustainable and equitable development strategy.⁴⁷ The Government has also prioritized gender equality and women's empowerment through its national policy agenda, strategies and plans.

[41] Localization Toolkit and Guidelines for the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Women, Peace and Security, Jakarta, ASEAN Secretariat, December 2023

[42] <https://cambodia.un.org/en/179373>

[43] https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/operational_effect_and_women_peacekeepers_74_may_2024.pdf

[44] <https://cambodia.un.org/en/179373>

[45] <https://elsiefund.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/240730-Press-Release-MOWIP-Launch.pdf>

[46] Concept Note: Launch of the ASEAN Localization Toolkit and Guideline and Awareness Raising Workshop on Localization of Women, Peace, and Security in Cambodia, 14–15 December 2023

[47] RGC NSDP 2019–2023

These include the successive phases of the Rectangular Strategies I–IV and the Pentagonal Strategy Phase 1 (2024–2028), the five-year National Strategic Development Plans (most recently 2019–2023, with the 2024–2028 plan forthcoming), as well as the Ministry of Women’s Affairs’ Five-Year Strategic Plan for Promoting Gender Equality and Empowering Women and Girls I–VI (most recently 2024–2028).

The Royal Government of Cambodia, through MoWA, has expressed interest in further advancing the WPS agenda in Cambodia, in line with UNSCR 1325, CEDAW and the ASEAN RPA-WPS, through the development of a NAP-WPS. Cambodia is particularly interested in the conflict prevention, participation and relief and recovery pillars of the WPS agenda, and has valuable lessons from its post-conflict context. Given Cambodia’s leadership in advancing the ASEAN RPA-WPS and its strong interest in localizing it within the national context, building synergies between regional and national efforts will be essential for securing national buy-in and ownership.

Recognizing the important role that women and CSOs play in advancing the WPS agenda, UN Women, in collaboration with two women-led CSOs (Women Peace Makers and the Alliance for Conflict Transformation), held an Interactive Dialogue with CSOs on Advancing the WPS Agenda in Cambodia on 18 October 2023.⁴⁸ Participants highlighted the importance of developing a NAP-WPS in Cambodia, ensuring an inclusive and intersectional approach, addressing emerging issues such as cyber and climate security, investing sufficient resources and acknowledging the need to strengthen their own capacity on the WPS agenda.

MoWA, in collaboration with ASEAN (particularly the ASEAN Committee on Women) and UN Women, held a two-day workshop on 14–15 December 2023 to launch the Localization Toolkit and Guidelines for the ASEAN RPA-WPS (2023) and to raise awareness of the WPS agenda’s relevance to Cambodia’s national priorities and context.⁴⁹ Key outcomes included: an expressed interest in localizing the ASEAN RPA-WPS to the Cambodian context; an emphasis on non-traditional security issues such as cybersecurity, climate security and human trafficking; endorsement of MoWA to lead the NAP-WPS development; and a recommendation to establish a national coordinating committee or working group as part of the process.

1.2. Methodology

The situation analysis followed a human rights-based approach grounded in the principles of participation, inclusiveness, gender equality and gender sensitivity. Efforts were made to include diverse groups of women and youth, while ensuring the key principles of confidentiality, privacy, safety and informed consent. Methodologies included a comprehensive desk review of WPS-related documents, as well as consultations and interviews with key stakeholders, including policymakers and government officials at national and subnational levels, NGOs/CSOs, UN agency personnel, development partners and embassy officials, academic and research institutions, women from marginalized groups and rural areas, youth (female and male) and UN peacekeepers (female and male).

[48] Concept Note: Interactive Dialogue with Civil Society Organizations on Advancing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Cambodia on 18 October 2023 in Phnom Penh. UN Women, WPM and ACT. 25 people (19 women) from 10 NGOs/CSOs joined

[49] Concept Note: Launch of the ASEAN Localization Toolkit and Guideline and Awareness Raising Workshop on Localization of Women, Peace, and Security in Cambodia, 14–15 December 2023. 111 participants joined on Day 1 and 47 persons including from 17 different ministries/institutions joined on Day 2

A consultative workshop on the WPS agenda in Cambodia was held on 30 July 2024 in Phnom Penh, co-organized by MoWA's Department of International Cooperation with support from MoWA's Internal Working Group on WPS and UN Women Cambodia, as well as the UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP). Participants included 50 persons (39 women and 11 men) from government ministries/institutions, NGOs/CSOs and UN agencies. During July and August 2024, interviews and focus group discussions using semi-structured guides were conducted with 198 individuals (166 women and 32 men), including policymakers, government officials and local authorities at national and subnational levels, NGOs/CSOs, academic/research institutions, youth groups and marginalized women at the national level and in three provinces: Kampong Chhnang, Mondulhiri and Svay Rieng.

The UN Women Cambodia Programme Analyst for WPS, the consultant team and MoWA's Department of International Cooperation collaborated closely in planning and conducting the consultative workshop, focus group discussions and interviews for this situation analysis. This included reviewing relevant documents, holding briefing meetings and conducting feedback sessions on fieldwork findings and stakeholder mapping. Feedback on preliminary findings and draft reports was incorporated into the process and is reflected in the final report. A final consultation workshop on the situation analysis was held on 18 December 2024 with 71 participants (63 women) from government institutions, UN agencies, development partners and NGOs/CSOs to review findings and provide feedback. Several follow-up meetings between MoWA and UN Women took place between December 2024 and March 2025 to finalize the report and consider next steps

SECTION II

Women, Peace and Security Issues in Cambodia



Photo: UN Women/Lim Sophorn



Photo: UN Women/Lim Sophorn

2. Overview of ASEAN RPA-WPS

The WPS agenda rests on four interconnected pillars: prevention, participation, protection, and relief and recovery.

- **Prevention** refers to ensuring women are equally and fully engaged in conflict and violence prevention efforts, and that peace and security interventions and policies effectively prevent violence against women and girls and GBV. This includes recognizing the different ways in which women, men, girls, boys and individuals from marginalized groups may experience GBV.
- **Participation** involves increasing the representation and meaningful involvement of women at all levels in peace and security policies and programmes.
- **Protection** aims to ensure that the specific rights and needs of women and girls are recognized and met within peace and security efforts.
- **Relief and recovery** focuses on ensuring access to services and protection of rights for women and girls during and after conflicts and disasters.

The COVID-19 pandemic and other emerging security challenges, including transnational crime, cybersecurity threats, trafficking in persons, natural disasters, climate change and violent extremism, have led to a re-examination of what constitutes security. The concept has expanded beyond traditional armed conflict to encompass broader threats to human security, moving beyond conventional national security paradigms.⁵⁰

The ASEAN RPA-WPS encompasses the WPS agenda’s four key pillars . In the summary matrix below, each pillar includes one outcome (except for prevention, which has two outcomes) and each outcome is accompanied by several indicators to measure progress. Each outcome also includes multiple outputs and priority actions.⁵¹

[50] ASEAN, ASEAN Regional Study on Women, Peace and Security, March 2020. Available at: <https://asean.org/asean-regional-plan-of-action-on-women-peace-and-security/>
 [51] ASEAN RPA-WPS, December 2022

Table 1: Summary ASEAN RPA-WPS Outcomes

Protection
Strategic Outcome 1: Protection of the rights of women, young women and girls, including those of marginalized groups, in policies, practices and institutions related to peace and security, including the protection of women and girls from all forms of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in conflict, post-conflict, peacebuilding and humanitarian settings.
Participation
Strategic Outcome 2: Women’s full, meaningful and equal participation in institutions, organizations and decision-making processes related to peace and security, including in leadership positions.
Prevention
Strategic Outcome 3: ASEAN sectoral bodies, institutions and Member States play an active role in contributing to global, regional and national conflict prevention, and prevention of violence, disasters and other threats to peace and security, with the principles of the WPS agenda central to these activities.
Strategic Outcome 4: Peace and security institutions, mechanisms and processes are successfully preventing SGBV.
Relief and Recovery
Strategic Outcome 5: The needs of women and girls are met in relief and recovery processes at regional, national and local levels, and women have equal and meaningful participation in these processes, including in positions of decision-making and leadership.

Source: ASEAN RPA-WPS (2022)



3. Women, Peace and Security Issues in Cambodia

Photo: UN Women/Lim Sophorn

Consolidating peace, political stability and social order remains at the forefront of the Royal Government of Cambodia's national development agenda. Extensive measures are taken to prevent civil unrest from escalating into violence. In Cambodia, the range of security issues relevant to the WPS agenda includes sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in crisis, post-conflict, peacebuilding and humanitarian settings; trafficking of women and girls; transnational crime, including drugs; cybersecurity and cybercrime; climate change and natural disasters; women's economic security and access to natural resources; social cohesion; and women's participation and leadership in decision-making.

3.1. Women and GBV in Conflict and Humanitarian Crisis

3.1.1 Context of Women and GVB in Conflict Settings

Violence against women and girls is rooted in unequal gender power relations and discrimination, and is exacerbated by conflict, humanitarian crises, poverty, economic stress and, at times, the harmful use of alcohol or other substances.⁵² During emergencies such as conflicts or natural disasters, the risk of violence, exploitation and abuse increases. Social exclusion and movement restrictions during such events pose specific risks for women and girls.

The COVID-19 crisis is a clear example, where data and reports showed that all forms of violence against women and girls intensified.⁵³ Contributing factors included household stress related to security, health and finances, cramped living conditions, isolation with abusers, mobility restrictions and deserted public spaces. Critical services such as health care, referrals, psychosocial and legal support, shelters and livelihoods were either unavailable or severely strained. Restrictions on mobility and the suspension of work, school and social activities disrupted GBV prevention activities and programming.⁵⁴

[52] <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2020/Issue-brief-COVID-19-and-ending-violence-against-women-and-girls-en.pdf>

[53] <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/in-focus-gender-equality-in-covid-19-response/violence-against-women-during-covid-19>

[54] <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/brief-prevention-violence-against-women-and-girls-and-covid-19-en.pdf?la=en&vs=3049>

SGBV has also intensified in other emergencies and crises, including post-conflict situations and during and after disasters. Numerous studies have shown that natural disasters disproportionately affect women and girls. They face greater risks of violence and exploitation due to disrupted housing and support systems, limited access to services and structural and social barriers to food, relief, supplies and sanitation facilities.⁵⁵ Common types of violence in emergency settings include rape and other forms of sexual and physical assault, psychological and emotional abuse, sexual exploitation and trafficking. In addition, violence can prevent women and girls from accessing services or securing shelter and safe spaces during emergencies.

Sustainable peace and security in Cambodia can only be achieved through the engagement of both women and men. This requires intensified efforts to end gender inequality and misogyny, which are fundamentally linked to sexual violence in both conflict and peacetime. Evidence shows that inequitable social norms in Cambodia contribute to violence against women and girls by promoting tolerance of violence and shifting blame onto survivors. In 2021, only 31 per cent of women who had experienced physical or sexual violence sought help; 16 per cent did not seek help but did disclose the violence to someone.⁵⁶ The main reasons that women cited for not seeking services for help included the belief that violence was normal or not serious, embarrassment or shame, and fear of losing children or bringing shame to the family.⁵⁷

The COVID-19 crisis highlighted the need for the Royal Government to strengthen social protection systems, particularly for vulnerable women, and to ensure that GBV responses are included in emergency planning. Lessons from the pandemic and related GBV responses underscore the importance of integrating GBV prevention and response into emergency preparedness plans, aligned with global GBVIE (gender-based violence in emergencies) standards. In Cambodia, GBV services were not prioritized as essential in the COVID-19 master plan. Access to essential services for women subject to GBV was compromised by delays or slow responses, which required adaptations such as the use of personal protective equipment, increased telephone contact and the introduction of some online services.⁵⁸

3.1.2 Women in Post-conflict and Peacebuilding in Cambodia

Cambodia has a compelling recent history of peacebuilding and development, transitioning from armed conflict through UN peacekeeping and nation-building to sustained economic growth over four decades following the fall of the Khmer Rouge regime. Over the past 25 years, the Government's Win-Win policies have ushered in peace, national unity and territorial integrity,⁵⁹ and onized women as the backbone of society. In the immediate aftermath of the conflict, women made up over 60 per cent of the adult population and played crucial roles in peace and security through economic activity, rebuilding trust via women's associations and networks and participating at all levels of government from the village and commune levels to provincial and national efforts.⁶⁰ Cambodia's national vision for sustainable development—Vision 2050—is broadly aligned with the 2030 Agenda through its pursuit of Peace, Prosperity, Planet and Partnership, with an emphasis on human rights, dignity and equality for all people.⁶¹

[55] <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/9377751468329371031/pdf/929670REVISED00entoBriefoAPRIL02015.pdf>

[56] CDHS 2021–2022, pg. 321

[57] MoWA 2015, National Survey on Women's Health and Life Experiences in Cambodia, Summary report, pgs. 20–21

[58] Impact of COVID-19 on Access to Essential Services for Women Survivors of Gender-Based Violence, Findings, MoWA, ACCESS, May 2022

[59] Royal Government of Cambodia 2023, Pentagonal Strategy—Phase 1, 2024–2028

[60] https://www.peacewomen.org/assets/file/Resources/NGO/part_goodgovernancegrounduppostconflictcambodia_march2004.pdf KII with senior female government officials

[61] RGC 2023, Pentagonal Strategy—Phase 1, 2024–2028; UNSDCF Cambodia 2024–2028

SGBV is widespread in times of conflict. Survivors continue to suffer from the psychological and physical effects of their trauma long after the initial incident. A culture of impunity during wartime contributes to the continued acceptance of sexual violence during peacetime.⁶² In many communities, perpetrators and survivors live side by side without resolution of past trauma. The majority of Cambodians who were born after the war ended have limited awareness of their recent history.⁶³ Preventing a recurrence of violence requires a commitment to reconciliation involving the whole of society, including government, academic institutions, the private sector, civil society, women, men and youth.

Cambodia's experience through the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) presents a unique opportunity to further consolidate peace and development.⁶⁴ Established in 2001, the ECCC represented a significant step towards justice and reconciliation after the Khmer Rouge regime and genocide. One of its major innovations was the enhanced recognition of victims in legal proceedings. At the ECCC, victims could apply to be civil parties and seek "collective and moral" reparations to restore their dignity through official recognition and collective remembrance.⁶⁵ Reparations projects focused on three main areas: education, remembrance and rehabilitation. Of the 13 common-interest projects implemented (reparations initiatives intended to benefit a broader group of victims rather than individuals), three were specifically designed for victims of genocide: the Community Media Project (focusing on the Cham people and former Khmer Rouge), Voices from Ethnic Minorities and Legal and Civic Education for Minority Civil Parties.⁶⁶

The ECCC is now carrying out its residual functions, including protecting victims and witnesses, monitoring implementation of reparations, disseminating its achievements to the public and preserving its archives. As the ECCC winds down, Cambodian officials and international experts agree that continued international support is imperative to promote reconciliation, contribute to regional peace and stability and protect the rights of survivors. This includes recognizing that women are not only survivors of crisis, vulnerable to risk or in need of protection, but are also active participants, skilled practitioners and constructive contributors to effective, lasting peace and security solutions and to broader social progress.⁶⁷

In addition to its role in the ECCC, the Royal Government of Cambodia has taken several measures to support remembrance, social healing and the prevention of future atrocities. These include declaring 20 May as the Day of Commemoration; supporting memorials such as the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum and Choeng Ek Memorial at the Killing Fields; and developing a genocide textbook through the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport in collaboration with the Documentation Centre of Cambodia. The textbook promotes prevention, social healing, intergenerational dialogue and reconciliation through teaching history in the education system.⁶⁸

NGOs have played a key role in reconciliation and the healing of SGBV survivors. The Women and Transitional Justice project, for example, focused on outreach and advocacy activities for GBV survivors, including access to justice, psychosocial support, truth-telling and dialogue.⁶⁹ Other initiatives have promoted mutual understanding through intergenerational dialogues and mobile exhibitions, particularly supporting healing and acknowledgement for survivors of forced marriage.⁷⁰

[62] <https://gbvkr.org/gender-based-violence-under-khmer-rouge/>

[63] <https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/10/never-again-legacy-cambodias-khmer-rouge-trials>

[64] <https://cambodia.un.org/en/269119-op-ed-genocide-convention-and-cambodia-lessons-past-prevention-future#>

[65] <https://www.eccc.gov.kh/en/organisation/victim-and-witness-support>

[66] <https://www.eccc.gov.kh/en>

[67] <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/opinion/cambodias-take-wps-agenda-context-covid-19>

[68] <https://irct.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Volume-21-No.-2.pdf>

[69] <https://gbvkr.org/activities/>

[70] <https://act-kh.org/>

Interviews with key stakeholders highlighted the critical importance of the National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women (NAPVAW) and Cambodia’s successful multi-stakeholder coordination approach to addressing and responding to violence against women and girls, particularly domestic violence. However, NGOs, CSOs, embassy officials, development partners and academic institutions raised concerns about different forms of violence against women and girls, including past experiences of SGBV, intergenerational trauma and harmful gender norms and stereotypes. These overlapping concerns were identified as key security issues affecting women and girls. Stakeholders also viewed Cambodia’s postconflict history, ongoing relevance of transitional justice and experiences of intergenerational trauma and violence as valuable lessons for both national progress and as examples for other countries. Senior women leaders in government emphasized the importance of women’s networks at national and subnational levels in addressing past conflicts and advancing peacebuilding, and noted that support from senior male leaders remains critical to promoting women’s roles in peace efforts.⁷¹

3.1.3 National Policies, Plans and Mechanisms

Eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls is a top priority in Cambodia’s agenda for human capital development and social harmony in the family and society.⁷² Over the past 15 years, several national action plans have been implemented to address this issue, including:

- The National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women (NAPVAW I–III; NAPVAW IV 2025 -2030 forthcoming);
- The National Strategic Plan for Counter-Trafficking in Persons (NSP-CTIP I–III and IV 2024–2028);
- The National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women (NAPVAW I–III; NAPVAW IV 2025 -2030 forthcoming);
- The Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Violence Against Children (2017–2021, extended to 2023); and
- The Prevention of Child Marriage and Adolescent Pregnancy Action Plan in Ratanak Kiri Province (2017–2021).

Currently, a draft action plan on preventing child marriage and early pregnancy among youth is under development. Cambodia has joined regional commitments through ASEAN to protect the rights of women, including the ASEAN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Violence Against Children and the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence Against Women 2016–2025 (ASEAN RPA on EVAW). The third National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women 2019–2023 (NAPVAW III), led by the Ministry of Women’s Affairs, is the key policy framework to end violence against women and girls in Cambodia and is aligned with the ASEAN RPA on EVAW. NAPVAW III identifies three priorities and outlines four strategies.

[71] KII with Senior Government Leaders (National Assembly and Supreme Council to the King), August 2024

[72] MoWA Neary Rattanak VI 2024–2028

NAPVAW III priorities are:

1. Domestic violence/intimate partner violence;
2. Rape and sexual violence; and
3. Violence against women at increased risk or in vulnerable groups.

NAPVAW III strategies are:

1. Prevention;
2. Legal Protection and Multi-sectoral Services;
3. Laws and Policies; and
4. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E).⁷³

The fourth NAPVAW (2024–2030) is currently under development. SGBV in the context of emerging security threats and conflict situations has not been adequately addressed in previous plans. As such, it is both timely and important to include prevention of and response to SGBV in contexts of crisis, conflict and humanitarian settings in the NAP-WPS in Cambodia.

The 2009 Criminal Code defines and sets out corresponding punishments and penalties for various crimes against humanity and violence, including rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced sterilization and all other forms of sexual violence (Title 2, Art. 188) and sexual assaults (Title 3, Arts. 239–252). It includes a separate definition and penalty for sexual harassment in Article 250. The 2005 Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Protection of Victims (DV Law) establishes the responsibility of the nearest authorities to intervene in cases of domestic violence. CEDAW has recommended a comprehensive review of the DV Law to ensure full protection of women’s rights.⁷⁴

The Technical Working Group on Gender-Based Violence (TWGG-GBV) serves as a national-level platform for government and civil society to engage in information sharing, coordination and joint action planning. Its membership includes 17 line ministries and institutions, 4 development partners and over 30 NGOs/CSOs. NAPVAW III, together with the coordination mechanisms of the TWGG-GBV, subnational GBV working groups and the Women and Children’s Consultative Committees, has served as a guide for enhanced collaboration among government ministries, institutions and departments, CSOs/NGOs, and development partners at both national and subnational levels, particularly in relation to mass media, campaigns and public events.⁷⁵ Under NAPVAW, the Inter-Ministerial Media Code of Conduct for Reporting Violence Against Women serves as a roadmap for journalists, establishing standards for reporting on violence against women and girls in the media, outlining sanctions and calling for stronger monitoring to ensure compliance.⁷⁶

Cambodia’s Village Commune Safety Policy (2010), amended in scope and expanded to districts in 2021 by the Ministry of Interior,⁷⁷ offers a valuable approach to promoting gender-inclusive protection at the local level. It addresses underreported and often overlooked issues such as violence against women and girls, sexual abuse and discrimination. The policy also aims to combat a range of forms of GBV, including human trafficking and domestic violence and other

[73] MoWA, NAPVAW III 2019–2023

[74] CEDAW 2019, Concluding Observation, paragraph 25b

[75] MoWA, Final Evaluation of NAPVAW III 2019–2023, May 2023

[76] Prakas No. 271, 20 July 2017; *ibid.*

[77] Eight main goals: No theft or robbery; no drug offences; no pornography, prostitution, human trafficking, domestic violence or gangsters; maintaining good hygiene and environment; responding in timely fashion to disasters and all communicable diseases and epidemics; providing quality and transparent administrative and public services; resolving disputes outside the judicial system with efficiency; and no traffic accidents.

community-level security issues linked to transnational crime. At the subnational level, provincial and district Women and Children’s Consultative Committees (WCCCs) meet regularly with Boards of Governors to discuss women, children and youth issues. Commune Committees for Women and Children are also important local-level mechanisms for raising concerns and taking action on issues related to women, children and youth.

Within the National Social Protection Policy Framework 2016–2025, Cambodia has made significant efforts to enhance social protection measures and ensure that vulnerable and marginalized populations— especially women—receive support through its social protection schemes. The Framework for Social Protection Response to Emergencies (2023)⁷⁸ includes three Sub-Decrees (Nos. 152, 153 and 154) focused on social assistance for vulnerable groups, including women. Sub-Decree 152 on Social Assistance in Emergencies establishes a framework for providing assistance during crises. Sub-Decree 153 on Social Assistance for Vulnerable Populations enhances the social safety net for vulnerable groups including women, children, older persons and people with disabilities. Sub-Decree 154 on Coordination and Implementation of Social Assistance Programmes aims to strengthen service delivery.⁷⁹ During the COVID19 pandemic, specific measures were implemented to support women and girls, including emergency cash transfers, food assistance and health services.⁸⁰

3.2. Women and Trafficking and Transnational Crime

3.2.1 Context of Women and Trafficking and Transnational Crime

Human traffickers exploit both domestic and foreign victims in Cambodia, and Cambodian victims are also trafficked abroad. In Southeast Asia, the primary form of trafficking is for sexual exploitation, which disproportionately affects women and girls.⁸¹ Cambodia’s National Defence Policy 2022 identifies human trafficking, drug trafficking and other illegal cross-border activities as serious problems. These crimes pose threats to international and national peace and security, undermine public safety, create potential divisions and social tensions within and across borders, and increase risks for already vulnerable communities. The Ministry of National Defence has acknowledged the importance of strengthening interinstitutional mechanisms and enhancing cooperation with national, regional and international partners to prevent and respond to transnational crime.⁸² The Ministry of Interior leads the administration and management of the National Police in matters of national security, public order and social security,⁸³ and serves as Chairperson of the National Committee for Counter Trafficking (NCCT).

ASEAN countries serve as source, transit and/or destination points for human trafficking. The UN Convention on Transnational Organized Crime and its additional protocols focus on prevention, protection, suppression and prosecution of human trafficking. Trafficking in persons remains a serious issue affecting women and girls in Cambodia. Although there is no national-level prevalence data, women and girls are known to be trafficked for labour exploitation, sexual exploitation and forced begging. NCCT reports have identified new risk groups, including women trafficked for marriage or for organ removal. Surrogacy has also emerged as a growing issue in trafficking cases.⁸⁴ These developments require deeper understanding to ensure women are not exploited and their rights are protected.

[78] Produced by MoSVY, with MoH, MoWA, MoEYS, Mol and MoP

[79] MoSVY 2023, Framework for Social Protection Response to Emergencies, September 2023

[80] Cambodia National Report, BPfA+30, June 2024

[81] UNODC Global Report of Trafficking in Persons, 2020

[82] MoND, National Defence Policy 2022

[83] https://www.interior.gov.kh/en/about_moi

[84] (NCCT 2016) Mid-Term Review of the National Plan of Action

A 2023 United Nations report revealed that hundreds of thousands of people are being forcibly engaged by organized criminal gangs in Southeast Asia in online criminal operations, including romance-investment scams, crypto fraud, money laundering and illegal gambling.⁸⁵ Women are also being exploited in online scam centres across the region. Victims of these schemes face a wide range of serious violations and abuses, including threats to their safety and security. Addressing the rise in online crimes and cybercrimes requires proactive engagement from technology companies. These companies must anticipate and address harms related to the use (and misuse) of their platforms, especially with respect to human rights impacts on groups or populations at heightened risk of vulnerability or marginalization. They must also engage in appropriate remedial action. For example, Meta launched a short campaign in Cambodia in 2022 (Let's Talk About Online Scams) to help people protect themselves from online fraud. However, far more must be done to monitor criminal activity without restricting fundamental rights.⁸⁶ Awareness-raising efforts must also extend to law enforcement actors to ensure they are able to recognize victims of online scams, cybercrimes, criminal migrant smuggling and trafficking operations and make appropriate referrals.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought a shift in risks for trafficking in persons, with women especially vulnerable. Returned migrant workers often lacked the ability to sustain their livelihoods once back in Cambodia, as many had no jobs or were underemployed, making them more vulnerable to trafficking. Women were more affected than men: 66.4 per cent of returned women migrant workers had no source of income compared to 48 per cent of men.⁸⁷ Border closures reportedly increased the risk of abuse by brokers for migrants seeking work. Risks of trafficking for surrogacy persist, with some reports suggesting that sham marriages are being used to circumvent laws and regulations related to surrogacy. This is coupled with ongoing risks of trafficking in persons, including labour exploitation for begging (of both adults and children), broken job promises after migration and trafficking on fishing boats. Online exploitation and abuse also became more prominent during the pandemic, further increasing trafficking risks.⁸⁸

Subnational authorities, women and youth in rural areas, including Indigenous and ethnic minority groups, raised concerns during interviews about drug trafficking and the increasing use and abuse of drugs by youth. These issues were reported to negatively affect community and family safety, with young men comprising the majority of users. Participants described increased incidents of theft, robbery and gang-related activity, and noted that women and girls felt particularly vulnerable and fearful when travelling after dark.⁸⁹

3.2.2 National Policies, Plans and Mechanisms

The 2008 Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation criminalizes sex trafficking and labour trafficking and prescribes penalties that are sufficiently stringent and, for sex trafficking, commensurate with other serious crimes such as rape.⁹⁰ Cross-border prosecution remains difficult due to extradition policies and differences in legal frameworks between countries. Identifying trafficking victims also remains a persistent challenge.⁹¹

[85] <https://bangkok.ohchr.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/ONLINE-SCAM-OPERATIONS-2582023.pdf>

[86] *Ibid*

[87] NCCT and UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund. Final Survey Report, Rapid Assessment on Social and Health Impact of COVID-19 Among returning Migrant Workers in Cambodia, November 2020

[88] (NCCT 2022). The Five Year NSP-CTIP 2019–2023 Mid-Term Review, March 2022

[89] KII/FGD with sub-national authorities, women and youth, August 2024

[90] <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-trafficking-in-persons-report/cambodia/>

[91] (NCCT 2016). Mid-Term Review of the National Plan of Action, Phnom Penh

The NCCT is the primary mechanism for countering trafficking in persons and sexual exploitation. Its structures operate at both national and subnational levels and include 22 ministries, five specialized units, six inter-ministerial or institutional thematic working groups, a general secretariat and 25 Provincial Committees to Counter Trafficking. International and local NGOs are vital partners in planning, coordination, service delivery and reporting—especially at subnational levels. A mid-term review of the National Strategic Plan for Counter Trafficking in Persons 2019–2023 (NSP-CTIP) found that while progress has been made, continued efforts are needed to strengthen counter-trafficking measures and ensure mechanisms are fully functional to prevent and respond to trafficking in persons.⁹²

The National Strategic Plan for Countering Trafficking in Persons 2024–2028 (NSP-CTIP Phase IV), the fourth roadmap, was developed in line with the ASEAN Action Plan for the ASEAN Convention Against Trafficking in Persons, building on progress and lessons learned from previous national action plans. The four strategies are:

1. Prevention of all forms of human trafficking, exploitation and child sexual abuse;
2. Improving the quality and effectiveness of the criminal justice system in responding to all forms of trafficking;
3. Improving the quality and effectiveness of victim protection; and
4. Strengthening cooperation, formulation and enforcement on the implementation of laws, policies and legal standards.⁹³

While progress has occurred, work remains to ensure that counter-trafficking measures are in place and that the mechanism functions adequately to prevent and respond to trafficking in persons.

The NCCT plays a key role in facilitating cooperation with relevant countries in the subregion, region and globally to implement the following international and regional instruments: UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, the ASEAN Convention Against Trafficking in Persons, the ASEAN Programme Plan, the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children and the Working Group for Cooperation Against Trafficking in Persons in the Greater Mekong Subregion.⁹⁴ As Chair of the InterMinisterial International Relations Working Group of the NCCT, the Minister of Women’s Affairs has actively engaged in the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking (COMMIT), contributing to the government’s anti-trafficking efforts. Through this framework, an amendment to the Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation on Actions Against Human Trafficking in the Greater Mekong Subregion was drafted, and core trainers were assigned from each COMMIT country. The Standard Operating Procedures on Case Management of Repatriation and Integration of Trafficked Victims between the Royal Government of Cambodia and the Royal Government of Thailand were disseminated for official use by the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (MoSVY).⁹⁵

[92] (NCCT 2022). The Five Year NSP-CTIP 2019–2023 Mid-Term Review, March 2022

[93] NSP CTIP 2024–2028. Available at: <https://download.ncct.gov.kh/plans/ncct-action-plan-2024-2028-en.pdf>

[94] Cambodia Universal Periodic Review 2024

[95] (NCCT 2022). The Five Year NSP-CTIP 2019–2023 Mid-Term Review, March 2022

Since 2018, Cambodia has intensified its efforts to combat drug trafficking and use, with the government implementing a new drug control strategy focusing on cross-border cooperation, public awareness campaigns, drug treatment and rehabilitation and law enforcement. The National Authority for Combating Drugs has reported several accomplishments, including: increased seizures of illegal drugs, arrests and convictions of drug-related offenders, expansion of drug treatment and rehabilitation services and enhancement of cross-border cooperation.⁹⁶ Cambodia's Village Commune Safety Policy (2010), updated in 2021 to include districts after 10 years of implementation, includes measures to eliminate illicit drug dealing and human trafficking, among others, in line with the National Police Guideline No. 052 dated 21 August 2006.

3.3. Women, Peace and Cybersecurity

3.3.1 Context of Gender, Cybersecurity and the Digital World

Cybersecurity is an increasingly recognized priority area for international and national security policies, particularly given the accelerated rate of digitalization and the threats posed by emerging technologies, cyberwarfare and attacks on critical infrastructure. While the Internet has opened up broad opportunities for civic engagement, digital peacebuilding and activism—particularly for women and marginalized groups—digital platforms are increasingly used to spread disinformation, hate speech, misogynistic and radicalizing content and to facilitate illicit activities such as trafficking and sexual exploitation, which disproportionately affect women. Given the underrepresentation of women in leadership and decisionmaking roles related to cybersecurity, technology development and peacebuilding, measures to address the gendered implications of these risks are lagging behind.⁹⁷

As Cambodia advances towards a more digital society, in line with the Cambodia Digital Economy and Society Policy Framework 2021–2035, cyberattacks pose an increasing threat. The National Defence Policy 2022 recognizes that cybercrime is a major threat to Cambodia and the region, as Southeast Asia becomes a hub of economic, trade and military cooperation.⁹⁸ With the advancement of modern telecommunications and information technology, the opportunities and capabilities to launch cyberattacks have significantly increased; organized crime groups, including human and drug traffickers and arms smugglers, often exploit these tools for criminal purposes. Cyberthreats affect national security and social stability through attacks on the economy, intelligence and critical infrastructure such as hospitals, telecommunications and transportation systems.⁹⁹ Any attack on critical infrastructure could disproportionately affect women. There remains a significant gap between the rapid implementation of new technologies in Cambodia and the national capacity to govern and mitigate related cyber threats.¹⁰⁰

As of early 2024, Cambodia had over 9.66 million Internet users, representing a penetration rate of 57 per cent, and 11.65 million social media users, equivalent to 68 per cent of the total population.¹⁰¹ Fewer social media users were female (45 per cent) than male (55 per cent). However, according to the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, only 30 per cent of Cambodians possess basic digital skills to use digital systems. There is a notable urban–rural divide in Internet access, with most Internet and mobile phone subscriptions concentrated in

[96] Cambodia VNR 2023

[97] Project Brief, Women, Peace and Cybersecurity: Promoting Women's Peace and Security in the Digital World (2021–2023) for the Asia Pacific Region, UN Women ROAP

[98] MoND, National Defence Policy 2022

[99] Ibid.

[100] Cybergovernance in Cambodia: A risk-based approach to cybersecurity, CDRI, January 2020

[101] <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-cambodia>

urban centres.¹⁰² Interviews with government officials conducted for this Situation Analysis noted that the rapid modernization of technology without adequate safeguards or digital literacy increases the vulnerability of rural and remote populations—especially women, youth and Indigenous communities—to exploitation, online scams, pornography, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and account hacks. Digital rights experts have identified three main factors that make Indigenous peoples particularly susceptible to online misinformation: limited social media and digital skills, lack of accessible and reliable sources of information and continued marginalization due to their ethnic identities, such as lack of Khmer language literacy.¹⁰³ Improving digital literacy through training and awareness-raising activities, along with making information available in Indigenous languages, would help communities better protect themselves from misinformation.

Women’s access to and safety on online platforms are essential for ensuring gender-equal participation in public life. Research conducted by EngageMedia on digital safety and Internet freedom in South and Southeast Asia found that the digital attacks that were of most concern to survey respondents in Cambodia were account takeovers, online impersonation, surveillance, online harassment and hate speech.¹⁰⁴ Over 60 per cent of respondents reported having low capacity to protect themselves against such digital threats, largely due to limited understanding and critical thinking in using social media, poor digital literacy skills and inadequate education on online behaviour. A whole-of-society approach is needed to counter disinformation, hate speech and discrimination, and to uphold women’s rights to express themselves online without fear of violence, harassment or repression.

Digital technologies are central to the work of women’s CSOs and women human rights defenders. However, cyberthreats can disrupt their work, damage reputations and even cause harm or injury, further marginalizing women’s voices and participation in society and change-making processes. A 2024 UN Women study on cybersecurity threats in Southeast Asia found that women’s CSOs reported higher levels of perceived and experienced threats compared to non-women CSOs—particularly in relation to online harassment (73 per cent vs 48 per cent), trolling (71 per cent vs 55 per cent) and doxing (61 per cent vs 32 per cent).¹⁰⁵ These threats were often gendered, including misogynistic and sexualized harassment. Key vulnerabilities included lack of device protection, use of unlicensed software and inadequate organizational policies and procedures. These findings highlight the need to raise awareness of gendered cybersecurity threats, strengthen collaborative approaches to cybersecurity policy development and develop effective prevention and response measures, particularly for women’s CSOs and women human rights defenders.¹⁰⁶

In Cambodia, 2009 Criminal Code Articles 494 and 496 define and prohibit hate speech.¹⁰⁷ Nevertheless, interviews with NGOs, CSOs, rural women and youth for this Situation Analysis confirmed that women are frequently targeted by cyberbullying, online harassment, discriminatory messages or hate speech. A 2021 report on harassment on social media found that 38 per cent of respondents had experienced online harassment, with a significant number of women reporting unwanted messages.¹⁰⁸ People from the LGBTIQ+ community, activists (including women human rights defenders and women’s CSO leaders) and youth reported higher rates of online harassment than women and men,¹⁰⁹ including sexual harassment, hate speech and misogynistic remarks. Twenty per cent of women reported receiving unsolicited sexual

[102] Ibid.; UNSDCF Cambodia 2024-2028

[103] <https://anrfel.org/cambodias-indigenous-peoples-struggle-with-digital-literacy-on-eve-of-elections/>

[104] Digital Safety and Internet Freedom in South and Southeast Asia, EngageMedia 2022. Available at: <https://engagemedia.org/projects/gif-report-digital-safety/>

[105] Cybersecurity Threats, Vulnerabilities and Resilience Among Women Human Rights Defenders and Civil Society in Southeast Asia, Research Summary, UNU Macao and UN Women, May 2024. Available at: <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/cybersecurity> Cybersecurity Threats, Vulnerabilities and Resilience Among Women Human Rights

[106] Ibid

[107] ICERD, Combined eighteenth to twentieth periodic reports submitted by Cambodia under Article 9 of the Convention, 3 May 2023 (CERD/C/KHM/18-20)

[108] <https://engagemedia.org/2023/digital-safety-threats-cambodia/>

[109] Status Update: Harassment on Social Media in Cambodia; LICADHO, November 2021

messages, photographs, videos or requests, nearly double the rate reported by men (11 per cent).¹¹⁰ While women and men reported experiencing online harassment at similar overall rates, the nature and impact of the harassment often differed. Twenty-seven per cent of those who experienced online harassment reported fearing for their physical safety or that of people close to them.¹¹¹ This fear may lead women to forgo professional or public opportunities, limit self-expression and restrict their use of the Internet. International experience suggests that one effective way to increase women's engagement in technology and cybersafety is through collaboration with women's organizations and women human rights defenders.¹¹²

The final evaluation of NAPVAW III (2019–2023) highlighted stakeholder concerns regarding online and ICT-facilitated VAWG, including the associated risks of trafficking, sexually explicit images, child pornography and grooming aimed at women, girls and children.¹¹³ Interviews with government officials and women in the police force acknowledged both the growing threats posed by unregulated online technology and cybercrime, and their limited capacity to prevent and respond to such risks. These limitations include challenges in identifying perpetrators, coordinating among stakeholders and working with relevant ministries. Women leaders in law enforcement and other institutions expressed interest in gaining further training and digital skills in cybersecurity to more effectively address cybercrime and protect women, youth and children.¹¹⁴

3.3.2 National Policies, Plans and Mechanisms

Cambodia is developing its cyber governance framework and has integrated gender equality and gender mainstreaming strategies into various policies, plans and guidelines. The National ICT Development Authority, under the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, established the ICT Security Department within the General Department of ICT, with CamCERT (Cambodia Computer Emergency Response Team) as one of its offices. This department plays an important role in supporting and coordinating responses to cyber incidents across Cambodia.¹¹⁵ It also assists ministries, institutions and private sector entities in reskilling and upskilling their workforce, including women. The Anti-Cybercrime Department under the National Police, established in 2016, is the sole agency where victims of cyberattacks can lodge complaints, pursue investigations and build cases to identify and prosecute perpetrators.¹¹⁶

The Policy Framework on Digital Economy and Society outlines a long-term vision to build a vibrant digital economy and society, with a particular focus on improving women's digital literacy, access and participation in the digital sector. The Cambodia Digital Government Policy 2022–2035 highlights specific targets to promote women's digital leadership in government institutions and provides a roadmap for developing programmes for girls and women to close the gender gap in the digital sector. The policy incorporates gender perspectives to address the digital divide, with initiatives and programmes aimed at equipping women with the necessary tools and knowledge to participate fully in the digital economy.¹¹⁷

Through the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications (MPTC) Gender Mainstreaming Action Plan (GMAP) 2019–2023, the ICT Development Strategy 2020 and the Gender Promotion Guidelines in the Cambodia Academy of Digital Technology (CADT), MPTC offers basic training on ICT and

^[110] Ibid

^[111] Ibid

^[112] Action Brief: Eliminating online hate speech to secure women's political participation, UN Women

^[113] MoWA, Final Evaluation of NAPVAW III, May 2023

^[114] FGD/KII with government stakeholders, August 2024

^[115] Cybergovernance in Cambodia: A risk-based approach to Cybersecurity, CDRI, January 2020

^[116] Ibid

^[117] <https://mptc.gov.kh/en/2022/04/cambodia-digital-government-policy-2022-2035/>

smartphone usage to vulnerable groups (including women, the poor, people with disabilities, older persons and ethnic minorities) to strengthen national and subnational capacity in information technology and the digital economy.¹¹⁸ Another positive example of youth engagement in cybersecurity is the Department of ICT Security’s annual cyber competition for university students and members of the public under 30. “Stay Safe Online Cambodia” is a national campaign to raise cybersecurity awareness and enhance understanding of cyber risks.

Three important laws are currently under consideration: the draft Cybercrime Law, the draft Cybersecurity Law and the draft Law on Personal Data Protection. The draft Cybercrime Law is aimed at combating offences committed via computer systems and ensuring the safety of emerging technologies. The draft Cybersecurity Law establishes principles, rules and mechanisms to manage and safeguard Critical Information Infrastructures, ensuring the secure and sustainable delivery of essential national services. The draft Law on Personal Data Protection aims to safeguard individual privacy rights and promote the lawful and responsible use of personal data.¹¹⁹ It is important that gender perspectives are incorporated into the law review processes to ensure that women’s organizations, women’s rights and freedom of expression are protected, in line with national gender equality policies and international standards.

3.4. Women’s Participation and Leadership

3.4.1 Context of Women’s Participation and Leadership

The WPS agenda recognizes that peace is inextricably linked with gender equality and women’s leadership. The 2023 Global Gender Gap Index ranked Cambodia 93rd of 146 countries globally and 10th out of 19 countries in Southeast Asia and the Pacific. While significant gains have been made in gender parity in educational attainment and health and survival, women’s political empowerment remains low (0.374).¹²⁰

The government is committed to increasing women’s participation and leadership, with targets reflected in CSDG 5.5 (5.5.1–5.5.5) and CSDG 16 (16.7) as well as in strategies of individual ministries, institutions and programmes. The total number of female civil servants rose to 42 per cent in 2024, and the proportion of women in leadership positions—from Vice-Chief of Office to Director General and equivalent ranks—increased to 27 per cent. Women hold 14.77 per cent of Secretary of State positions and 15.69 per cent of Under-Secretary of State positions at the national level.¹²¹ While these figures indicate progress, they remain below the UN Economic and Social Council’s Resolution 1990/15, which recommends a minimum threshold of 30 per cent female representation in leadership, with a view to achieving gender parity.

Despite various initiatives and policies to promote women’s leadership, women remain underrepresented in decision-making roles, which limits the extent to which women’s priorities and perspectives are reflected in policy and governance. In Southeast Asia, concerns also persist around substantive representation—when women in leadership are not closely connected to women’s organizations or do not adequately represent the gender issues and challenges faced by different groups of women, particularly marginalized women. For example, women made up 14.4 per cent of the National Assembly in 2024, a decline from 21 per cent in 2018, although the

[118] Cambodia National Report, BPF+30, June 2024

[119] Cybergovernance in Cambodia: A risk-based approach to cybersecurity, CDRI, January 2020; Legal Analysis: Cambodia Draft Law on CyberSecurity, Access Now and ICI, 29 September 2023; Data Protection Laws of the World, Cambodia, DLA Piper, 18 January 2024

[120] World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Index 2023. Available at <https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-gender-gap-report-2023/>

[121] Cambodia National Report to BPF+20, June 2024

proportion of female senators increased to 17.7 per cent in 2024. The number of female commune/sangkat chiefs rose to 176 (10.7 per cent) in 2022, up from 130 (7.9 per cent) in 2017 and the percentage of female commune councillors rose to 22.0 per cent in 2022, up from 17.7 per cent in 2017.¹²²

This persistent low level of female leadership contributes to a lack of role models and visible success stories, which in turn slows social change and gender advancement. Interviews with women in local government noted barriers such as limited family support, family pressure to quit due to safety concerns (especially when work requires travel at night) and a lack of support from male colleagues as constraints on women's participation.¹²³

A recent study by the Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI) on women in local government revealed that the vast majority of male and female commune/sangkat council members report being satisfied with the current level of female representation on their councils, and 96 per cent believe that the government has done enough to ensure equal opportunities for women and men to serve on commune/sangkat councils.¹²⁴ The study suggests that without proactive policies, improvements in gender parity may stall, as most actors report being largely satisfied with the status quo.

Cambodian women spend more time on unpaid domestic and care work than women in any other ASEAN country. They have traditionally had to balance both paid work and family care responsibilities, which often limits their ability to engage in activities outside the home. Families continue to reinforce the gendered division of labour by socializing women and girls to take responsibility for care work.¹²⁵ The responsibilities of unpaid care and domestic work are one of the greatest obstacles to gender equality in Cambodia, yet it is rarely addressed in public policy or development efforts.¹²⁶ The highly gendered, undervalued and unsupported nature of this work hinders efforts to increase women's meaningful participation in peace and security processes, including conflict prevention, response, peacebuilding and recovery. Interestingly, findings from the recent CDRI study suggest that most women council members manage their private and public responsibilities without much difficulty.¹²⁷ At the same time, more female council members (37 per cent) than male (13 per cent) reported that family members played the biggest role in encouraging them to run for office, indicating that family support is a critical factor in increasing women's participation in public leadership.

Notwithstanding the government's commitments to increasing women's leadership, discussions with stakeholders (including national and subnational government officials, development partners, NGOs/CSOs, youth groups, academic institutions, and rural women and youth) revealed common concerns about the limited representation of women in leadership and decision-making roles in government and other public institutions. Discussion participants also cited verbal harassment, bullying and discriminatory attitudes towards women leaders in the workplace.

[122] Ibid

[123] KII/FGD with sub-national authorities, August 2024

[124] The Status of Women in Commune/Sangkat Government, CDRI, June 2024

[125] UNESCAP 2022

[126] UNCT Cambodia CCA, January 2023

[127] The Status of Women in Commune/Sangkat Government, CDRI, June 2024

The lack of involvement and exclusion of marginalized groups of women and youth, especially Indigenous, ethnic, religious and cultural minorities and the rural poor, were cited as key barriers to participating in the WPS agenda and advancing gender equality. A recent study on minority women's rights in Cambodia revealed that 61 per cent of respondents said women never or rarely participated in community-level efforts to address local issues or development. Reasons cited included unpaid care work commitments, social norms that discourage women's participation in public or political affairs, a lack of invitations or safe spaces to share views and political sensitivities, especially on land issues.¹²⁸

Interviews with several senior women leaders in government acknowledged the support of senior male leaders and colleagues as important in creating a favourable working environment and opportunities for women to advance into decision-making positions.¹²⁹ A strong example of Cambodia's commitment to promoting women's leadership was the 2nd ASEAN Women Leaders' Summit, held in October 2022 and chaired by then Prime Minister Samdech Techo Hun Sen. The Summit was held under the theme of the Declaration on Building a More Sustainable and Inclusive and Resilient Future: Unlocking Women's Entrepreneurship in ASEAN.¹³⁰ In his remarks, Samdech Techo Hun Sen emphasized that more effort is required to unlock women's potential and create an enabling environment for the growth of women's entrepreneurship in the region.

A recent study on women in commune/sangkat councils revealed that 18 per cent of female councillors cited their commune/sangkat chief as the person who most encouraged them to run for office. Yet discriminatory attitudes towards women in local government leadership persist: 46 per cent of interviewed male council members, compared to 21 per cent of female council members, contended that men make better political leaders than women.¹³¹ This indicates the need for continued efforts to address discriminatory attitudes and promote gender equality in leadership roles.

3.4.2 National Policies, Plans and Mechanisms

The national machinery for gender equality and women's empowerment includes the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) and the Cambodian National Council for Women (CNCW), and is strengthened by the Technical Working Group on Gender and Gender Mainstreaming Action Groups in line ministries and institutions.

Through its five-year strategic plans (Neary Rattanak), MoWA works to expand gender mainstreaming in national policies and programmes and to promote gender-responsive policies, strategic plans and initiatives. Under Neary Rattanak VI (2024–2028), the objective of Strategy 5: Women in Leadership and Governance is to promote gender equality and increase the participation of women and girls in decisionmaking at all levels in the public sector.¹³² Recognizing that unpaid domestic and care work is a significant deterrent to women's empowerment, MoWA has conducted research, documented lessons learned and, beginning in 2021, held consultations to develop a draft Care Economy Framework and Action Plan. This plan focuses on four key areas: care infrastructure, care services, employment-related care policies and care-related social protection.¹³³

[128] Voice and Visibility: A participatory exploration of Minority Women human rights in Cambodia, Women Peace Makers, January 2024

[129] KII with Senior Government Leaders (National Assembly and Supreme Council to the King), August 2024

[130] <https://www.mfaic.gov.kh/posts/2022-10-17-News-The-2nd-ASEAN-Women-Leaders-Summit---12-October-2022----08-39-05>

[131] The Status of Women in Commune/Sangkat Government, CDRI, June 2024

[132] MoWA, Neary Rattanak VI 2024–2028

[133] Ibid

A key national-level mechanism is the network of sectoral Gender Mainstreaming Action Groups (GMAGs) established in line ministries and institutions. These groups ensure gender mainstreaming in institutional policies, sectoral plans and programmes through Gender Mainstreaming Action Plans (GMAPs) and Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion Mainstreaming Action Plans. Most line ministry GMAPs include capacity development initiatives aimed at increasing the number of women in decision-making positions and set targets to promote women’s leadership at both the subnational and national levels.¹³⁴

Under the National Programme for Public Administration 2021–2030, ministries are implementing the Ministry of Civil Service guidelines to recruit between 20 and 50 per cent women into the civil service, with the goal of reaching 44 per cent female civil servants by 2023 and 27 per cent women in decisionmaking positions. The National Committee for Subnational Democratic Development (NCDD) Strategy and Action Plan to Increase Women in Subnational Management Positions 2024–2028, along with the Policy on Promotion of Gender Equality for Subnational Democratic Development (2019), focus on increasing the number of female civil servants and strengthening women’s leadership at the subnational level.

3.5. Women in the Security Sector, International Diplomacy and Peacekeeping Forces

3.5.1 Women in Law Enforcement in Cambodia

Women in the security sector play a key role in enhancing the operational effectiveness of law enforcement, including efforts to combat trafficking in border areas. Research on Women in Law Enforcement in the ASEAN Region identified five reasons why women’s participation is especially important:

1. Enhanced efficiency and effectiveness through a diverse and inclusive workforce, which improves performance;
2. Increased community trust and institutional legitimacy;
3. Improved responses to SGBV;
4. Promotion of gender equality and increased compliance with international and national commitments; and
5. Improved professionalism in policing.¹³⁵

Efforts have been made to improve the quality and gender-responsiveness of law enforcement in Cambodia. Police officers, as frontline service providers, have received training on GBV responses, including basic communication, coordination of services and data, community policing, gender-responsive police services for women and girls subject to violence, and the essential minimum service standards delivered through the GBV Working Groups.¹³⁶

The research report Women in Law Enforcement in the ASEAN Region confirmed the key role that women play in de-escalating conflict and building reciprocal, trust-based mechanisms between police entities and local communities. Female police officers’ participation has been linked to greater community cooperation and improved perceptions of police legitimacy.

[134] Cambodia National Report, BPFA+30, June 2024

[135] Women in Law Enforcement in the ASEAN Region, Summary Report, INTERPOL, UNODC and UN Women, 2020

[136] MoWA, Final Evaluation of NAPVAW III, May 2023

Nevertheless, the percentage of women in law enforcement remains low across ASEAN countries, ranging from 6 per cent in Indonesia to 20 per cent in the Lao People’s Democratic Republic,¹³⁷ with Cambodia at 11 per cent as of 2024. The gender gap widens at higher ranks. While Cambodia does not currently have a formal target or quota for female police officers, the Gender Mainstreaming Action Plan of the General Commissariat of National Police (2019–2023¹³⁸ and 2024–2028), in line with the Ministry of Civil Service recruitment guidelines, recommends that women comprise at least 20 per cent of new recruits.

Interviews with Ministry of Interior officials and female police officers revealed their strong commitment to engaging with and advancing the WPS agenda in Cambodia, and to continuing collaboration with the Ministry of Women’s Affairs—particularly in implementing gender mainstreaming action plans and promoting more women in leadership and decision-making roles. They expressed a desire to see more women involved and improving their digital literacy and technology skills to address the growing threats of cybersecurity and cybercrimes targeting women and girls.¹³⁹ They also emphasized the importance of having more female police officers in community administration offices, citing their demonstrated ability to respond peacefully to potential conflict situations and better serve women and families. Access to language training was considered critical for career progression and skills development, particularly for leadership positions and engagement at regional and international levels.

3.5.2 Context of Women in International Cooperation and Peacekeeping

International cooperation is a key priority under the National Defence Policy 2022. From its past as a conflict-affected country to its current role as a peace-contributing nation, Cambodia has actively supported the meaningful participation of women in peace processes and security services in conflict zones around the world.¹⁴⁰ Cambodian women have served in UN peacekeeping missions under the National Centre for Peacekeeping Forces, Mine and Explosive Remnants of War Clearance (NPMEC) since 2006.

As of December 2024, Cambodia ranked 14th out of 120 countries contributing women to UN peacekeeping operations.¹⁴¹ Among ASEAN Member States, Cambodia ranks among the top, with women comprising 21.2 per cent of its peacekeepers,¹⁴² exceeding the UN’s 15 per cent target. Cambodia fulfilled its national commitment to deploy more than 20 percent female peacekeepers in 2024, recognizing the importance of enhancing women’s participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations.¹⁴³ Despite the Royal Government of Cambodia’s active efforts to amplify the significance of UNSCR 1325 internationally, a survey revealed limited awareness within the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (RCAF): 89 per cent of respondents (93 per cent of men and 91 per cent of women) reported they had never heard of the resolution.¹⁴⁴

Key findings from the 2023 Report on Results of the Measuring Opportunities for Women in Peace Operations (MOWIP) Assessment revealed that the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (RCAF) does not impose any restrictions on women serving in peacekeeping missions; men and women serve equally in leadership roles (even after controlling for rank) and in combat and operational roles while on mission.¹⁴⁵ Most women (79 per cent) have at least one mentor within the RCAF, there are

[137] Women in Law Enforcement in the ASEAN Region, Summary Report, INTERPOL, UNODC and UN Women, 2020

[138] Ibid

[139] FGD with Mol and General Commissariat of Police, August 2024

[140] <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/opinion/gender-equality-cambodia-women-leadership-peace-and-security>

[141] https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/02_country_ranking_81_december_2024.pdf

[142] Ibid

[143] RCAF 2023 Report on Results of MOWIP Assessment, 2024

[144] Ibid

[145] Ibid

male allies who actively support women's rights and the majority of male and female respondents did not hold rigid beliefs about traditional gender roles.¹⁴⁶ Yet far more female officers (24 per cent) than men (8 per cent) reported facing social stigma if deployed to a UN peacekeeping operation—much of it from family members.

In 2023, two women were promoted to three- and four-star generals in line with the RCAF's commitment to addressing gender issues. However, despite strong government commitment, women remain underrepresented in the RCAF and in leadership roles: battalions and formed police units are typically composed of fewer than 20 per cent women, only 10 per cent of operational units include women, and only 10 per cent of women have served in a leadership position.¹⁴⁷

Pre-deployment gender training is mandatory, and 93 per cent of survey respondents (both men and women) indicated they had participated.¹⁴⁸ Gender training is not required for senior RCAF leaders, though they are kept informed of gender-related programmes and the importance of achieving gender parity. Nevertheless, less than half of senior leaders and personnel have received training on gender issues. Among leadership, 43 per cent of both men and women have attended gender training specifically designed for leaders, 19 per cent of men and 24 per cent of women have taken general gender training for officers and all ranks, and 43 per cent of men and 57 per cent of women reported having attended gender training at the basic academy level.¹⁴⁹

These figures confirm findings from other studies: where in-service gender training is not compulsory, participation among men tends to be lower.¹⁵⁰ The assessment also noted that certain gender role beliefs among RCAF leadership continue to inhibit women's participation in peacekeeping missions. The 2023 Report on the Results of the MOWIP Assessment recommended requiring leaders to undergo annual gender training and awareness sessions to reduce reliance on gender stereotypes and suggested implementing broader education and awareness programmes to address misconceptions surrounding the deployment of women to UN peacekeeping operations.

The RCAF has a legal framework in place for addressing sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), and predeployment training includes content on the RCAF Code of Conduct and SEA policy, as well as human rights and sexual harassment. Co-ed trainings are widely accepted (95 per cent), and men and women frequently work together (75 per cent), often daily (68 per cent of male and 85 per cent of female respondents). In addition, 57 per cent of respondents (49 per cent of men and 69 per cent of women) reported socializing daily with members of the opposite sex, an indicator of positive institutional social cohesion.

However, the 2023 Report on the Results of the MOWIP Assessment found that only 58 per cent of surveyed personnel were aware of the sexual harassment policy, there is no internal complaint system and a majority (60 per cent of men and 75 per cent of women) were concerned about being falsely accused of sexual harassment by a fellow officer. Gender training opportunities exist during deployment, but participation rates were lower: only 50 per cent of men and 39 per cent of women attended SEA prevention training, and just 40 per cent of men and 29 per cent

[146] Ibid

[147] Ibid

[148] Ibid, page 48

[149] Ibid, page 96

[150] Women in Law Enforcement in the ASEAN Region, Summary Report, INTERPOL, UNODC and UN Women, 2020

of women attended specialized gender courses, such as those on preventing sexual and civilian violence. The MOWIP Assessment recommended making gender and SEA training mandatory during pre-deployment, in-service and deployment stages for all personnel, and ensuring inclusion of complaint procedures and whistle-blower protections.

Focus group discussions (FGDs) with female peacekeepers revealed they are proud to serve their country, gained self-confidence through training and experience, and were recognized by superiors as skilled mediators capable of resolving local conflicts, particularly those involving women. Many credited family support as a key motivator for joining UN peacekeeping missions. Reported safety and security concerns included lack of water and hygiene supplies during deployment, vulnerability during travel and experiences of bullying or verbal harassment from local men while stationed abroad.¹⁵¹

During the FGDs, male peacekeepers acknowledged that female peacekeepers faced heightened risks of sexual harassment and abuse while serving as UN peacekeepers abroad. They also observed that prevailing gender norms and stereotypes about women's roles in peacekeeping limited the types of training and skills women received during pre-deployment. Some male peacekeepers admitted reluctance to have female colleagues accompany them on patrols, stating that they felt burdened and responsible for ensuring their female colleagues' physical safety. Others expressed concern that some women were less adept under stress (e.g. prone to panic) or lacked adequate training in vehicle or heavy equipment operation and maintenance, making them less useful during overseas missions.¹⁵²

Despite some of these concerns, there is strong support from both women and men to continue increasing the number of Cambodian women in the defence workforce, to reduce gender stereotypes by providing equal and comprehensive pre-deployment training (including in language, cybersecurity and digital literacy) and to promote more role models of women contributing to peacebuilding processes, both nationally and internationally. FGD participants also suggested that a clear plan be developed to support women in advancing to higher-level leadership roles in peacekeeping and negotiations, following examples such as Japan and Spain.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MoFAIC) recognizes the important role of women in contributing to political stability, economic and social development and peace, as well as in promoting gender equality and creating opportunities for women to serve as civil servants. MoFAIC also plays a critical role in protecting Cambodian citizens abroad, including through interventions to assist vulnerable Cambodians, especially women and children who are victims of trafficking, through cooperation with other Cambodian ministries, foreign governments, international agencies and local organizations. Priority actions include expanding opportunities for language and skills training for female civil servants and promoting more women in decision-making roles at all levels and in all regional and international forums.¹⁵³

Women are actively participating in foreign affairs and international forums. As of 2024, seven women represent Cambodia as Ambassadors across 27 Embassies and four Permanent Missions abroad, with two additional women serving as Consuls General.¹⁵⁴ The proportion of Cambodian

[151] FGD with Cambodian female peacekeepers, Phnom Penh, August 2024

[152] FGD with Cambodian male peacekeepers, Phnom Penh, August 2024

[153] CNCW CEDAW COB Action Plan 2020–2023

[154] Including China, India, the United Kingdom, Vietnam, the Republic of Korea, Belgium and UNESCO

women participating in diplomatic affairs stands at 16 per cent, slightly above the global average of 15 per cent.¹⁵⁵ Despite this above-average rate of representation in high-level international decision-making, additional efforts are needed to further accelerate the advancement of women in leadership positions across international and diplomatic spheres in pursuit of gender equality.

3.5.3 National Policies, Plans and Mechanisms

The National Defence Policy 2022 outlines Cambodia's commitments to safeguarding peace, security and stability in the region and contributing to UN peacekeeping operations globally. The Ministry of National Defence has a gender mainstreaming policy led by a Gender Mainstreaming Group, with key actions including efforts to increase the number of women in leadership and decision-making positions. Women currently serve as Secretary and Under-Secretary of State in the Ministry of National Defence.

At the national level, efforts to promote the role of women in UN peacekeeping operations are led by the National Centre for Peacekeeping Forces, Mine and Explosive Remnants of War Clearance (NPMEC). Predeployment training consists of three programmes: (1) the National Training Programme, which is mandatory; (2) the Core Pre-deployment Training Materials Programme, a UN-designed training; and (3) the Specialized Training Materials Course. According to the 2023 Study on the MOWIP Assessment, the vast majority of men (80 per cent) and women (79 per cent) have attended pre-deployment training at the National Peacekeeping Training Centre. MoFAIC is responsible for monitoring and coordinating with NPMEC and the Cambodian National Coordination Committee on the deployment of troops to UN peacekeeping missions.

As part of ongoing judicial reforms, Cambodia established the National Authority for Alternative Dispute Resolution (NAADR) in 2023 and has integrated gender perspectives into its policy framework and operational guidelines.¹⁵⁶ This includes specific training programmes to sensitize mediators and other personnel on gender issues, ensure the participation of women as mediators and decision-makers and provide specialized support for disputes involving gender-based issues. The inclusion of gender equality and women's concerns reflects a commitment to a more equitable and supportive environment for individuals seeking dispute resolution services.

A key objective of the NAAADR is to collaborate with women's organizations and CSOs to provide comprehensive support to women involved in disputes.¹⁵⁷ NAAADR is a relatively new mechanism aimed at promoting quality, efficiency and swiftness in dispute resolution through reconciliation outside the court system and bringing the system closer to communities, in line with the Leave No One Behind principle. A recent study on minority women's rights revealed that confusion around the permissibility of local alternative dispute resolution in cases of GBV is compounded by a lack of effective guidance for local authorities and by the fact that such dispute resolution is also practised by actors including family members, cultural or religious leaders and police officers.¹⁵⁸

[155] <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/opinion/gender-equality-cambodia-women-leadership-peace-and-security>

[156] Royal Decree NS/RKT/1123/2381

[157] Cambodia National Report, BPfA-30, June 2024

[158] Voice and Visibility: A participatory exploration of Minority Women human rights in Cambodia, Women Peace Makers, January 2024

As an open economy, Cambodia is vulnerable to external changes and shocks, as evidenced by the COVID19 pandemic. Cambodia’s Economic Diplomacy Strategy 2021–2023 established linkages between foreign policy, diplomacy and national economic development, while recognizing the importance of ensuring economic security.¹⁵⁹ Although the Pentagonal Strategy Phase 1 (2024–2028) and many sectoral policies and frameworks recognize women’s economic empowerment and contributions to peace and security, further integration of gender perspectives and WPS lens would strengthen the Economic Diplomacy Strategy 2024–2028 by highlighting women’s roles in peace, security and economic development at national, regional and international levels.

3.6 Women and Climate, Peace and Security

3.6.1 Climate Change and Natural Disasters

Climate security refers to the idea that climate change poses significant threats to national and global security, and that its impacts can lead to social, political and economic instability. Security concerns linked to climate change include impacts on food, water and energy supplies, increased competition over natural resources, loss of livelihoods, climate-related disasters and forced migration and displacement. Women are often among the most vulnerable to climate change impacts, yet they are not merely among those affected—they are also powerful agents of change and play a crucial role in climate security.

The WPS agenda and the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on WPS provide a framework for integrating gender analysis into climate security architecture. This includes understanding women’s vulnerabilities to climate change and recognizing the intersection between women’s empowerment and climate change adaptation in order to harness women’s potential to build sustainable and resilient futures.¹⁶⁰

Cambodia is among the countries most vulnerable to climate change (ranked 149 of 182 in the 2020 NDGAIN Index), partly due to its dependence on rain-fed agriculture to sustain livelihoods, vulnerability to flooding and the impacts of rising temperatures on human health and productivity, all compounded by low adaptive capacity. Given its economic reliance on agriculture, floods and droughts are recognized as severe threats to national development, with preparedness identified as a top national security priority.¹⁶¹ Climate change impacts, coupled with environmental degradation, can exacerbate risks of conflict and social division and are likely to disproportionately affect rural women, who represent an increasing proportion of rice farmers.¹⁶² Climate change may also aggravate existing gender inequalities, increasing women’s vulnerability in conflict-affected regions. For instance, resource scarcity can lead to increased gender-based violence and exploitation.¹⁶³

The Cambodian Women’s Resilience Index found that women are less resilient than men during disasters. Causal factors include unstable and insecure income sources; limited access to protective infrastructure, shelters and early warning systems; poor housing; and weak social safety nets and networks.¹⁶⁴ Furthermore, climate change and disasters increase the amount and change the nature of unpaid care work in affected regions. Restrictive gender norms are reflected

[159] MoFAIC, Economic Diplomacy Strategy 2021–2023

[160] NTS Insight, no IN24-01, May 2024; Engaging WPS in Climate Security – ASEAN Perspectives, by Tamara Nair

[161] Royal Cambodian Armed Forces, National Defence Policy. Available at: <https://dot.mod.gov.kh/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Cambodias-Defence-Policy-EN.pdf>

[162] United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for Cambodia 2024–2028, March 2024. Available at: <https://cambodia.un.org/en/252482-united-nations-sustainable-development-cooperation-framework-2024-2028>

[163] UN Women 2024; Women, Peace and Climate Security in Asia and the Pacific, In Brief

[164] Reference GMP5FA 2022–2026; UN Women and CDRI (2021)

in the vastly unequal distribution of unpaid domestic and care work, with women carrying out, on average, 90 per cent of this work.¹⁶⁵ Gender and climate change challenges are also linked to unequal access to public and private services, financial resources, health care and rights, natural resources, education and economic opportunities and participation in decision-making processes.¹⁶⁶

A recent UN Women study, *Women, Peace and Climate Security in Asia and the Pacific*, shows that climate change poses serious threats not only to human health and well-being, but also to peace and security.¹⁶⁷ It forces communities to redefine what peace and security mean for themselves and future generations. The effects of climate change, environmental degradation and natural resource scarcity are increasingly contributing to insecurity and instability—both globally and in Cambodia. These challenges affect security through various pathways, including changes in migration and displacement patterns; intensified competition over land, water and other resources; reduced food security and deteriorating livelihoods; public health threats; shifts in the blue economy; and new patterns of organized crime, including environmental crimes.¹⁶⁸ Understanding the gender dimensions of climate-related security risks is essential, not only to avoid exacerbating vulnerabilities but also to identify opportunities for promoting gender equality, strengthening climate resilience and sustaining peace.

The government acknowledges that, in the context of climate change and migration, rural women carry responsibility for domestic work and agriculture and are reliant on natural resources to support their families. However, most women lack access to comprehensive information on environmental protection, climate resilience and green development.¹⁶⁹ Empowering women through education, economic opportunities and leadership roles has a profound and wide-ranging impact on building community resilience, preventing conflict and supporting sustainable peace. When women have access to resources and economic power, they are more able to invest in sustainable practices and technologies that mitigate climate impacts. Economic empowerment also helps reduce poverty, which is a major driver of climate vulnerability. Economically empowered women are better able to support their families and communities during climate-related crises. Women in leadership positions can influence policy and decision-making to ensure gender perspectives are reflected in climate action plans.

Female leaders often prioritize community well-being and sustainable development, leading to more inclusive and effective resilience strategies. Their participation in peacebuilding processes ensures that women's specific needs and contributions are recognized, helping to promote more comprehensive and enduring peace agreements.¹⁷⁰ Moreover, when male leaders also understand and integrate gender perspectives into their work, it creates a more enabling and supportive environment to accelerate the WPS agenda.

Key environmental challenges affecting Cambodia include: poor surface water management practices, inadequate land allocation and use, deforestation and soil degradation due to unsustainable agricultural practices. Interviews with women's and youth groups and with subnational authorities in three provinces confirmed the negative impacts of climate change

[165] Gender Equality Deep Dive for Cambodia, Common Country Analysis, UNCT, 2022
[166] Ibid., reference Goh, A.H.X (2012), "A literature review of the Gender-Differentiated Impacts of Climate Change on Women's and Men's Assets and Well-Being in development Countries" pp.10
[167] UN Women 2024; *Women, Peace and Climate Security in Asia and the Pacific*, In Brief
[168] Ibid
[169] Cambodia VNR 2023
[170] UN Women 2024; *Women, Peace and Climate Security in Asia and the Pacific*, In Brief

(droughts, floods and extreme heat) on women’s economic security and family resources. In some cases, this has led to tensions within communities and with local authorities over access to scarce water resources for agriculture. Environmental degradation and deforestation have also undermined livelihoods and contributed to disputes with authorities over land use rights, particularly in Indigenous communities.¹⁷¹ Women’s involvement in peacebuilding and climate adaptation strategies can enhance resilience and stability. Their unique perspectives and knowledge can help foster more sustainable and inclusive solutions.¹⁷²

3.6.2 National Policies, Plans and Mechanisms

Evidence shows that policies and programmes that integrate gender considerations into climate action and peacebuilding efforts are essential. This includes ensuring women’s participation in decision-making processes at all levels and addressing the specific needs of women in climate and security policies. The Royal Government of Cambodia has made promoting climate change resilience and green development a priority through its Pentagonal Strategy 2024–2028 and National Strategic Development Plans.

Pentagonal Strategy Phase 4 (Resilient, Sustainable and Inclusive Development) includes promoting gender equality, ensuring environmental sustainability, enhancing readiness for climate response and advancing the green economy.¹⁷³ Gender equality and women’s empowerment have been prioritized in the climate change agenda, including green growth. As a member of the National Council for Sustainable Development (NCS) and the National Committee for Disaster Management (NCDM), the Ministry of Women’s Affairs (MoWA) advocates for gender-responsive policy development and implementation related to green growth, climate change and disaster risk reduction.¹⁷⁴

MoWA also successfully advocated for the integration of gender perspectives into environmental and climate change adaptation policies, particularly through the formulation and coordination of the Master Plan on Gender and Climate Change 2018–2030, in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment and the Department of Climate Change. The update to Cambodia’s Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) includes gender-focused adaptation measures and incorporates gender impact assessments and evaluations.

Key policies and plans developed and implemented include the Gender and Climate Change Strategic Plan 2013–2023 and the Action Plan on Gender and Climate Change 2019–2023. Gender mainstreaming in climate change has also been incorporated into strategic plans and policies of priority ministries, including those covering environment, rural development, agriculture, health, water resources and public works and transportation.¹⁷⁵

The NCDM is responsible for implementing the National Action Plan on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) 2019–2023 in line with the Law on Disaster Management (2015) and Decision No. 001 (2019). Article 18 of the law specifically mentions women, calling on authorities to “pay high attention to the needs of women, children, elderly, handicapped and disabled persons” during

[171] KII/FGD with women, youth and sub-national authorities in 3 provinces, August 2024

[172] UN Women 2024; Women, Peace and Climate Security in Asia and the Pacific, In Brief

[173] RGC Pentagonal Strategy Phase 1: 2024–2028, pg. 25

[174] MoWA 2024, Neary Rattanak VI (2024–2028)

[175] Cambodia National Report BPFA+30, June 2024

disasters. Articles 35–37 outline individuals’ rights and obligations regarding protection, information, resources and participation in DRR and climate change adaptation (CCA) activities. The NCDM recognizes the importance of gender mainstreaming in climate change action, as well as the vital roles of women, children and youth.¹⁷⁶ The RCAF also plays a key role in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations and is mandated to cooperate with all relevant authorities, particularly the NCDM.¹⁷⁷

Several gender-responsive strategies, plans and guidelines on DRR and CCA have been introduced. The Guideline for Mainstreaming Gender in Inclusive Disaster Management (2021) provides direction on integrating gender and social inclusion throughout the disaster management cycle, including prevention, mitigation, preparedness and response.¹⁷⁸ The recently endorsed National Action Plan on Disaster Risk Reduction (NAP-DRR) 2024–2028 further integrates gender and inclusiveness and strengthens the role of women in disaster management.

The National Strategy on Disaster Risk Management for Health 2020–2024 supports the needs of women and girls by incorporating the Inter-Agency Working Group on Reproductive Health in Crisis Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP). This package addresses maternal, sexual and reproductive health services, as well as the prevention and management of gender-based violence in emergencies.¹⁷⁹

The Environmental and Natural Resources Code of Cambodia, adopted on 29 June 2023, replaces the 1996 Environmental Protection and Natural Resources Management Law. The new code strengthens provisions for conserving natural resources and wildlife, building climate resilience, promoting renewable energy use and developing sustainable urban environments with the capacity to effectively manage waste and pollution. It explicitly references gender equality, the participation of women and non-discrimination, thus ensuring that particular attention is paid to the needs of vulnerable or at-risk groups. The Code of Environment and Natural Resources Strategic Plan for Local Community Development 2024–2028 includes the establishment of Community Protected Areas (CPAs) and the AC Local Community Women’s Network.¹⁸⁰

3.7 WPS Agenda and Access to Economic Security, Livelihood Opportunities, Natural Resources and Human Security

3.7.1 Key Security Issues in Women’s Economic Participation

Women play an essential role in peace and security activities, including in accelerating economic revitalization after conflict and contributing to sustainable peace.¹⁸¹ In Cambodia, the agriculture sector is critical for supporting economic growth and reducing poverty by strengthening the rural economy and promoting sustainable development. Cambodia has one of the highest rates of women’s labour force participation in the region, at 78.9 per cent.¹⁸² However, in the agriculture sector, most women are engaged in low-skilled and low-paid roles. Unpaid family work accounts for 25.7 per cent of rural women’s labour, more than twice the rate of rural men (11.5 per cent). Most female household members working in agriculture are not paid for their contributions.¹⁸³

[176] UNCT Common Country Analysis, January 2023, p. 42. Available at <https://cambodia.un.org/en/239810-cambodia-common-country-analysis>

[177] MoND, National Defence Policy 2022

[178] NCDM 2021. Guideline for Mainstreaming Gender in Inclusive Disaster Management 2021

[179] UNFPA Cambodia 2021

[180] Cambodia’s National Report, BPfA+30, June 2024

[181] UN Women Action Brief: Women, Peace and Security and COVID-19 in Asia and the Pacific

[182] CSES 2021; ASEAN Statistical Yearbook 2023, Jakarta, ASEAN Secretariat, December 2023

[183] CSES 2021

Many rural women engage in additional economic activities by owning and operating micro-enterprises or participating in a range of income-generating work. These activities, whether seasonal, informal, fulltime or part-time, provide supplementary household income and improve income security. However, they rarely offer rural women decent or formal employment opportunities.¹⁸⁴ Interviews with rural women and youth engaged in agriculture, as well as women migrant workers, cited a lack of local economic opportunities and difficulty finding decent seasonal work near their homes. These challenges drive food and livelihood insecurity and often result in migration, either within the country or abroad, in search of employment.¹⁸⁵

Migration is a vital economic lifeline and a driver of social mobility for many Cambodian families. Among total migration flows, rural migration accounts for 13 per cent, rural–urban migration 57 per cent and cross-border migration 31 per cent, with Phnom Penh and Thailand as the¹⁸⁶ most common destinations. Four out of five migrants are between the ages of 17 and 35. While migration has enabled many young people to find jobs and support their families, it also raises concerns around limited skills development, school dropout, the impacts on accompanying children and the safety and vulnerability of migrants. Interviews with government officials and NGOs/CSOs highlighted the risks of unsafe migration for rural women seeking decent employment, as well as the negative effects on women’s safety and family stability. This persists despite the existence of gender-responsive government policies and plans addressing safe labour migration, support for women in agriculture, women’s economic empowerment programmes and technical vocational education and training.

The Gender Mainstreaming Policy and Strategic Framework in Agriculture 2022–2026 highlights that women are more directly engaged with the natural environment than men. Women are responsible for food production, child care and feeding and are essential to ensuring household food security and nutrition. However, their representation in public decision-making remains low, their views are often overlooked and their voices are rarely heard in environmental and natural resource governance.¹⁸⁷ Women also have fewer opportunities for capacity building and have less access to reliable information and education than men.¹⁸⁸

Landmines and unexploded ordnance are a devastating legacy of Cambodia’s decades of conflict, with an estimated 6 million landmines planted, mainly in the north-western provinces. The Government has prioritized clearance of landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) and has integrated mine action into key national strategies to reduce poverty and support socio-economic development. Significant progress has been made in reducing mine and ERW casualties, and Cambodia aims to become mine-free by 2025.¹⁸⁹

In line with the Gender Mainstreaming Guidelines in Mine Action, Cambodian women are playing an increasingly important role in mine clearance, with over 800 women in operational positions in 2023—34 per cent of the operational workforce.¹⁹⁰ Around 22 per cent of women now hold managerial or supervisory roles, breaking barriers in a traditionally male-dominated field. Despite these gains, landmines continue to pose serious risks to life and development. The impacts of landmines are experienced differently by women, girls, boys and men. Women are

[184] FAO 2024

[185] FGD/KII with rural women and youth, August 2024

[186] WFP 2019, Vulnerability and Migration in Cambodia

[187] UN Women and CDRI 2021: State of Gender Equality and Climate Change

[188] Ibid

[189] Cambodia VNR 2023

[190] https://www.mineactionreview.org/assets/downloads/Cambodia_Clearing_the_Mines_2024.pdf

more often affected indirectly, taking on caregiving responsibilities for survivors and assuming greater financial burdens.¹⁹¹ Girls are also more likely to be removed from school or married early when family resources are strained following a landmine incident. Men and boys account for 80 per cent of landmine casualties in Cambodia, but injured women and girls face disproportionate long-term challenges due to gendered roles, differential access to services and prevailing social attitudes.¹⁹² In areas with unexploded ordnance, women and girls also face heightened risks of sexual abuse and exploitation. Beyond the direct threats to safety, landmines exacerbate food insecurity, limit movement and undermine livelihoods. Women in affected families experience physical and mental health burdens as they care for survivors and manage increased responsibilities.

3.7.2 Land, Natural Resources and Livelihoods

The rich biodiversity and ecosystems of Cambodia are critical to rural livelihoods and provide essential ecological and economic value to the country's development. However, Cambodia's rapid economic growth and transition to a market-oriented economy are increasingly straining its natural resources.¹⁹³ As in many countries, rural women in Cambodia are the primary gatherers and suppliers of natural resources and depend on them for sustenance and livelihoods. Research by UN Women on gender, peace and security in natural resource management shows that women's rights and access to natural resources and their benefits remain tenuous, and their voices and perspectives are often absent from decision-making spaces.¹⁹⁴ Furthermore, when natural resources are contested, competed over or under pressure, women have limited space or power to participate in negotiating, deciding or mediating outcomes.

The Royal Government of Cambodia has made considerable efforts to address land disputes, which have long been a source of conflict in the country.¹⁹⁵ As of November 2023, the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction (MLMUPC) had issued 7,163,764 land titles and resolved a total of 12,676 cases of all types of land disputes, with an additional 2,636 cases under review.¹⁹⁶

Approximately 40 per cent of resolved land dispute cases included women as primary or secondary parties, and the MLMUPC has made efforts to ensure that their rights and interests are protected throughout the resolution process. Ten per cent of agricultural land is owned by women-headed households,¹⁹⁷ while women hold 18 per cent of all land titles and 68 per cent are held jointly.¹⁹⁸ Despite notable progress in gender equity in land tenure, many rural women still lack information about land rights and the land titling process and gender biases continue to prevent them from exercising their rights.¹⁹⁹ As a result, land-related conflicts persist.

Several initiatives aimed at fostering greater social cohesion and community engagement have been launched with government support, such as the Community Peacebuilding and Conflict Mitigation Project, led by the Alliance for Conflict Transformation.²⁰⁰ The project recognizes the critical role that women play in building and sustaining peace and aims to create an environment where their contributions are valued and supported. However, challenges remain in fully realizing community rights—especially women's rights—to access natural resources, with rural

[191] Gender and Diversity in the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC), UNIDIR. Available at: https://unidir.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/UNIDIR_Factsheet_Gender_and_Diversity_in_the_APMBC.pdf

[192] Available at: <https://www.undp.org/cambodia/speeches/technical-working-group-mine-action>

[193] UNCT Cambodia CCA, January 2023

[194] Gender, Peace and Natural Resource Management, Research Brief, UN Women, December 2022

[195] Cambodia VNR 2023

[196] Cambodia Universal Periodic Review 2024

[197] CSES 2021

[198] FAO 2024

[199] Ibid.

[200] Cambodia VNR 2023

women living in poverty disproportionately affected due to their domestic responsibilities being closely tied to local natural resources.

While Cambodia is increasingly engaging communities in natural resource management, less than 10 per cent of forests and protected areas are currently under community management.²⁰¹ Women's participation in decision-making processes remains limited: only 21.5 per cent of women are represented in the management committees of forestry groups, although half of the overall committee membership is female.²⁰²

Cambodia's Indigenous peoples, who are often geographically isolated, reliant on natural resources for their traditional livelihoods and without legal title to their ancestral lands, are increasingly vulnerable to economic marginalization due to land loss. Under the policy on land registration and land use rights of Indigenous communities, only 42 out of approximately 500 communities had received access to collective land titles as of early 2024. Efforts have been made to revise the format and procedures for collective land registration to make the process faster and more accessible.²⁰³

Indigenous women in rural areas carry a particularly heavy burden, performing household chores, farming, raising animals, weaving bags and mats and collecting forest foods, especially during times of food shortages.²⁰⁴ These communities are also affected by economic land concessions, mining concessions and hydropower dams, which often result in forced displacement and provoke land disputes.²⁰⁵ Cambodian Indigenous Peoples continue to face discrimination and displacement from their lands, threatening their existence as distinct groups.²⁰⁶ Research suggests that more inclusive, genderresponsive processes would more effectively address concerns related to women, sustainable forestry and environmental management.²⁰⁷

Interviews with stakeholders expressed concern that some of Cambodia's economic policies, particularly those tied to rapid growth and profit motives, could lead to instability or conflict if they strain local resources. Tensions may arise if different economic policies displace communities or undermine local livelihoods.²⁰⁸ Interviewed stakeholders, including government officials, NGOs and youth groups, called for continued efforts to raise awareness of Indigenous rights and protect Indigenous land tenure. These efforts should align with government policies and mechanisms such as the Department of Ethnic Minority Development under the Ministry of Rural Development, the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Ethnic Minorities Development and the Inter-Ministerial Committee for Highland Peoples Development.

Natural resource management plays a vital role in mitigating climate change impacts by promoting sustainable practices and offering mechanisms to manage scarce and threatened resources, helping to prevent the escalation of security risks. Gender equality and women's empowerment are central to this process, both in terms of impact (as women are disproportionately affected by environmental degradation and insecurity) and empowerment (in terms of their ability to participate in decision-making related to resource governance and risk mitigation). There is significant potential for women to play greater leadership roles in sustainable resource management, climate-resilient community development and in

[201] UNCT Cambodia CCA, January 2023

[202] FAO 2024

[203] Cambodia Universal Periodic Review 2024

[204] UN Women and CDRI (2021); ref AIPP 2013. "Research on the roles and contributions of Indigenous women in sustainable Forest Management in Mekong Countries/Asia"

[205] Hennings, A., and Pen, A. (2021) Cambodia: Context and Land Governance

[206] CERD "Concluding Observations on the combined fourteenth to seventeenth reports of Cambodia", 12 December 2019

[207] UN Women and CDRI 2021; FAO 2024

[208] KII with development partners, Phnom Penh, August 2024

fostering peace and stability.²⁰⁹ Research by UN Women on gender, peace and natural resource management shows that more inclusive governance, with women’s full participation and attention to their knowledge and needs, helps keep communities more peaceful and secure.²¹⁰

3.7.3 National Policies, Plans and Mechanisms

The Royal Government of Cambodia is implementing environmental policies and governance reforms to transform the current model of economic development into one that is more sustainable and better equipped to simultaneously meet the needs of people and ecosystems, recognizing that the two are not mutually exclusive.²¹¹

Under the Pentagonal Strategy Phase 1, women’s economic empowerment remains a priority and is supported through key sectoral policies and strategies, including Neary Rattanak VI 2024–2028, Strategy 1: Women’s Economic Empowerment, the National Employment Policy 2015–2025, the National Technical Vocational and Education Training Policy 2017–2025, the National Strategy for Informal Economy Development 2023–2028 and the National Financial Inclusion Strategy (NFIS) 2019–2025. Further efforts are being made to promote women’s entrepreneurship through expanded education and technical and vocational training.²¹² While there are clear gendered strategies, the COVID-19 crisis highlighted the importance of also addressing the care economy to reduce women’s economic vulnerabilities before, during and after crises and emergencies.²¹³

Today, Cambodia has a relatively advanced legal framework for land tenure and management. The 2001 Land Law establishes a system for the systematic titling of land, creates a comprehensive dispute resolution system and governs lease rights. The 2008 Land Policy Declaration introduced a change in land titling processes to strengthen women’s access to land tenure by providing for the registration of the names of both spouses. Certificates of land titles can be granted by the local Cadastral Administration Office. However, many women continue to struggle to register land in their name due to a lack of information about land rights and land titling processes under the law.²¹⁴

The Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction has several mechanisms to effectively address complaints related to land and construction, including:

- The National Authority for Land Dispute Resolution (State Land);
- Cadastral Commissions at district, provincial and national levels (untitled land);
- A mobile land dispute resolution team (systematic registration areas);
- Twenty-five non-judicial land dispute resolution teams (one in each province); and
- A Construction Inspection Team (construction disputes and site safety).

[209] Gender, Peace and Natural Resource Management, Research Brief, UN Women, December 2022

[210] Ibid

[211] UNCT Cambodia CCA, January 2023

[212] Cambodia National Report, BPFA-30, June 2024

[213] MoWA, Neary Rattanak VI 2024–2028

[214] FAO 2024; reference Cambodia Land Law 2008

Women make up at least one-third of each working group under the Land and Construction Dispute Resolution Team.²¹⁵

Land lies at the centre of debates about Cambodia's socio-economic development, and agriculture remains the main source of income for about three-quarters of the population. The Gender Mainstreaming Policy and Strategic Framework in Agriculture (GMPSFA) 2022–2026 is gendertransformative in design. It provides detailed analysis of gender and agriculture, including constraints and challenges faced by women in labour, production, harvesting, processing, marketing and agri-food supply chains; their disproportionate responsibilities for household work and childcare; their limited voice in decision-making at household and community levels; and the gendered impacts of climate change. The strategy also includes objectives and indicators to address and measure changes in gender equality and women's empowerment.²¹⁶

The National Environment Strategy and Action Plan (2016–2023), overseen by the National Council for Sustainable Development (NCSA), aims to ensure efficient management of environmental and natural resources in alignment with the 2030 Agenda. It also seeks to mobilize resources for sustainable livelihoods with a focus on vulnerable groups (particularly women, children and minority communities) who are disproportionately affected by climate-related and other shocks. The Ministry of Environment has recently developed an Environmental Protection Strategic Plan 2024–2028 as part of its broader Circular Strategy on Environment 2023–2028. This strategy emphasizes improving environmental quality, strengthening legal frameworks and building institutional capacity to address pressing environmental challenges.

The Cambodian Mine Action and Victim Assistance Authority (CMAA), established in 2000, acts as the national regulatory authority for mine action. It coordinates demining policies and procedures and launched its third Gender Mainstreaming in Mine Action Plan 2021–2025. The CMAA's quality management teams and mine action planning units have all received training on implementing gender mainstreaming. By the end of 2023, women made up a quarter of CMAA employees and 19 per cent of management staff.

The CMAA also has a Gender Mainstreaming Team that coordinates with the technical reference group on gender. In 2023, Cambodia became the first country to introduce a national standard on mainstreaming gender and diversity in mine action.²¹⁷ The new Cambodian Mine Action Standard (CMAS) reinforces the Gender Mainstreaming in Mine Action Plan. Strong synergies exist between Cambodia's mine action policies and procedures under CSDG 18 and the WPS agenda. These include women's participation in mine action activities; prevention through gender- and diversity-sensitive risk education; protection via victim assistance that supports the rights of survivors and addresses the high levels of SGBV faced by women with disabilities; and relief and recovery through land clearance, which can help redress gender imbalances and empower women in communities.²¹⁸

[215] CNCW COB Action Plan 2020-2023, MLMUPC submission

[216] MAFF 2022

[217] https://www.mineactionreview.org/assets/downloads/Cambodia_Clearing_the_Mines_2024.pdf

[218] Gender and Diversity in the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC), UNIDIR. Available at: https://unidir.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/UNIDIR_Factsheet_Gender_and_Diversity_in_the_APMBC.pdf

3.8 Women and Social Cohesion

3.8.1 Women and the Socio-cultural Context

According to the 2019 General Population Census, Cambodia had a total population of 15.6 million, with 39.4 per cent residing in urban areas. The median age of the population was 27 years, with 29.4 per cent aged 15 years or younger and 8.9 per cent aged 60 years or older. Nearly 62 per cent of the population was between the ages of 15 and 59. In 2019, 4.9 per cent of the total population over five years old (5.5 per cent of females and 4.2 per cent of males) reported some form of disability. Khmer was the mother tongue of 95.8 per cent of the population, with ethnic minority languages spoken by 2.9 per cent (equivalent to almost 450,000 people).²¹⁹

Cambodia is known for its rich cultural diversity, including ethnic minorities and Indigenous Peoples. Approximately 22 Indigenous groups, totalling around 220,000 people, primarily reside in five or six northeastern provinces. Other major ethnic minority groups include Cambodian Muslims or Cham (approximately 370,000 people) and Vietnamese (over 90,000 people), while Laotians, Thais and Khmer Kampuchea Krom communities collectively account for about 25,000 people.²²⁰

Cambodia has taken significant steps to recognize and protect the rights of ethnic minority and Indigenous groups through policies and initiatives aimed at promoting inclusivity, preserving cultural heritage and addressing issues such as land rights. These include, but are not limited to, the Cambodian Constitution (1993), the Law on Protecting Cultural Heritage (1996), the National Policy on Development of Indigenous Peoples (2009), the Environment and Natural Resources Code (2023)²²¹ and multilingual education programmes under the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport.

Articles 265 to 270 of the 2009 Criminal Code explicitly prohibit all forms of racial discrimination, including on the basis of ethnicity, nationality or race, in line with Article 1 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD). Citizens have the right to file complaints, and awareness-raising sessions on the complaints procedure have been conducted by the Ministry of Justice in collaboration with NGOs, development partners and the Cambodian Human Rights Committee. However, no complaints of racial discrimination have been filed with domestic courts.²²²

Indigenous and other ethnic minority women and girls in Cambodia remain vulnerable and face multiple forms of discrimination, marginalization and exposure to violence. Within their own communities, gender stereotypes often discourage them from speaking out, pursuing higher education, working outside the home or representing their communities. They also face negative stereotypes in broader Cambodian society.²²³ According to the Thematic Report of the 2019 Population Census on Ethnic Minorities, fertility rates were higher among ethnic minority populations than in the general population.

[219] NIS 2020, General Population Census of the Kingdom of Cambodia

[220] ICERD, Combined eighteenth to twentieth periodic reports submitted by Cambodia under Article 9 of the Convention, 3 May 2023 (CERD/C/KHM/18-20)

[221] <https://opendevelopmentcambodia.net/topics/ethnic-minorities-and-indigenous-people-policy-and-rights/>

[222] ICERD, Combined eighteenth to twentieth periodic reports submitted by Cambodia under Article 9 of the Convention, 3 May 2023 (CERD/C/KHM/18-20)

[223] *Voice and Visibility: A participatory exploration of Minority Women's human rights in Cambodia*, Women Peace Makers, January 2024

Interviews with subnational authorities, women and youth for this situation analysis confirmed that early marriage remains prevalent among ethnic minority communities and has negative impacts on young girls, families and communities, despite government and community development efforts to prevent child marriage and teenage pregnancies.²²⁴ In a recent study on minority women's rights, among those surveyed, 100 per cent of Indigenous women, 79 per cent of ethnic Vietnamese women, 72.9 per cent of Cham women and 45.2 per cent of Khmer Kampuchea Krom women reported seeing early or child marriages in their communities.²²⁵

From a human security perspective, the health and safety of women and girls are often more at risk during conflict or emergencies, and early marriage compounds these risks. Conflict and emergencies can also normalize the use of violence in resolving family problems, with potential spill-over effects into broader community conflict. Promising outcomes from the Action Plan to Prevent Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy in Ratanak Kiri province (2017–2021, extended to 2023), including reductions in early marriage and teen pregnancy, have prompted consideration of a National Action Plan for 2024–2030.²²⁶ Globally, women and girls at risk of statelessness or without clear legal status face heightened risks of sexual and gender-based violence, human trafficking and exploitation, risks that stem from structural barriers such as lack of access to education, travel restrictions due to fear of authorities, inability to gain formal employment and difficulty acquiring land ownership.²²⁷

In Cambodia, Articles 9 and 10 of the 2018 Law on Nationality define the rules for acquiring citizenship for children born in the country. The Government also launched the National Strategic Plan on Identification (2017–2026), with the vision that “Everyone is identified.”²²⁸ However, a 2024 NGO study on minority women's human rights found that many ethnic minority women continue to face difficulties securing legal documentation at the local level, despite favourable national policy provisions.²²⁹ This implementation gap contributes to insecurity, instability and potential conflict in affected communities.

The Cambodian Constitution affirms the equal rights of men and women and guarantees freedom of movement (Articles 31 and 40). Yet a recent study revealed that 64 per cent of ethnic minority women respondents reported they do not feel they have the same freedom to go outside the home as men.²³⁰ Interviews with Cham women in Kampong Chhnang province indicated that they feel they have limited access to information on government programmes due to low levels of engagement in community activities and limited representation of the Cham community in government structures. Without adequate representation or participation, they risk becoming isolated and having their concerns overlooked, which can, in turn, foster insecurity and tensions within and between communities.

MoWA has established a special Working Group on the Inclusion of Vulnerable Women and Girls, led by MoWA senior leadership, to strengthen internal coordination and foster collaboration with other relevant agencies. This aims to ensure that Neary Rattanak strategies are inclusive, mainstreamed and responsive to the needs of diverse vulnerable groups of women and girls, including women with disabilities, Cham women, older women, lesbians and Indigenous women and girls.²³¹ The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport supports school education

[224] KII/FGD with sub-national authorities, women and youth groups, August 2024

[225] *Voice and Visibility: A participatory exploration of Minority Women's human rights in Cambodia*, Women Peace Makers, January 2024

[226] Cambodia National Report for BPFA+30, June 2024

[227] Laura van Wass et al., *The Nexus between Statelessness and Human Trafficking in Thailand* (Oisterwijk: Wolf Legal Publishers, 2015); Laura van Wass et al., *A methodology for exploring the interaction between statelessness and human trafficking* (Oisterwijk: Wolf Legal Publishers, 2015).

[228] ICERD, Combined eighteenth to twentieth periodic reports submitted by Cambodia under Article 9 of the Convention, 3 May 2023 (CERD/C/KHM/18-20)

[229] *Ibid*

[230] *Voice and Visibility: A participatory exploration of Minority Women's human rights in Cambodia*, Women Peace Makers, January 2024

[231] MoWA Neary Rattanak VI, 2024-2028

programmes in Cham communities, including by upholding the right of women to wear Muslim headscarves in public schools, although many community members still fear losing their cultural identity, including their language.²³²

Women and girls with disabilities often face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, which increase their vulnerability and exposure to harm and hinder their full realization of human rights. These risks are particularly acute during conflict or disaster, when women and girls with disabilities are significantly affected, and in post-conflict or transitional contexts, where their participation in conflict resolution, service delivery, justice mechanisms and development processes is often overlooked or marginalized.²³³

Cambodia has demonstrated a strong commitment to disability rights, evidenced by its ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol, the signing of the Marrakesh Treaty, and the 2009 Law on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The National Disability Strategic Plan 2019–2023 provides a robust framework for action across all ministries and agencies at national and subnational levels, with a strategic objective to promote gender equality and women’s leadership, as well as disability inclusion and quality services for survivors of gender-based violence.²³⁴ The integration of Gender Equality and Disability Inclusion (GEDI) training packages for service providers is an example of effective collaboration between MoWA, the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (MoSVY) and NGOs/CSOs to address the intersection of GBV and disability.²³⁵

Under the National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women (NAPVAW), lesbian, bisexual and transgender women are identified as a priority vulnerable group at risk of violence. Discussions with LGBTIQ+ persons conducted as part of this study revealed the extent of hate speech and comments, online bullying and harassment, as well as ongoing discrimination in access to public services. These experiences negatively affect the personal security and mental health of LGBTIQ+ individuals, leading to loss of self-worth, low self-esteem and depression, and also contribute to broader societal tensions.

Cambodia’s 2019 Universal Periodic Review Recommendations Nos. 45, 47, 51, 52, 54 and 55 call for the development of an anti-discrimination law or policy against LGBTIQ+ persons, including the legalization and enforcement of marriage equality. Such measures would advance gender equality and uphold the rights of LGBTIQ+ individuals in Cambodia while aiming to reduce hate speech and hate crimes.

[232] Ibid

[233] <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/working-toward-disability-inclusion-women-peace-and-security-agenda-arab-region>

[234] <https://www.undp.org/cambodia/projects/programme-promote-disability-inclusion-ppdi>

[235] Cambodia National Report, BPfA+30, June 2024



Photo: UN Women/Lim Sophorn

4. Stakeholder Mapping Analysis

Part of the Situation Analysis exercise was to identify current and potential stakeholders involved in various aspects related to the WPS agenda in Cambodia, including government, NGOs/CSOs, academic and research institutions and development partners. Below is a preliminary description of stakeholders, to be further elaborated during the development of a NAP-WPS in Cambodia.

4.1 Government Ministries / Institutions and Mechanisms

All government ministries and institutions in Cambodia have a role to play in advancing the WPS agenda. As a starting point, it is important to identify relevant institutions and prioritize their involvement in the development and implementation of the NAP-WPS in order to maximize efforts and minimize duplication. Ministries and institutions may contribute at different stages of planning, implementation and monitoring. The following is a tentative list.

Table 2: Government Ministries/Institutions

Ministry/Institution	Role and potential contribution to the WPS agenda and the NAP-WPS in Cambodia
National Assembly (8th Commission, Women's Caucus)	Accelerating the WPS agenda through the ASEAN RPA-WPS; promoting women's role in peace and conflict prevention, including women's leadership; and advocating for the development of a NAP-WPS in Cambodia.
Council of Ministers (CoM)	Providing overall strategic direction and guidance for the development of the NAP-WPS in line with the ASEAN RPA-WPS, including oversight of implementation monitoring.

<p>Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA)</p>	<p>Leading and coordinating efforts on gender equality and women's empowerment, and gender mainstreaming across priority sectors to advance the WPS agenda in Cambodia. This includes promoting women's rights, participation and leadership; championing the ASEAN RPA-WPS at the regional level and through localization; and promoting the development of a coordination mechanism among line ministries and institutions, with support from the National Assembly, Council of Ministers and other stakeholders.</p>
<p>Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MoFAIC)</p>	<p>Promoting the WPS agenda in international and regional peace and security sectors; integrating a gender perspective and WPS lens into the Economic Diplomacy Strategy 2024–2028 to strengthen economic security and international cooperation;²³⁶ and promoting women's leadership within MoFAIC and UN PKO. There is strong interest in leading the development of a NAP-WPS in Cambodia, including establishing an effective coordination mechanism focused on external and diplomatic relations.</p>
<p>Ministry of National Defence (MoND)</p>	<p>Integrating the WPS agenda into the National Defence Policy, where relevant, with a focus on national, regional and international peace, stability and cooperation. This includes the security sector and UN PKO, and increasing women's full and meaningful participation and leadership in PKO and the broader security sector. There is strong interest in leading the development of a NAP-WPS in Cambodia and creating an effective coordination mechanism.</p>
<p>Ministry of Interior (Mol)</p>	<p>Integrating the WPS agenda into national security frameworks, wherever relevant, including regional and international cooperation to address transnational crime, cybercrime, human trafficking, drug trafficking and other forms of organized crime through the NCCT. Ensure effective implementation of the Village/ Commune Safety Policy (VCSP). There is strong interest in leading development of the NAP-WPS and creating a coordination mechanism focused on domestic security and women's participation and leadership.</p>

[236] MoFAIC, Economic Diplomacy Strategy 2021-2023; Available at: https://www.mfaic.gov.kh/files/uploads/S2QKPXXAOTPW/%5BEn%5D_Economic_Diplomacy_Strategy.pdf

Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF)	<p>Ensuring senior-level engagement in planning, budgeting and resource allocation for the NAP-WPS, including leveraging gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) to enhance implementation and promote women’s participation and leadership.</p>
Ministry of Environment (MoE)	<p>Addressing the intersection of climate, peace and security, including exploration of how climate change and environmental impacts affect men and women differently. Ensuring that women and marginalized groups are meaningfully included and their concerns addressed. Senior-level engagement is expected for the NAP-WPS and coordination mechanisms, with a focus on enhancing women’s full participation and contributions to climate change response and environmental sustainability.</p>
Ministry of Information (MoINF)	<p>Integrating the WPS agenda into cybersecurity, social media and online safety, including protection against disinformation, hate speech and violence against women on digital platforms. Senior-level engagement is expected in Pillar 1: Prevention and Pillar 3: Protection.</p>
Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS)	<p>Promoting youth engagement and strengthening links between the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) and WPS agendas. This includes enhancing peace education, drawing on conflict history for prevention and recovery and promoting digital literacy for women and girls. Senior-level engagement is expected in Pillar 1: Prevention.</p>
Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (MoSVY)	<p>Providing prevention and support services for vulnerable groups, including marginalized women, Indigenous communities, migrant women workers, trafficked women and girls, and those affected by humanitarian crises. Senior-level engagement is expected in Pillar 2: Protection and Pillar 4: Relief and Recovery.</p>
Ministry of Health (MoH)	<p>Addressing VAWG, SGBV and associated health risks, particularly during crises and emergencies. Senior-level engagement is expected in Pillar 2: Protection and Pillar 4: Relief and Recovery.</p>
Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MoLVT)	<p>Supporting labour migration and TVET, including efforts to promote decent work, safe migration and digital literacy for women and girls. Engagement is expected across Pillar 1: Prevention, Pillar 2: Participation, Pillar 3: Protection and linkages to Pillar 4: Relief and Recovery.</p>

<p>National Institute of Statistics, Ministry of Planning (NIS, MoP)</p>	<p>Conducting research and surveys relevant to the WPS agenda, including producing gender statistics and data on climate change and disaster risk reduction, to inform policy and programme implementation.</p>
<p>National Committee for Disaster Management (NCDM)</p>	<p>Coordinating the NAP-DRR to ensure the full and meaningful participation of women and marginalized groups in climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction. Engagement is expected in Pillar 2: Participation and Pillar 4: Relief and Recovery.</p>
<p>National Centre for Peacekeeping Forces, Mine and ERW Clearance (NPMEC)</p>	<p>Contributing to national, regional and international peace, security and stability through MoFAIC and MoND in UN PKO, including efforts to increase women's full and meaningful participation and leadership. This also involves promoting gender equality and showcasing role models for women in UN PKO and across the defence and security sectors.</p>
<p>Cambodian Mine Action and Victim Assistance Authority/ Cambodian Mine Action Centre (CMAA/CMAC)</p>	<p>Supporting gender-responsive mine action and ERW clearance in-country and contributing to regional and global efforts. These actions help improve the security of women, families and communities and support implementation of the WPS agenda across all four pillars.</p>
<p>Cambodian National Council for Women (CNCW)</p>	<p>Responsible for monitoring and reporting on CEDAW implementation through a coordination mechanism with government line ministries and institutions, as well as for advocacy at the Parliament and Prime Minister level. Monitoring of the NAP-WPS should align with CEDAW commitments.</p>
<p>Cambodian Human Rights Committee (CHRC)</p>	<p>Responsible for monitoring and reporting to the UN on Cambodia's human rights situation, including obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), with coordination across government ministries and institutions, including with the Cambodian National Council for Women (CNCW).</p>

4.2 Civil Society

4.2.1 International NGOs and CSOs

Civil society in Cambodia is robust and dynamic, with the majority of CSOs focusing on service delivery and various forms of development.²³⁷ As of the end of 2022, over 2,600 associations and almost 3,500 NGOs were registered with the Ministry of Interior,²³⁸ with an additional 300 international NGOs registered with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.²³⁹ There are also an estimated 25,000 community-based organizations and at least 110 networks operating at the national and subnational levels.

International NGOs and CSOs are engaged across nearly all aspects of Cambodia's socio-economic development, including peacebuilding and reconciliation. They actively support the majority of government policies, plans and coordination mechanisms. The Ministry of Interior recognizes CSOs' contributions to national development, particularly in enhancing good governance, human rights, the judicial system, education, health, natural resources and the environment.²⁴⁰ For example, over 30 NGOs/CSOs are involved in the NAPVAW and TWGG-GBV, over 20 support the NSP-CTIP and the NCCT and over 10 work directly with the NCDM and the NAP-DRR. Many others collaborate with line ministries on national and sectoral action plans relevant to the WPS agenda, including in agriculture, climate change adaptation, natural resource management, mine action, health, social affairs, rural development, women's economic development and youth development. Ongoing efforts to expand civic space remain essential to enable CSOs to meaningfully contribute to Cambodia's socio-economic development and the advancement of the WPS agenda.

Under Target 17.7 of the SDGs, States are encouraged to promote effective partnerships among the public sector, private sector and civil society. Below is a summary of NGOs/CSOs that are engaged—or have expressed interest in contributing to—the NAP-WPS in Cambodia. Some are potential contributors whose interest should be explored further. This list will be revised as needed.

Table 3: NGOs and CSOs

Organizations	Role and potential contribution to the WPS Agenda and the NAP-WPS in Cambodia
International NGOs (i.e. TAF, AAC, possibly CARE International, Plan International)	Potential to provide technical, financial and capacity-building support in partnership with government and local NGOs for the NAP-WPS, with a focus on women's rights, participation, leadership, gender equality, peacebuilding and local conflict resolution. Meaningful participation in inclusive planning and development of the NAP-WPS, including capacity-building and implementation.

[237] Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), by Laura Mooney and Lana Baydas, "Cambodian Civil Society at a Critical Juncture," June 2018

[238] <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/501218514/over-6100-associations-and-ngos-recorded-in-cambodia-as-of-december-2022/>

[239] <https://www.mfaic.gov.kh/Page/2021-02-10-List-of-Foreign-NGOs-Which-Signed-MoU-with-the-Ministry-of-Foreign-Affairs-and-International-Cooperation>

[240] <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/501218514/over-6100-associations-and-ngos-recorded-in-cambodia-as-of-december-2022/>

<p>Local NGOs/CSOs, including women's networks (Women Peace Makers, Alliance for Conflict Transformation, CPCS, GADC, Silaka, Kdei Karuna, TIC, CIPA, CDPO, possibly TPO, etc.)</p>	<p>Participation in NAP-WPS development, including potential advisory roles within coordination mechanisms, implementation of priority actions and ensuring that marginalized women and communities are represented. May also contribute to monitoring and reporting, in line with NAP-WPS. Focus on women's rights and gender equality, including participation, leadership, community peacebuilding, local conflict and dispute resolution, economic rights, disability inclusion, VAWG/SGBV and education on peace and justice at the local level.</p>
<p>Youth organizations and networks (i.e. UNYAP, KYA, YRD, etc)</p>	<p>Meaningful participation in the development and local implementation of NAP-WPS initiatives, with a focus on ensuring that marginalized youth voices are included. Emphasis on gender equality and peace education for youth, including community peacebuilding.</p>

Note: This list is not exhaustive and will be further developed during the NAP-WPS process

4.2.2 Academic/research institutions, Media and other stakeholders

As part of civil society, academic institutions, media and religious leaders can play an important role in informing, educating and advancing the WPS agenda in Cambodia, focusing on gender equality and women's rights for peace and stability with the broader public, students and communities.

Table 4: Academic Institutions, Media and Religious Leaders

Academia/Media/Religious Leaders	Role and potential contribution to the WPS Agenda and the NAP-WPS in Cambodia
<p>CSHL/RULE and other Universities</p>	<p>Engage with the NAP-WPS process to inform priority actions on women's rights and gender equality, and promote education on peace, justice and conflict resolution, including the Khmer Rouge and genocide history. This could include research, education or seminars to raise public and student awareness of the WPS agenda.</p>
<p>Cambodia Development Resource Institute and other research institutions</p>	<p>Engage with or conduct research and studies on WPS issues in Cambodia to inform the development of the NAP-WPS. This includes research on women's leadership and participation, the generation of gender data and evidence to guide policymaking and implementation and support for public awareness initiatives.</p>

Media	Participate in awareness-raising and dissemination of the WPS agenda and NAP-WPS, including efforts to promote safe and responsible social media use, digital literacy and access to reliable information and women's rights.
Religious Leaders	Disseminate information on the WPS agenda through local authorities and communities. Support community peacebuilding and public engagement with NAP-WPS in Cambodia.

4.3 Development Partners and Other Stakeholders

United Nations Agencies, Development Partners, Embassies and the ASEAN community are critical actors in support of the WPS agenda. Below is a tentative list of these stakeholders for advancing the NAP-WPS in Cambodia.

Table 5: Development Partners and UN Agencies

Organization	Role and potential contribution to the WPS Agenda and the NAP-WPS in Cambodia
UN Women	Lead technical support for the development and implementation of normative policy frameworks to advance the WPS agenda in Cambodia, including alignment between the ASEAN RPA-WPS and the national NAP-WPS. This includes advancing women's rights and gender equality (SDG 5); providing technical assistance to integrate GBV into post-conflict settings, disaster risk reduction and humanitarian response; raising awareness of climate–peacesecurity linkages and the WPS agenda; promoting gender mainstreaming in climate and disaster resilience; and convening civil society actors, including NGOs and CSOs.
UNRCO	Leverage UN agency engagement with the NAP-WPS, particularly in relation to SDG 5, SDG 16 and the Leave No One Behind principle, through high-level political advocacy, support for NGO/CSO participation and coordination with government and bilateral agencies to advance the WPS agenda.
UNFPA	Provide potential technical support as co-chair of the UN Gender Theme Group, with a focus on gender equality, women's SRHR, SGBV/VAWG in post-conflict and humanitarian settings (GBViE), youth engagement and improving disaggregated data collection and analysis for development.

<p>UNDP</p>	<p>Provide potential technical support as co-chair of the UN Gender Theme Group, with thematic expertise on women's rights, the care economy, economic rights, climate change/DRR, mine action and disability rights.</p>
<p>UN OHCHR</p>	<p>Offer potential technical support to the NAP-WPS, with a focus on the law and justice sector and marginalized groups of women, including a convening role with NGOs and CSOs.</p>
<p>UNODC</p>	<p>Provide potential technical support for government action on women in law enforcement, transnational and cross-border crime, human trafficking and drug trafficking.</p>
<p>Embassies (Including but not limited to Canada, Australia, United States of America, Republic of Korea, Japan, the Philippines and other ASEAN countries)</p>	<p>Country embassies are well-positioned to provide valuable technical, financial and political support for advancing the WPS agenda in Cambodia, including the implementation of the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on WPS and the forthcoming national action plan. Potential contributions span a wide range of thematic areas, including economic empowerment, education, mine action, restorative justice, parliamentary engagement, climate change, disability and social inclusion, community peacebuilding, youth engagement and participation in UN peacekeeping operations. Many embassies also support local civil society efforts, particularly NGOs and youth-led initiatives. While entry points may differ across embassies, all contributions should be aligned with national and regional frameworks and coordinated with relevant stakeholders.</p>

SECTION III

Opportunities, Challenges and Lessons Learned



Photo: UN Women/Lim Sophorn



5. Promising Practices, Opportunities and Challenges

5.1 Opportunities

The development of the NAP-WPS in Cambodia will build on alignment with the government's existing national action plans and strategies to ensure consistency with national policy priorities and reinforce synergies among the various plans. The NAP-WPS will complement these existing frameworks at the national and local levels by introducing a peace and security dimension and applying a WPS lens. It will also serve to elevate and revitalize the gender equality agenda by emphasizing its critical links to government priorities on peace and security.

For example, Cambodia has made strong policy commitments to increase the deployment of women peacekeepers to at least 20 per cent by 2024, exceeding the UN target of 15 per cent. This target was achieved in May 2024 and surpassed in December 2024, with 21.4 per cent women. This milestone reflects the government's recognition of the vital role women play in sustaining peace and preventing conflict. Furthermore, the Ministry of Women's Affairs is well positioned to advance the WPS agenda in Cambodia, in close collaboration with other government ministries and institutions, due to its strong leadership, commitment and role as Chair of the ASEAN Advisory Group on WPS.

The NAPVAW, NSP-CTIP, NAP-DRR, Gender and Climate Change Strategic Plan (2013–2023), and the Action Plan on Gender and Climate Change (2019–2023)—all supported by established coordination mechanisms such as the TWGG-GBV, NCCT, NCDM and NCSO—have helped strengthen collaboration among stakeholders, accelerate progress towards gender-related goals and increase awareness of the importance of addressing these issues to improve the situation of women, girls and society as a whole. National action plans are effective tools for accelerating Cambodia's progress towards the SDGs, and the NAP-WPS will contribute to advancing national peace and security priorities.

NAPVAW, for example, has served as an effective framework for multi-sectoral coordination between and with government stakeholders, NGOs/CSOs and development partners at national and subnational levels to address violence against women and girls. The TWGG-GBV and GBV working groups have provided platforms for coordination and collaboration on GBV prevention and response. Lessons learned from the final evaluation of NAPVAW III (2019–2023) relevant to the NAP-WPS development and implementation include the importance of clearly defined Terms of Reference for coordinating bodies and members, outlining roles and responsibilities for planning, implementation and reporting, while also highlighting the need for more systematic data collection, progress measurement, monitoring, analysis and reporting on outputs and outcomes, as well as stronger budget planning.²⁴¹

Trafficking in persons is addressed under the National Strategic Plan to Counter Trafficking in Persons (NSP-CTIP), led by the NCCT. Its priority areas complement those of the NAPVAW. The Minister of Women’s Affairs chairs the NCCT Inter-Ministerial Working Group on International Relations and the MoWA Department of Legal Protection actively participates in NCCT working groups, ensuring synergies between NAPVAW and NSP-CTIP. The Ministry of Women’s Affairs is strategically positioned to promote coherence among the NAP-WPS, NAPVAW, NSP-CTIP and NAP-DRR.

National action plans in Cambodia have consistently enhanced multi-stakeholder coordination and implementation of activities to advance gender equality and women’s rights. Promising practices include involving government ministries and institutions, NGOs/CSOs, the private sector, media, academic and research institutions and religious leaders in collaborative planning and implementation centred around shared goals such as ending violence against women and girls or preventing human trafficking.

UN Women plays a central role in advancing the WPS agenda at the global, regional and national levels. Globally, it serves as the lead agency for WPS and, building on the work of its predecessor entities, has been instrumental in promoting UNSCR 1325 and its successor resolutions. This includes working in close partnership with the women’s movement and drawing on decades of UN system engagement in diverse contexts. Regionally, UN Women leads support to ASEAN in the development and implementation of the ASEAN RPA-WPS, offering Cambodia opportunities to exchange good practices and lessons learned across Southeast Asia through the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific. At the national level, UN Women has long been a key government partner in advancing gender equality, including through its support to MoWA in developing and implementing key policies such as NAPVAW and in monitoring CEDAW implementation.

UN Women also maintains strong ties with civil society and women’s organizations in Cambodia, ensuring the meaningful inclusion of marginalized women in development processes, and building on its longstanding service and engagement at the national and subnational levels. As a key member of the UN Gender Theme Group in Cambodia, UN Women collaborates with other UN agencies to promote gender equality and women’s rights in the WPS context, in line with UNSCRs, CEDAW and the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

[241] MoWA, Final Evaluation of NAPVAW III, May 2023

Many NGOs and CSOs have proven to be effective implementers at the grassroots level, engaging diverse groups of women, youth and girls at the community level, including those from marginalized groups, and working closely with subnational authorities to advance gender equality in line with national policies and plans. These organizations have provided essential services, supported capacity-building efforts and contributed valuable feedback and lessons learned to improve policies, guidelines, standard operating procedures and other mechanisms to promote women's rights in Cambodia.

5.2 Challenges

Non-traditional peace and security threats affect more than women's security; these issues can also undermine social cohesion and overall peace and security in Cambodia. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic—now recognized as a non-traditional peace and security threat—posed unique challenges to international, regional and national stability. In Cambodia, the pandemic threatened social cohesion and community-level security and increased the risk of GBV for women. A key lesson from the global pandemic, including within the ASEAN region, was that no country or community could be safe without women's full and meaningful participation. If women were excluded from decision-making and from designing and implementing solutions such as vaccine delivery, masking and social distancing, the virus would continue to spread, putting everyone at greater risk and compounding existing security threats. Cybersecurity threats provide another example. Online hate speech, bullying, harassment and discrimination targeting women, girls and other marginalized groups can incite violence against individuals as well as entire communities, eroding social trust and posing serious threats to the safety and security of society and the country as a whole.

Despite stakeholder acknowledgement of the importance of—and having already-established—monitoring, evaluation and learning frameworks within national action plans and strategies, such as the NAPVAW and the NSP-CTIP, monitoring implementation and measuring results remain challenging due to resource limitations, capacity constraints and overly ambitious sets of activities. Systematic mechanisms for data collection, analysis, monitoring and reporting are often lacking, making it difficult to assess the extent of implementation or measure progress against stated objectives.²⁴²

The government, with MoWA spearheading efforts, has made notable progress in advancing gender equality through gender mainstreaming in national and sectoral plans and adopting multi-stakeholder coordinated approaches. However, many government officials still perceive gender and women's rights activities as MoWA's responsibility alone. This perception may discourage other ministries and institutions from contributing resources to gender equality efforts.²⁴³ A study on women in law enforcement across ASEAN found that training on gender and human rights is rarely compulsory, and where it is not mandatory, men rarely attend—either because they are not invited or due to lack of interest.²⁴⁴

Despite considerable achievements in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, Cambodian women continue to face challenges. Social norms, particularly around unpaid care work and family responsibilities, continue to restrict the full development of women's potential and limit their participation in economic, social, public and political life.

[242] MoWA, Final Evaluation of NAPVAW III, May 2023

[243] Ibid

[244] Women in Law Enforcement in the ASEAN Region, Summary Report, INTERPOL, UNODC and UN Women, 2020



Photo: UN Women/Lim Sophorn

6. Lessons Learned from Other Countries' Experience with NAP-WPS

6.1 Global Experiences on NAP-WPS Development and Implementation

Since 2006, 108 UN Member States (56 per cent) have adopted a NAP-WPS, and eight subregional organizations, including ASEAN, have developed regional action plans. These are important milestones in advancing the WPS agenda. In the Asia-Pacific region, 13 countries have developed at least one NAP-WPS. However, many States, which hold primary responsibility for implementation, continue to face challenges in translating commitments into meaningful action.

The 2015 Global Study on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 acknowledged evidence of progress but found that many NAPs were frequently unrealistic or lacked the political will and resources needed for effective implementation. Weak monitoring, limited accountability and poor coordination across government bodies and governance levels were identified as persistent challenges.²⁴⁵ A common weakness of early NAPs was their attempt to address the breadth of the WPS agenda without sufficient depth. For example, Norway's fourth NAP-WPS narrowed its focus to four overarching objectives: peace and reconciliation processes, implementation of peace agreements, operations and missions and humanitarian efforts.²⁴⁶

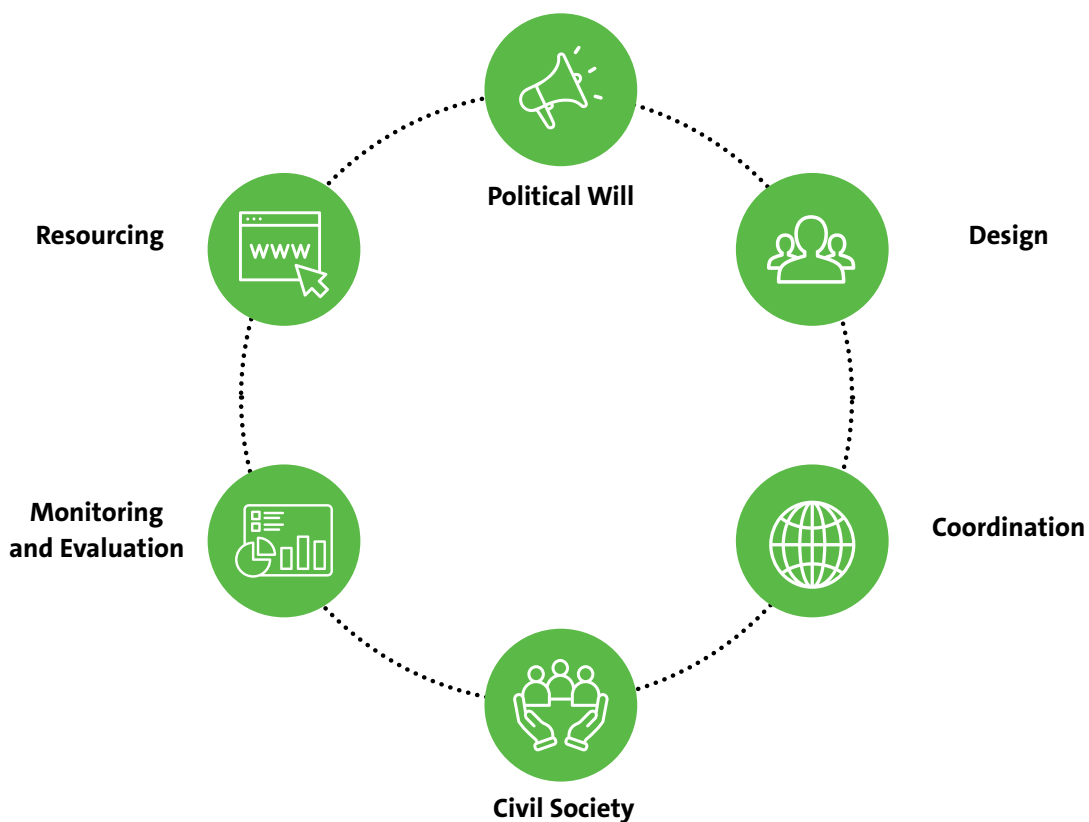
Drawing on lessons learned, a high-impact methodology has been developed to guide governments in designing NAP-WPS frameworks that support successful implementation. This methodology identifies core elements and guiding principles that should be embedded as good practice in developing national action plans.²⁴⁷

[245] <https://wps.unwomen.org/about/>

[246] Towards Full Implementation of WPS Agenda in Vietnam, Report to Contribute to the Possible Development of Vietnam's First National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. Mirsad Miki Jacevic, UN Women ROAP, December 2022

[247] Ibid

Figure 1: Simplified High-Impact Framework of NAP-WPS



Source: *Towards Full Implementation of WPS Agenda in Vietnam*, UN Women, December 2022

Table 6: High-Impact Framework of NAP-WPS Description

HIGH IMPACT FRAMEWORK	
<p>1. Strong and sustained political will</p>	<p>The purpose of the NAP-WPS is to provide a framework for coordination, activity development and accountability. All relevant ministries must integrate NAP-WPS activities and objectives into their own plans. Capacity-building and technical support among actors are essential to strengthen ownership and political will.</p>

<p>2. Localizing the NAP</p>	<p>Local Action Plans (LAPs) play a vital role in building the capacities of local actors to support NAP-WPS implementation and monitoring. It is important to strengthen their capacities to track progress and ensure LAPs are integrated into local government plans and budgets.</p>
<p>3. An inclusive planning process that leads to a design focused on results</p>	<p>The planning process should be inclusive and participatory. The NAP-WPS should build on existing national policy and normative frameworks linked to gender equality, peace and the development agenda at the national and local levels. Consultations should involve key stakeholders, including CSOs, women's networks, international partners, academia and the private sector.</p>
<p>4. Considering local WPS priorities and contexts</p>	<p>The NAP-WPS must be aligned with the broader national context and connected with other national plans and processes. It should also incorporate international norms while reflecting national and local specificities.</p>
<p>5. An established coordination system for implementation</p>	<p>Strong coordination and leadership are essential for effective NAPWPS development and implementation. Cross-government coordination helps generate political support and raise awareness across ministries. Clear lines of responsibility, defined tasks for each actor and high-level political commitment within government are critical.</p>
<p>6. Public accountability and transparency mechanisms</p>	<p>The NAP-WPS must include a system of accountability based on specific, measurable goals, regular public reporting, evaluations, parliamentary oversight and CSO involvement.</p>
<p>7. A defined and inclusive role for civil society, sociopolitical organizations and academia</p>	<p>Developing a NAP-WPS is an opportunity to establish regular dialogue between government and civil society to advance the WPS agenda. It is essential to design a strategy for civil society engagement that is inclusive, flexible and context-specific.</p>

8. Identified and allocated implementation resources	Each NAP-WPS should include a clear funding framework. Costing a realistic action plan is a key step in preparing the budget. Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) is particularly important for advancing the WPS agenda and preventing bias in resource allocation.
9. A properly resourced M&E and reporting system aligned with the national context	Structured monitoring and reporting systems that are aligned with national frameworks and sustained technical and financial support for the M&E processes are essential. Reporting through CEDAW helps strengthen the link between the WPS agenda and gender equality.
10. Responding to emerging challenges	Lessons from COVID-19 underscore the need to integrate and adapt the NAP-WPS to evolving contexts, including pandemic-related and other emerging threats.

Source: *Towards Full Implementation of WPS Agenda in Vietnam, UN Women, December 2022*

6.2 National Action Plan Models

6.2.1 Standalone or Integrated Plans

Depending on the national context, each country must determine the most appropriate approach to implementing the WPS agenda. Some countries have integrated WPS issues and priorities into existing laws, policies, plans and national security or defence strategies. Others have developed standalone national action plans through consultative processes. Both approaches have advantages and disadvantages.

Integrating WPS into existing plans may require fewer resources and help mainstream WPS across national frameworks. However, there is a risk that WPS issues are treated as an “add-on” and fail to receive the attention or resources needed for full implementation.

Standalone plans offer the benefit of raising national awareness and commitment to WPS issues, focusing implementation within national goals and often enabling easier monitoring of progress. However, they may require more resources and effort up front, risk duplication of efforts and face challenges in implementation if not properly resourced.²⁴⁸

Cambodia’s earlier experience with integrating WPS elements into NAPVAW (2014–2018) resulted in only a few target activities, mostly limited to capacity building on GBV prevention and response for the police and security sectors. This experience, combined with the cross-cutting nature of WPS issues across sectors and institutions, supports the case for developing a standalone NAP-WPS to ensure a broader and more effective inclusion of WPS priorities in alignment with the ASEAN RPA-WPS.

[248] Localization Toolkit and Guidelines for the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Women, Peace and Security, Jakarta, ASEAN Secretariat, December 2023

6.2.2 Inward, Outward or Mixed Approach

Translating the WPS agenda into national policies depends on each country's context. Three types of NAPs are typically found:

1. Outward-looking plans that focus mainly on foreign policy;
2. Inward-looking plans that focus on domestic priorities; and
3. Mixed approach plans that combine outward-looking by focusing on foreign policy and inward looking by focusing on domestic issues.

Donor countries often develop outward-focused NAPs driven by foreign policy and led by ministries of foreign affairs. Inward-focused plans are typically overseen by ministries of women's or gender affairs or interior ministries.²⁴⁹ There is growing recognition of the interlinkage between foreign and domestic peace and security priorities. For example, Canada's first NAP-WPS (2011) was primarily outward-looking, while its third NAP-WPS (2023–2029) focuses more on implementing WPS principles both domestically and internationally.²⁵⁰

Table 7: Different types of NAPs-WPS

Inward-Looking Plans	Outward-Looking Plans	Mixed Approach Plans
Uganda	Canada	Indonesia, Philippines, Timor Leste
Sudan	Norway	Thailand (national measures and guidelines on women, peace and security)

Source: *Localization Toolkit and Guidelines for the ASEAN RPA-WPS*

6.2.3 Coordination Models

Establishing an effective internal coordination mechanism and selecting a lead government agency to guide planning are essential for securing broad institutional buy-in. Cross-sectoral collaboration is key to successful coordination and implementation. Examples of effective lead agencies in ASEAN include the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (Indonesia), the Office of the Presidential Advisor on the Peace Process (Philippines) and the Ministry of Internal Security (Timor-Leste).²⁵¹

Different coordination models include involvement of one or multiple institutions. Approximately two-thirds of NAPs have been developed by a consortium of ministries. Coordination can be structured at two levels:

- **Strategic level:** A high-level body made up of deputy or assistant ministers or department leads. This group sets strategic objectives, provides political support, promotes government-wide participation and acts as the primary accountability mechanism.

[249] Towards Full Implementation of WPS Agenda in Vietnam, Report to Contribute to the Possible Development of Vietnam's First National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. Mirsad Miki Jacevic, UN Women ROAR, December 2022

[250] https://wpsfocalpointsnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/WPS-FPN-TLS_Internal-External-NAPs_July-2022.pdf

[251] Localization Toolkit and Guidelines for the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Women, Peace and Security, Jakarta, ASEAN Secretariat, December 2023

[252] Ibid.

- **Operational level:** Consists of technical staff designated as WPS/gender focal points within their respective ministries or departments. This group manages programme implementation in coordination with other actors.²⁵²

Some coordination models include:

- **Vertical coordination:** A single agency manages both coordination and implementation (e.g., Nigeria);
- **Horizontal coordination:** A small group of key ministries shares implementation responsibilities (e.g., Bosnia and Herzegovina);
- **Oversight coordination:** An executive body, such as the National Security Council, oversees implementation (e.g. United States); and
 - **CSO Engagement:** CSOs are directly involved in steering committees or working groups (e.g., Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nepal).

6.2.4 Applicability to Cambodia

Evidence suggests that NAPs on WPS are effective tools for reducing gender gaps, enhancing national security and promoting long-term peace.²⁵³ The WPS agenda seeks to protect women's rights and ensure their full realization. Interviews with stakeholders involved in ASEAN RPA-WPS and knowledgeable about Cambodia's NAP-WPS process identified key opportunities for Cambodia, including:

- **Strengthening** policy coherence across ministries and institutions to advance gender equality and women's empowerment, while improving implementation, accountability and transparency.
- **Promoting** women's meaningful roles in conflict prevention, resolution and recovery. Given Cambodia's post-conflict history and reconciliation efforts, the WPS agenda presents an opportunity to increase women's participation in peacekeeping missions and leadership across sectors such as diplomacy, security, defence and governance at all levels.
- **Integrating** a WPS lens to address non-traditional peace and security challenges. WPS is not limited to conflict-affected contexts. Cambodian stakeholders have recognized emerging threats, such as transnational and cybercrime targeting women through online scams and harassment, technology-facilitated GBV and the spread of misinformation, disinformation and misogynistic hate speech, which undermine social cohesion, peace and security. These risks disproportionately affect women, especially women from marginalized groups.

Based on their own experiences developing and implementing NAPs on WPS, several Embassy Officials interviewed identified the following components of an effective NAP-WPS: 1) A shared vision of and commitment to gender equality and women's rights as key to prosperity and security, 2) Strong internal coordination mechanisms with multiple working levels, 3) Recognition of the interconnectedness between domestic and international issues, 4) Engagement of NGOs/CSOs in the coordination mechanism through formalized networks to enable diverse perspectives to emerge and 5) The establishment of strong monitoring and evaluation frameworks to measure WPS progress without overly burdensome reporting requirements.²⁵⁴

[252] Ibid

[253] Towards Full Implementation of WPS Agenda in Vietnam, Report to Contribute to the Possible Development of Vietnam's First National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. Mirsad Miki Jacevic, UN Women ROAP, December 2022

[254] KII with Embassy Officials, Phnom Penh, August 2024

SECTION IV

Conclusions and Recommendations



Photo: UN Women/Lim Sophorn



Photo: UN Women/Lim Sophorn

7. Conclusions

As a country with decades of experience dedicated to successful peace, rehabilitation and reconciliation at the national level along with internationally recognized contributions to UN PKOs and a commitment to regional peace and stability, Cambodia is well positioned to adopt a mixed approach for its NAP-WPS. The WPS agenda is relevant to both Cambodia's national priorities on gender equality and women's empowerment and its ambition to promote peace and stability at all levels: community/subnational, national, regional and global.

Recognizing Cambodia's many effective coordination mechanisms and national action plans addressing gender equality and women's rights, including national committees, national councils, technical working groups and sectoral working groups, it will be beneficial to build on these systems to develop the NAPWPS. The NAP-WPS can be designed to strengthen existing frameworks and address gaps and emerging needs within the current gender and security policy landscape. For example, it can serve as a policy framework applied to new initiatives as they arise in the design phase, such as new policies or commissions, and help ensure coordination among different frameworks and their implementing agencies, including those focused on climate change or cybersecurity. This would support alignment, the sharing of good practices and the identification of emerging needs. An important aspect of developing a NAP-WPS in Cambodia will be its added value in relation to the existing gender mainstreaming framework and other national action plans on gender equality and women's empowerment.

The development and implementation of other national action plans in Cambodia have helped strengthen collaboration among stakeholders and advance progress on key issues such as GBV and VAWG, trafficking in persons, climate change and DRR. Common features of successful action plans in Cambodia and other countries include high-level political commitment, senior government leadership and accountability, multi-stakeholder involvement (including NGO/CSO engagement) and public transparency. Areas identified for improvement in existing plans include stronger coordination and implementation, as well as the establishment of realistic monitoring, evaluation and reporting frameworks that can capture the full extent of progress and identify both gaps and challenges in implementation. Limited budget and human resources were also highlighted as key constraints to more effective implementation.

Discussions with national-level government officials revealed common concerns affecting women's security, including the impact of climate change, disasters and environmental degradation on family economic security; violence against women and girls (including marginalized women); limited representation of women in leadership and decision-making roles; fewer opportunities for women to participate; negative attitudes towards the importance of gender equality in the workplace; and rising cybersecurity threats (including online pornography, exploitation, human trafficking and financial scams targeting women and girls). These threats are underpinned by harmful gender norms, stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes that continue to limit women's and girls' opportunities. Development partners, NGOs/CSOs and other stakeholders raised similar concerns, emphasizing both the discrimination and exclusion faced by marginalized groups of women in decision-making roles and the importance of continuing to address SGBV and intergenerational trauma rooted in Cambodia's history.

At the subnational level, stakeholders reported similar concerns, including the impacts of climate change on family economic security and natural resources, which can generate local tensions over land and water, increase debt burdens and limit rural economic opportunities. These pressures contribute to school dropout rates, migration and labour exploitation, all of which affect the economic security of women and families. Additional concerns include sexual and gender-based violence, rising cybersecurity threats, including online harassment and financial scams and increased drug use and gang activity among youth, which undermines community safety and security.

The limited representation of women in leadership and decision-making positions was also noted. Specific concerns for Indigenous women and youth included discrimination, lack of representation in government and the loss of land and traditional ways of life, including farming. For ethnic Cham women, lower levels of engagement and representation in community activities limited access to information and services and contributed to feelings of separation from the wider society.

From the range of peace and security issues explored through a WPS lens in the Cambodian context, and aligned with the WPS agenda and ASEAN RPA-WPS and government priorities, the following have emerged as strong thematic areas for inclusion in the country's first NAP-WPS:

- 1. Women, Trafficking and Transnational Crime;**
- 2. Women, Peace and Cybersecurity;**
- 3. Women in the Security Sector, International Diplomacy and Peacekeeping Forces; and**
- 4. Women and Climate, Peace and Security.**

For Women, Trafficking and Transnational Crime, the National Defence Policy 2022 identifies human trafficking, drug trafficking and other illegal cross-border activities as national concerns, as they undermine public safety and security, create potential social tensions within and across borders and increase risks for vulnerable communities. The COVID-19 pandemic shifted the risk landscape for trafficking in persons, with online exploitation and abuse emerging as major concerns, particularly affecting women. While the NSP-CTIP addresses human trafficking and transnational crime, there are further opportunities to ensure that a NAP-WPS addresses women's security issues and participation.

For Women, Peace and Cybersecurity, cybercrime poses a major threat to Cambodia and the region. Cyber-enabled crimes that target women, including online scams, harassment, and technology-facilitated GBV, can intensify the spread of misinformation, disinformation and misogynistic hate speech, all of which undermine social cohesion and peaceful societies. Women remain underrepresented in leadership and decision-making spaces related to cybersecurity, technology development and peacebuilding, despite inclusive policy efforts such as the Cambodia Digital Government Policy 2022–2035 and the ICT Development Strategy 2020.

For Women in the Security Sector, International Diplomacy and Peacekeeping Forces, Cambodia's National Defence Policy 2022 outlines commitments to safeguarding peace, security and regional stability, including through contributions to UN Peacekeeping Operations. The MoND, MoFAIC, NPMEC and Ministry of Interior all recognize the vital role that women in the security sector play, particularly in conflict de-escalation, trust-building with communities and leadership. However, women's participation remains low despite favourable policies, plans and measures aimed at enhancing women's capacity and engagement.

For Women and Climate, Peace and Security, Cambodia's vulnerability to climate change raises security concerns, including impacts on food, water and energy supplies, increased competition over natural resources, loss of livelihoods, climate-related disasters and forced migration and displacement. Women are often among the most vulnerable to these impacts but are also powerful agents of change and can play critical roles in climate security. Cambodia has developed several plans addressing gender and climate change, including the Gender and Climate Change Strategic Plan 2013–2023, the Action Plan on Gender and Climate Change 2019–2023, and the NAP-DRR (2019–2023/2024–2028) under the NCDM. However, opportunities remain to more fully address women's specific security concerns and leadership in climate action through a NAP-WPS.

Other important topics explored in this situation analysis include:

1. **Women's Participation and Leadership;**
2. **Women and GBV in conflict and humanitarian crisis;**
3. **WPS Agenda and Economic Security, Livelihood Opportunities, Natural Resources and Human Security; and**
4. **Women and Social Cohesion.**

Some of these issues can be addressed or incorporated in other ways, including in other national action plans or mainstreamed into the NAP-WPS.

For example, **Women's Participation and Leadership** is already a key strategy under Neary Rattanak VI (Strategy V: Women in Leadership and Governance), is integrated into nearly all sectoral GMAPs, is one of the four pillars of the WPS agenda and is recognized as a cross-cutting issue under all thematic areas.

For Women and GBV in conflict and humanitarian crisis, relevant interventions can be supported through national plans such as the NAPVAW, NAP-DRR and the Social Protection Framework. The COVID-19 pandemic also led to increased efforts to include GBViE in health and disaster management planning. Peacebuilding, conflict resolution and reconciliation programmes, such as those of MoEYS, ECCC and NGOs, could be further reviewed and strengthened.

For WPS agenda and Economic Security, Livelihood Opportunities, Natural Resources and Human Security, several national policies and frameworks (including Neary Rattanak VI, the National Employment Policy, GMPSFA 2022–2026, the Gender Mainstreaming in Mine Action Plan 2021–2025, the Social Protection Framework and dispute resolution systems such as the MLMUPC and NAADR), offer opportunities to further integrate and protect women’s economic participation in relief and recovery efforts.

For Women and Social Cohesion, the government has introduced policies and mechanisms to support women in all their diversity, including ethnic minority women, Indigenous women, women with disabilities, LGBTIQ+ women and other at-risk groups. These are integrated into frameworks such as Neary Rattanak, the NAPVAW and the NAP-DRR, as well as through sectoral GMAPs in ministries and institutions. However, more robust monitoring and evaluation systems may be needed to ensure these efforts are effectively implemented and fully inclusive of vulnerable and marginalized groups.

More effort is required to raise awareness and deepen understanding of the WPS agenda and the critical roles women have played—and can continue to play—in conflict prevention, resolution and recovery, as well as in addressing new and emerging peace and security threats. Women are essential to reconciliation, confidence-building and community trust, and their leadership is vital to sustaining peace and social cohesion, thus ensuring that Cambodia’s hard-won gains in post-conflict reconciliation are not reversed and that efforts to advance peace continue moving forward.

At the Consultative Meeting on the WPS Agenda in July 2024, stakeholders with experience and knowledge of the WPS agenda expressed strong support for developing a NAP-WPS for Cambodia. They also acknowledged the challenges of coordinating, leading and implementing such a plan and emphasized the importance of a strong monitoring and evaluation system, with clear, measurable indicators and a realistic reporting mechanism. A follow-up meeting in December 2024 reaffirmed the importance of developing a NAP-WPS through multi-stakeholder, participatory processes linking with and building on existing policies, initiatives and national action plans and with targeted interventions to advance the WPS agenda in Cambodia.



Photo: UN Women/Lim Sophorn

8. Recommendations towards Developing a NAP-WPS in Cambodia

8.1 Key WPS priorities for consideration aligned with ASEAN RPA-WPS

To minimize duplication across national action plans and sectoral strategies, and to build on Cambodia's commitments, achievements and momentum in advancing gender equality and women's participation and leadership, it is recommended that the ASEAN RPA-WPS be reviewed in detail to identify synergies with existing plans and strategies. A focused approach at the outset may be more effective, with priority areas including:

- 1) Increasing women's participation and leadership across the government and public sectors at all levels, particularly in the security sector, including law enforcement, armed forces, UN PKOs and the justice sector;
- 2) Enhancing cybersecurity and addressing cybercrimes targeting women and girls, including through improved digital literacy;
- 3) Strengthening linkages between the WPS agenda and women's participation in climate change, disaster risk reduction and natural resource management; and
- 4) Addressing sexual and GBV in crisis and emergency settings and reconciliation processes.

8.1.1 Protection Pillar

ASEAN RPA-WPS Strategic Outcome 1: Protection of the rights of women, young women and girls, including those from marginalized groups, through policies, practices and institutions related to peace and security, including protection from all forms of SGBV in conflict, post-conflict, peacebuilding and humanitarian settings.

Suggested Actions:

- Ensure that survivors of SGBV in crisis and emergency settings, including past, current and future conflict situations and disasters, have access to legal, judicial, social security and protection, and transitional justice mechanisms, with the meaningful participation of women in all their diversity. These efforts may build on NAPVAW strategies and actions as well as successful initiatives such as the ECCC/Victim Support Unit. (ASEAN RPA-WPS Output 1.1)
- Strengthen the capacity of frontline responders in the peace and security sectors to prevent and respond to SGBV in alignment with NAPVAW priorities and multi-sectoral coordination mechanisms. (ASEAN RPA-WPS Output 1.1)
- Enhance opportunities for CSOs and women's organizations to collaborate with government stakeholders and systems in managing and implementing referral networks and support mechanisms for SGBV survivors, particularly in conflict and emergency settings. (ASEAN RPAWPS Output 1.1)
- Strengthen cybersecurity measures and leverage digital technologies to address cybercrimes and threats to women's safety and security. This includes addressing threats that destabilize communities. These threats include online sexual harassment and exploitation and online scams targeting rural and vulnerable women; hate speech and bullying targeting marginalized groups, such as ethnic minorities, Indigenous peoples and LGBTIQ+ persons, also pose serious risks. Women human rights defenders, journalists, environmental activists and others are particularly affected. Protective interventions should address both those most vulnerable to and those already affected by cybercrime and digital threats. (ASEAN RPA-WPS Output 1.1)
- Ensure the protection and support of women's livelihoods, particularly in the context of crises and disasters. This includes addressing the responsibilities of unpaid care work, which limits women's economic participation and security. Crises often increase women's caregiving responsibilities, restricting their ability to engage in decision-making spheres. (ASEAN RPA-WPS Output 1.2)
- Promote the integration of the WPS agenda into educational and training curricula to raise awareness of peace and security objectives within families, communities and institutional training programmes. (ASEAN RPA-WPS Output 1.2)
- Strengthen gender mainstreaming in governance and security institutions, including within the National Police, RCAF/defence sector, UN peacekeeping forces and mine clearance operations, and build the capacities of GMAGs to implement GMAPs. (ASEAN RPA-WPS Output 1.3)
- Build the capacities of security sector actors, including the National Police, RCAF and UN peacekeeping personnel, to protect the rights of women with specific risks or needs, such as ethnic minority and Indigenous women, migrant workers, women with disabilities and older women, ensuring their safety and dignity. (ASEAN RPA-WPS Output 1.3)

8.1.2 Participation Pillar

ASEAN RPA-WPS Strategic Outcome 2: Women's full, meaningful and equal participation in institutions, organizations and decision-making processes related to peace and security, including in leadership positions.

Suggested Actions:

- Create opportunities for women's participation and advancement to leadership roles, particularly in the peace and security sectors. This includes creating and maintaining an enabling work environment for women and establishing temporary quotas to help meet SDG 5 and SDG 16 targets, in line with CEDAW Recommendations 31a and 31b (2019) to Cambodia. Addressing structural and cultural barriers is essential and can be achieved through gender equality policies, training and awareness-raising, alongside accountability for results. (ASEAN RPA-WPS Output 2.1 and Output 2.4)
- Institute mandatory gender training for both men and women—including leaders—in all peace and security institutions. Emphasize the importance of male leadership support for women's participation in decision-making, peacebuilding and conflict prevention, resolution and mediation at the national, regional and international levels. (ASEAN RPA-WPS Output 2.1)
- Strengthen the participation of women and young women at subnational, community and local levels in promoting social cohesion, conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding. This includes women in local government, community leaders, CSOs, women's networks and youth leaders contributing to local peace efforts. (ASEAN RPA-WPS Output 2.1 and Output 2.2)
- Support the engagement of women's CSOs and youth organizations and include young women and men in consultations, planning, implementation and evaluation processes in the peace, security and humanitarian sectors. Institutional mechanisms should support civil society and youth contributions, particularly in preventing violent extremism, addressing technology-facilitated GBV and linking climate, peace and security. (ASEAN RPA-WPS Output 2.2)
- Engage the media, academia and faith-based organizations to advance women's leadership in peace and security initiatives. This includes promoting the visibility of female role models in conflict resolution and mediation. Explore ways to involve the private sector in strengthening women's participation. (ASEAN RPA-WPS Output 2.2)
- Develop programmes to train and build the capacities of women as qualified mediators and negotiators across peacebuilding and conflict prevention themes, at both the regional and national levels. This could include standardized training covering digital skills and connections to the NAADR, NPMEC and UN PKO. (ASEAN RPA-WPS Output 2.3)
- Continue expanding access to digital literacy, cybersecurity and technology training for women leaders and law enforcement personnel. This strengthens women's participation in cybercrime prevention and enables them to apply their perspectives and expertise to solution-building. (ASEAN RPA-WPS Output 2.4)
- Strengthen women's leadership and meaningful participation in cyber-related law and policymaking in line with WPS principles, including in decision-making and enforcement mechanisms that address cyber threats. (ASEAN RPA-WPS Output 2.4)

- Promote full inclusion of marginalized women and other underrepresented groups in the peace and security sectors by identifying barriers and norms that can be changed and by adopting new approaches to increase representation—particularly in leadership roles—and improve gender balance. (ASEAN RPA-WPS Output 2.1)

8.1.3 Prevention Pillar

ASEAN RPA-WPS Strategic Outcome 3: ASEAN sectoral bodies, institutions and Member States play an active role in contributing to global, regional and national conflict prevention and the prevention of violence, disasters and other threats to peace and security, with WPS principles at the centre.

Suggested Actions:

- Promote technical cooperation across ASEAN to exchange lessons learned and good practices on gender mainstreaming and women’s participation in conflict prevention, including DRR, emergency response, cybersecurity and other emerging peace and security threats. (ASEAN RPA-WPS Output 3.1)
- Conduct evidence-based research to identify how women, men and youth, including those from marginalized communities, are engaged or could be better supported in mitigating risks and preventing violence, conflict, SGBV and environmental insecurity, including in natural resource management and sustainable land use. (ASEAN RPA-WPS Output 3.1)
- Build partnerships with women mediators, women’s CSOs, youth organizations and faith-based groups through coordinated mechanisms that support local peacebuilding and conflict prevention. These efforts should ensure that women’s needs and perspectives are fully integrated into conflict prevention policy formulation. (ASEAN RPA Output 3.1)
- Identify and address training and capacity-building needs to equip first responders, policymakers and practitioners in conflict prevention and risk mitigation. This includes training on the prevention of sexual harassment and the implementation of sexual harassment workplace policies, as well as interventions designed to prevent escalation and further harm. These efforts should incorporate clear results measurements for addressing sexual GBV/VAWG. (ASEAN RPA-WPS Output 3.2)
- In line with CEDAW and CERD, and as part of efforts to prevent hate speech that may incite tensions, continue raising awareness and providing training to law enforcement officials and the broader public on preventing gender-based and racial discrimination. This includes addressing such discrimination in the administration and functioning of the criminal justice system and ensuring access to complaints procedures. (ASEAN RPA-WPS Output 3.2)
- Develop programme interventions to raise awareness and improve protection against cybersecurity and cybercrime threats, particularly for women, girls and vulnerable communities. This includes increasing digital literacy and awareness of online security risks. (ASEAN RPA-WPS Output 3.2)
- Strengthen capacities to detect and prevent gendered impacts of digital threats, harms and crimes facilitated by information and communication technologies. (ASEAN RPA-WPS Output 3.2)

ASEAN RPA-WPS Strategic Outcome 4: Peace and security institutions, mechanisms and processes are successfully preventing SGBV.

Suggested Actions:

- Capitalize on lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and GBV response to ensure that emergency response and disaster preparedness policies and plans include SGBV in emergencies standards. This may include additional research to better inform targeted, gender-responsive interventions that address the root causes of violence, including SGBV. (ASEAN RPA-WPS Output 4.1)
- Ensure the National Strategy on Disaster Risk Management for Health 2020–2024 supports the needs of women and girls by fully incorporating the Inter-Agency Working Group on Reproductive Health in Crisis Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) covering the provision of maternal, sexual and reproductive health services and the prevention and management of the consequences of gender-based violence in emergencies.²⁵⁵ (ASEAN RPA-WPS Output 4.1)
- In line with CEDAW General Recommendation No. 37 (2018), institutionalize women’s leadership at all levels of disaster prevention and preparedness, including the development and dissemination of early warning systems, response and recovery and climate change mitigation and adaptation. Ensure early warning information is delivered using technology that is modern, culturally appropriate, accessible and inclusive, taking into account the needs of diverse groups of women. First responders should have increased access to sex-disaggregated data and capacity-building to ensure the peace and security sector adopts effective interventions to prevent sexual and GBV during emergency responses. (ASEAN RPA-WPS Output 4.2)
- Incorporate the findings and recommendations of the 2023 RCAF Study on MOWIP into NAPWPS priority actions for UN PKOs and broadly disseminate findings relevant to women in law enforcement. (ASEAN RPA-WPS Output 4.2)

8.1.4 Relief and Recovery Pillar

ASEAN RPA-WPS Strategic Outcome 5: The needs of women and girls are met in relief and recovery processes at regional, national and local levels, and women have equal and meaningful participation in these processes, including in positions of decision-making and leadership.

Suggested Actions:

- Ensure policies and implementation are gender-responsive to women’s priorities during relief and recovery phases, including through consultations with community women with different needs and abilities. Collect and analyse sex-disaggregated data to inform evidence-based policies and interventions. (ASEAN RPA-WPS Output 5.1)
- Strengthen women’s participation and leadership in multi-sectoral coordination mechanisms, networks and partnerships at the international and regional levels to ensure that the WPS agenda is integrated into relief and recovery phases to promote social cohesion and the inclusiveness of stakeholders. (ASEAN RPA-WPS Output 5.2)

- Promote and implement programmes that address the economic rights and needs of women, including those in the informal economy, in order to enhance the safety and security of women, families and their livelihoods. This includes access to livelihoods and income-generating opportunities during relief and recovery following a crisis. (ASEAN RPA-WPS Output 5.3)
- In line with 2019 CEDAW Recommendation 13a to Cambodia, continue building on Cambodia’s successes through the ECCC in advancing justice and reconciliation processes following genocide and past conflicts, including victim support mechanisms that address the impact of genocide, SGBV and intergenerational trauma on women, families and communities, especially ethnic minority communities. This includes local initiatives such as community dialogues on peacebuilding and conflict transformation, intergenerational dialogues between survivors of GBV/SGBV and education programmes to foster deeper understanding of past conflicts as a basis for preventing future ones. (ASEAN RPA-WPS Output 5.3)
- Develop gender-responsive programmes to deliver appropriate psychosocial support to survivors of conflict and violence. These should address trauma, including the intergenerational impact of violence on women and families, through conflict resolution and peacebuilding methods. (ASEAN RPA-WPS Output 5.3)

8.2 Possible Coordination Mechanisms

- In line with best practices, the coordination mechanism for developing and implementing a NAPWPS in Cambodia should consist of two levels of government—political (senior) and technical— with high-level oversight at the Prime Minister or Deputy Prime Minister level, similar to NCCT and CNCW structures. Key ministries and institutions involved in coordination leadership may include MoWA, MoFAIC, MoND, MoI, MPTC and MEF, with participation from NPMEC, NCDM, MoE, MoEYS, MoH, MoINF, MoJ and CMAA/CMAC at the technical and implementation level.
- Strategically, the NAP-WPS and its coordination mechanism should build on the strong support of the National Assembly 8th Commission and Women’s Caucus leadership to advance NAP-WPS development at the senior government level.
- Utilize the existing GMAGs already established in relevant ministries and institutions to appoint WPS champions or focal points who can support planning and implementation. As in Canada’s model, WPS champions can lead internal advocacy, ensure coherence with sectoral strategies and plans, and act as focal points on the WPS agenda.
- Use the existing TWGG to harmonize WPS-related work across stakeholders, including development partners, NGOs/CSOs and the private sector. This should include tracking progress, identifying challenges, sharing lessons learned and setting directions for future work.
- Establish an informal network or formal advisory group of NGOs/CSOs interested in collaborating on Cambodia’s NAP-WPS. This group should ensure representation from vulnerable and marginalized groups, including youth. The advisory group should have clear terms of reference, be engaged in planning, monitoring and reporting, and meet regularly. Other NGOs can also participate in information sharing, implementation and reviews.
- Formalizing NGO/CSO involvement in the NAP-WPS process could improve systematic planning, implementation and reporting. It would also strengthen capacity-building and awareness-raising efforts related to the WPS agenda.

- Ensure that the development of the NAP-WPS is closely aligned with other national policies, plans and monitoring frameworks, such as Neary Rattanak, climate change strategies and NAP-DRR, and integrates with national and international reporting frameworks (e.g., SDGs, CEDAW). This will accelerate progress on gender equality, reduce duplication of efforts and simplify reporting requirements.

8.3 Recommended Next Steps from the Study

- Given MoWA's strong leadership in championing the development of the ASEAN RPA-WPS, its experience and knowledge as Chair of the ASEAN Advisory Group on WPS, and its leadership role in advancing gender equality and women's rights through other national action plans and policies, such as NAPVAW, NSP-CTIP and Neary Rattanak, MoWA is well placed to lead the development of the NAP-WPS in Cambodia, in close partnership with other relevant line ministries and in collaboration with NGOs/CSOs and development partners
- Cambodia is well positioned to develop and implement a standalone NAP-WPS, given MoWA's strong leadership in mainstreaming gender across all sectors and advancing gender equality and women's rights in national plans, policies and strategies. The advantage of a dedicated NAP-WPS is that it would acknowledge and highlight the complex and cross-cutting nature of women, peace and security issues across many different sectors and institutions. It would also ensure the inclusion of a wider range of WPS priorities in line with the ASEAN RPA-WPS. By contrast, incorporating WPS into other national plans or strategies entails the risk that many of the issues identified would not be adequately addressed, would be difficult to monitor and measure and could be overshadowed by other priorities.
- In line with the best practices of the High-Impact Methodology, strong political leadership is required to effectively mobilize support from all levels of government, civil society and international development partners and to demonstrate the importance of the WPS agenda for peace and stability at the national, regional and international levels.
- Also following High-Impact Methodology practices, the NAP-WPS in Cambodia will require sufficient allocation from the national budget, as well as support from development partners. MoWA, in partnership with other line ministries, is well placed to collaborate and advocate with the Ministry of Economy and Finance for national budget allocations for the NAP-WPS.
- Establish the coordination mechanism at the outset of the NAP-WPS development process to ensure ownership and political commitment in implementation. The Terms of Reference for the coordination mechanism should clearly define the lead ministries/institutions and the participating line ministries/agencies in Cambodia.
- UN Women should continue to provide technical support to MoWA and the coordination mechanism in advancing the WPS agenda and developing the NAP-WPS, including by garnering support and mobilizing resources from other UN agencies and development partners, engaging with NGOs/CSOs and ensuring the inclusion of marginalized groups in the process.
- As part of the development of a NAP-WPS in Cambodia, carry out awareness-raising on the WPS agenda, including the ASEAN RPA-WPS and the Cambodian context, with government actors, NGOs/CSOs, youth organizations, academic and research institutions, media and subnational authorities. This includes emphasizing security issues beyond violence against women and girls.
- Conduct a consultation workshop to validate the findings of the Situation Analysis and use this evidence to prioritize the most relevant and achievable issues for inclusion in a NAP-WPS for Cambodia.
- Prepare a timeline for the development of the NAP-WPS, including the establishment of a coordination mechanism, clear Terms of Reference and a process for inclusive stakeholder participation.

9. Annex

9.1 Summary Matrix of WPS Issues, Policies, Measures and Gaps

WPS Issue	Addressed by Current Policies / Action Plans, including Neary Rattanak VI	What actions/measures are in place or gaps to be addressed?
<p>1. Women and GBV in conflict and humanitarian crisis</p>	<p>1.1 Neary Rattanak VI 2024–2028, includes Strategy 5: Legal Protection for Women and Girls</p> <p>1.2 NAPVAW IV 2025–2030, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - TWGG-GBV, Provincial/ District GBV Working Groups, One Stop Service Unit, telephone and digital support services (helplines, GBV SafeApp, Chatbot, My Journey mobile app) - Strengthening capacity of service providers to prevent and respond to GBV survivors/ victims - Inter-Ministerial Media Code of Conduct for Reporting Violence Against Women 	<p>1.1.1 Neary Rattanak VI does not focus on violence against women in the context of WPS</p> <p>1.1.2 Neary Rattanak VI does not include women’s participation in demining and peacekeeping, and strategies and developments in addressing GBV and the impact of epidemics on women and security</p> <p>1.1.3 NAPVAW does not have comprehensive coverage of WPS agenda, especially women in armed conflict</p> <p>1.1.4 NAPVAW, DV Law and national policies and mechanisms are applicable within Cambodia</p>

	<p>1.3 Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence and Protection of Victims (DV Law) includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - JPA/JPO, intervention, administrative decisions, protective order <p>1.4 National Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Violence against Children (NAP VAC) 2017–2021/2023</p> <p>1.5 Village Commune District Safety Policy (VCSP) (2010/2021)</p> <p>1.6 The National Strategy for Disaster Risk Management for Health 2020– 2024 (NS-DRM for Health)</p> <p>1.7 The Guideline for Gender Mainstreaming in Inclusive Disaster Management</p> <p>1.8 National Action Plan on Disaster Risk Reduction 2024–2028 (NAP-DRR)</p> <p>1.9 National Social Protection Policy Framework 2016–2025</p>	<p>1.1.5 NAPVAW includes Media Code of Conduct for Reporting Violence Against Women</p> <p>1.1.6 DV Law – no provisions for online violence</p> <p>1.1.7 NAP VAC addresses VAC/ girls, including online child sexual exploitation</p> <p>1.1.8 VCSP addresses security issues relevant to WPS, including human trafficking, domestic violence, drug trafficking and gang violence; responds in a timely manner to disasters, communicable diseases and epidemics; and resolves disputes outside the judicial system with efficiency</p> <p>1.1.9 Reproductive Health in Crisis MISP addresses SRH health services in humanitarian action; more efforts needed to ensure GBV prevention/response systems in emergencies (GBViE)</p> <p>1.1.10 Guidelines for Gender Mainstreaming in Inclusive Disaster Management (MoWA/ NCDM)</p> <p>1.1.11 NAP-DRR includes gender responsive measures</p> <p>1.1.12 The Framework for Social Protection Response to Emergencies (2023) includes three Sub-Decrees (No. 152, 153, 154)</p>
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<p>2. Women, Trafficking and Transnational Crime**</p>	<p>2.1 Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation 2008</p> <p>2.2 NCCT National Strategic Plan on Counter Trafficking in Persons (NSP-CTIP) 2019–2023 (MoWA is Vice Chair)</p> <p>2.3 Strategic Plan on Combatting Drugs 2018–2023 by National Authority to Combat Drugs (NACD) (MoWA is a member)</p> <p>2.4 Village Commune District Safety Policy (2010/2021)</p> <p>2.5 National Defence Policy 2022</p>	<p>2.1.1 Measures: NCCT NSP-CTIP 2024–2028 set to launch and requires strengthening to ensure counter-trafficking measures are in place and mechanisms are functioning (MTR NSP-CTIP)</p> <p>2.1.2 MoWA is Chair of International Working Group of NCCT</p> <p>2.1.3 Measures: implement SOPs on case management of repatriation and integration of trafficked victims (MoSVY)</p> <p>2.1.4 Measures: Royal Government of Cambodia Engagement with COMMIT</p> <p>2.1.5 Strategic Plan on Combatting Drugs 2024–2028 (NACD) set to launch</p> <p>2.1.6 VCSP addresses security issues relevant to WPS, including drug trafficking, human trafficking, domestic violence and gang violence</p> <p>2.1.7 National Defence Policy recognizes human trafficking, drug trafficking and other illegal cross-border activities as threats</p>
<p>3. Women, Peace and Cybersecurity**</p>	<p>3.1 National ICT Development Authority, ICT Security Department and CamCERT (MPTC)</p> <p>3.2 Anti-Cyber Crime Unit (Mol, National Police)</p> <p>3.3 Cambodia Digital Government Policy 2022–2035, promotes women’s digital leadership</p> <p>3.4 MPTC GMAP 2019–2023, ICT Development Strategy, Gender Promotion Guidelines in CADT</p>	<p>3.1.1 MPTC provides basic training on ICT, including for women and vulnerable groups</p> <p>3.1.2 Measures: Stay Safe Online Campaign raises cybersecurity awareness</p> <p>3.1.3 Gap/opportunity: increase digital literacy among women and in rural areas</p> <p>3.1.4 Gap/opportunity: strengthen digital literacy for women in police force to combat cybercrimes</p>

	<p>3.5 2009 Criminal Code Articles 494 and 496 prohibit hate speech</p> <p>3.6 National Defence Policy 2022</p> <p>3.7 Draft Cybercrime Law, Draft Cybersecurity Law and Draft Law on Personal Data Protection</p>	<p>3.1.5 National Defence Policy recognizes cybercrime as a threat to Cambodia and the region</p> <p>3.1.6 Gap/opportunity: draft Cybercrime Law, draft Cybersecurity Law and draft Law on Personal Data Protection, which require a gender perspective so women's rights are protected and ensured</p>
<p>4. Women's Participation and Leadership</p>	<p>4.1 Cambodia Constitution ensures women are equal (Art. 31 and Art. 45), in line with CEDAW, BPfA, SDG 5 on Gender Equality</p> <p>4.2 Pentagonal Strategy Phase 1: 2024–2028, National Strategic Development Plan DP 2019–2023 and 2024–2028 and Cambodia SDG 5.1: Gender Equality</p> <p>4.3 Neary Rattanak VI; Core Strategy: Gender Mainstreaming and Strategy 5: Women in Leadership and Governance</p> <p>4.4 National Programme for Public Administration 2021–2030 and Ministry of Civil Service guidelines (MoCS)</p> <p>4.5 Strategy and Action Plan to Increase Women in Subnational Management Positions 2024–2028 and the Policy on Promotion of Gender Equality for Subnational Democratic Development 2019 (NCDD)</p>	<p>4.1.1 Opportunities: strengthen and increase women's participation and leadership in line with National Programme for Public Administration 2021–2030, including in security sectors</p> <p>4.1.2 Opportunities: link actions / outcomes of NAP-WPS with CSGDs, especially 5.1 Gender Equality and CEDAW Recommendations</p> <p>4.1.3 Opportunities: collect case studies on female and male role models in support of gender equality in WPS agenda</p> <p>4.1.4 Gaps/Opportunities: draft Care Economy Framework and Action Plan that focuses on four key aspects: 1) Care Infrastructure, 2) Care Services, 3) Employment-related care policies, and 4) Care-related Social Protection.</p> <p>4.1.5 Sectoral Gender Mainstreaming Action Groups (GMAGs) and Gender Mainstreaming Action Plans (GMAPs)</p>

<p>5. Women in the Security Sector, International Diplomacy and Peacekeeping Forces**</p>	<p>5.1 National Defence Policy 2022 (MoND/RCAF) 5.2 MoND Gender Mainstreaming Policy led by a Gender Mainstreaming Group 5.3 National Centre for Peacekeeping Forces, Mine and Explosive Remnants of War Clearance (NPMEC) 5.4 Gender Mainstreaming Action Plan of the General Commissariat of National Police 2019–2023 and 2024–2028 5.5 National Authority for Alternative Dispute Resolution (NAADR) 2023 includes gender equality and women’s issues in several initiatives and frameworks 5.6 Cambodia’s Economic Diplomacy Strategy 2021–2023 (MoFAIC)</p>	<p>5.1.1 National Defence Policy commitment to safeguarding peace, security and stability in the region and contributing to UN PKO globally 5.1.2 Opportunity: to utilize and support recommendations from 2023 Report on Results of MOWIP, including strengthening women’s participation and leadership 5.1.3 Gaps: Strengthen sexual harassment policies and internal complaint system in government 5.1.4 Opportunity: to strengthen women’s participation and leadership in police force in line with WPS agenda 5.1.5 Opportunity: to both address women’s issues and strengthen women’s participation in NAADR 5.1.6 Opportunity: to further integrate gender and WPS lens into Cambodia’s Economic Diplomacy Strategy 2024–2028 (MoFAIC)</p>
<p>6. Women and Climate, Peace and Security*</p>	<p>6.1 Neary Rattanak VI 2024–2028; Strategy 6: Women and Climate Change 6.2 Master Plan on Gender and Climate Change 2018–2030 (MoWA and MoEn) 6.3 Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) update includes gender-focused measures for climate change adaptation 6.4 Gender and Climate Change Strategic Plan 2013–2023, Action Plan on Gender and Climate Change 2019–2023.</p>	<p>6.1.1 Gender mainstreaming and climate change incorporated into strategic plans and policies of priority ministries, including environment, rural development, agriculture, health, water resources and public works and transportation 6.1.2 NDC update incorporates gender impact assessments and evaluations 6.1.3 Measures: NAP-DRR 2024–2028 integrates gender and inclusiveness; aims to strengthen the role of women in disaster management</p>

	<p>6.5 National Action Plan on Disaster Risk Reduction (NAP-DRR) 2024–2028, and Law on Disaster Management (2015)</p> <p>6.6 The Guideline for Mainstreaming Gender in Inclusive Disaster Management 2021</p> <p>6.7 The National Strategy on Disaster Risk Management for Health 2020–2024</p> <p>6.8 Environmental and Natural Resources Code of Cambodia 2023</p> <p>6.9 National Committee for Disaster Management (NCDM), including role of RCAF in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief</p>	<p>6.1.4 Measures: the National Strategy on Disaster Risk Management for Health 2020–2024 includes Reproductive Health in Crisis MISP and requires continued strengthening of prevention and management of GBViE</p> <p>6.1.5 Gaps: Environmental and Natural Resources Code of Cambodia 2023 references gender equality and participation of women and vulnerable groups, but is unclear in relation to the WPS agenda</p>
<p>7. WPS agenda and Access to economic security, Livelihood Opportunities, Natural Resources and Human Security</p>	<p>7.1 Neary Rattanak VI 2024–2028: Strategy 1: Women’s Economic Empowerment and Strategy 6: Women and Climate Change</p> <p>7.2 National Employment Policy 2015–2025, National Technical Vocational and Education Training Policy 2017–2025, (MoLVT), National Strategy for Informal Economy Development 2023–2028 (MISTI)</p> <p>7.3 2001 Land Law and 2008 Land Policy Declaration include a change in the land titling processes to strengthen women’s access to land tenure</p> <p>7.4 Department of Ethnic Minority Development (MRD), Inter-Ministerial Committee for Ethnic Minorities Development and Inter-Ministerial Committee for Highland Peoples Development.</p>	<p>7.1.1 Neary Rattanak VI: Strategy 1: Women’s Economic Empowerment addresses inclusive environment, enhancing SMEs and entrepreneurship, and care economy and digital technology</p> <p>7.1.2 Gap: national policies have clear gendered strategies, but the COVID-19 crisis highlighted the need to address the care economy to reduce women’s economic vulnerabilities before, during and after crises and emergencies.</p> <p>7.1.3 MLMUPC dispute mechanisms: 1) National Authority for Land Dispute Resolution (state land), 2) Cadastral Commissions (untitled land), 3) mobile land dispute resolution team, 4) 25 non-judicial land dispute resolution teams, and 5) Construction Inspection Team (at least one-third women participate)</p>

	<p>7.5 Gender Mainstreaming Policy and Strategic Framework in Agriculture (GMPSFA) 2022–2026 is gender transformative (MAFF)</p> <p>7.6 Environment and Natural Resources Code (2023) and National Environment Strategy and Action Plan (2016–2023) (NESAP) (NCSD)</p> <p>7.7 Third Gender Mainstreaming in Mine Action Plan 2021–2025, Gender Mainstreaming Team and Draft National Standard on Gender Mainstreaming in Mine Action (CMAA)</p>	<p>7.1.4 GMPSFA 2022–2026 provides a detailed analysis of gender and agriculture</p> <p>7.1.5 NESAP 2016–2023 includes vulnerable groups, especially women, children and minority groups, disproportionately affected by climatic and other shocks.</p> <p>7.1.6 Gap: potential for women to increase their leadership in sustainable natural resource management, climate-resilient communities and enhanced peace and stability</p>
<p>8. Women and Social Cohesion</p>	<p>8.1 National Policy on Development of Indigenous Peoples (2009)</p> <p>8.2 Multilanguage Education Programmes for Indigenous communities (MoEYS)</p> <p>8.3 MoEYS supports the Khmer Islam communities’ school education programmes</p> <p>8.4 National Strategic Plan on Identification (2017–2026)</p> <p>8.5 National Disability Strategic Plan 2019–2023, includes a strategic objective to ensure gender equality</p> <p>8.6 NAPVAW includes LGBTIQ+ women as a priority vulnerable group and at risk of violence</p> <p>8.7 Action Plan to Prevent Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy in Ratanak Kiri Province 2017–2021/2023</p>	<p>8.1.1 Special Working Group on the Inclusion of Vulnerable Women and Girls (MoWA)</p> <p>8.1.2 Disability Action Group (MoWA) has a capacity development programme to advance the roles and rights of women and people with disabilities</p> <p>8.1.3 GEDI training packages address the intersectionality between GBV and disability</p> <p>8.1.4 Gap/opportunity: no anti-discrimination law or policy to prevent discrimination and hate speech, online bullying and harassment targeting LGBTIQ+</p> <p>8.1.5 Gap/opportunity: develop National Action Plan to Prevent Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy (2024–2030)</p>

9.2 List of Documents Reviewed

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- (Cambodia VNR 2023). Royal Government of Cambodia, Cambodia's Voluntary National Review Report 2023. On Accelerating the Recovery from the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) and the Full Implementation of the 2030 Agenda. June 2023
- (CSDGs 2016–2030). Cambodia Sustainable Development Goals 2016–2030, List of Revised Targets and Indicators by Goals, Ministry of Planning, Royal Government of Cambodia, July 2022
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9.3 List of Stakeholders Consulted

1. Workshop: 30 July 2024	Total	Female	Male	Remarks
Stakeholder Group	50	39	11	
Government Ministries / Institutions	17	11	6	Mol, MoINF, MoFAIC, MoJ, NCDM, CMAC, MoH, NPMEC, MEF, MoEYS, MoSVY, MoE, CNCW
Ministry of Women's Affairs	18	14	4	Participants and Logistics
NGOs/CSOs	6	5	1	Alliance for Conflict Transformation, RWI, Silaka, TAF, TIC, Women Peace Makers
UN Agencies	5	5	0	UNFPA, UNDP, UNOHCHR, UNRCO, UN Women
Consultant team/UN Women	4	4	0	Facilitators/Logistics

2. Workshop: 18 Dec 2024	Total	Female	Male	Remarks
Stakeholder Group	70	63	8	
Government Ministries / Institutions	33	28	4	Mol, MoINF, MoFAIC, MoJ, NCDM, CMAC, MoH, NPMEC, MEF, MoEYS, MoSVY, MoE, CNCW, MPTC, MoC, PDoWA Svay Rieng
Ministry of Women's Affairs	15	13	2	Participants and Logistics
NGOs/CSOs	9	8	2	Alliance for Conflict Transformation, Breakthrough, GAD/C, Kdei Karuna, Silaka, TAF, Women Peace Makers
UN Agencies	8	7	1	UNFPA, UNOHCHR, UN Women, US Embassy, UK Embassy
Consultant team/UN Women	6	6	0	Facilitators/Logistics

3. KII/FGD at National Level	Total	Female	Male	Remarks
Stakeholder Group	70	70	70	
Government Ministries / Institutions	37	31	6	MoFAIC, MoE, MEF, Mol, MoWA, NCDM
National Assembly/ Supreme Council to the King	2	2	0	Senior women Leaders
Embassies/ Development Partners	9	5	4	Canada, UK, Australia, USAID
NGOs/CSOs	4	3	1	Women Peace Makers, TAF, AAC, Kdei Karuna
Academic/Research Institutions	2	1	1	CSHL at RULE, Cambodia Development Resource Institute
FGD with National Police / Mol	8	8	0	Female Police Women
FGD with Youth Groups	8	5	3	Separate FGD for women /men
FGD with LGBTIQ+	6	5	1	
FGD with Peacekeepers	12	6	6	Separate FGD for women/ men
FGD with women migrant workers	3	3	0	Siem Reap and Phnom Penh

4. KII/FGD at Subnational Level	Total	Female	Male	Remarks
Stakeholder Group	107	97	10	
Provincial WCCC	16	15	1	Mondulkiri, Svay Rieng, Kampong Chhnang provinces
District WCCC and Commune Committees for Women and Children	22	20	2	1 district/province; 3–4 Commune Committees for Women and Children
Village Authorities	13	13	0	All women
FGD with Indigenous women	16	16	0	Mondulkiri province (2 groups)
FGD with rural women	14	14	0	Svay Rieng and Kampong Chhnang
FGD with youth groups	18	11	7	Separate FGD for women and men
FGD with Khmer Islam women	8	8	0	Kampong Chhnang province

9.4 Summary of UNSCRs on WPS, CEDAW GR Nos. 30 and 37 and BPFA

UNSCR	Description
1325 (2000)	Promotes women as equal participants in all aspects of international peace and security, and highlights continued targeting of women for abuses in conflict situations
1820 (2008)	Recognizes conflict-related sexual violence as a tactic of war, calls for training of troops on GBV and more women in peace operations
1888 (2009)	Calls for deployment of military and gender experts to conflict areas and for improved monitoring and reporting
1889 (2009)	Calls for global indicators on 1325 and improvement of responses to the needs of women in conflict and post-conflict
1960 (2010)	Calls for an end to sexual violence in armed conflict and provides measures to end impunity for perpetrators of GBV
2106 (2013)	Provides operational guidance on addressing GBV and calls for Women Protection Advisers
2122 (2013)	Calls for women's participation in peace talks, increases resources for women in conflict zones and acknowledges civil society
2242 (2015)	Highlights the role of women in CVE and their role in other emerging fields
2467 (2019)	Recognizes GBV in conflict and the need for a survivor-centred approach and prioritization of vulnerable groups
2493 (2019)	Urges members to recommit to the WPS agenda and calls for equal participation of women in addressing GBV and in peacekeeping
2538 (2020)	Calls for meaningful participation of uniformed and civilian women in peacekeeping operations

Source: Reproduced from *Localization Toolkit and Guidelines for ASEAN RPA-WPS*

CEDAW	Description
General Recommendation No. 30 (2013)	On women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations, indicates specific obligations of Member States to eliminate discrimination against women in conflict-related situations
General Recommendation No. 37 (2018)	On gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change, calls for effective measures to prevent and mitigate the adverse effects of disasters and climate change and to ensure the human rights of women are protected, respected and fulfilled
Draft General Recommendation No. 40 (2024)	On Equal and Inclusive Representation of Women in Decision-Making Systems, calls for parity in decision-making spheres, including in conflict prevention, building resilient societies and post-conflict reconstruction efforts as part of a new peace architecture

Source: CEDAW General Recommendations, Nos. 30, 37 and 40

BPfA	Women and Armed Conflict: Strategic Objectives (SO)
SO 1	Increasing the participation of women in conflict resolution at decision-making levels and protecting women living in situations of armed and other conflicts or under foreign occupation
SO 2	Reduce excessive military expenditures and control the availability of armaments
SO 3	Promote non-violent forms of conflict resolution
SO 4	Promote women's contribution to fostering a culture of peace
SO 5	Provide protection, assistance and training to refugee women, other displaced women in need of international protection and internally displaced women
SO 6	Provide assistance to the women of the colonies and non-self-governing territories.

Source: Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)

9.5 Summary of ASEAN RPA-WPS Matrix

Protection

Strategic Outcome 1: Protection of the rights of women, young women and girls, including those of marginalized groups, in policies, practices and institutions related to peace and security, including the protection of women and girls from all forms of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in conflict, postconflict, peacebuilding and humanitarian settings.

Output 1.1. ASEAN member states have increased capacity to develop and implement legislation, policies and measures to prevent and eliminate SGBV and to address the needs of SGBV victims/ survivors, including in conflict-affected areas, emergency and humanitarian settings.

Output 1.2. Increased capacity of ASEAN and AMS to promote the protection and safeguarding of women's and girls' rights, and women's economic empowerment, in conflict-affected contexts as well as during times of emergency, humanitarian response and insecurity.

Output 1.3. The security sector (including military and police forces) has identified ways to improve gender mainstreaming and women's rights protection in its responses to traditional and non-traditional security challenges.

Participation

Strategic Outcome 2: Women's full, meaningful and equal participation in institutions, organizations and decision-making processes related to peace and security, including in leadership positions.

Output 2.1. Increased capacity to ensure women's representation and full and equal participation at regional and national levels and in key leadership positions within ASEAN Community pillars, sectoral bodies and associated entities.

Output 2.2. Women's organizations, youth organizations and other civil society groups can meaningfully participate in ASEAN's consultation, planning, implementation and evaluation processes, to better reflect the perspectives and needs of women and girls in the region, and ensure women's equitable participation and inclusion.

Output 2.3. Women peacebuilders, either as mediators, negotiators and/or first responders, have increased opportunity and capacity to participate at the international, regional, national and local levels.

Output 2.4. Women can participate meaningfully and fully in the security sector institutions of the ASEAN member states, such as the armed forces and police, including in positions of leadership, and there is increased capacity to deploy women peacekeepers at all ranks and in leadership positions in particular.

Prevention

Strategic Outcome 3: ASEAN sectoral bodies, institutions and member states play an active role in contributing to global, regional and national conflict prevention, and prevention of violence, disasters and other threats to peace and security, with the principles of the WPS agenda central to these activities

Output 3.1. Early warning mechanisms and actions to prevent conflict and other risks to peace and security (such as disaster mitigation/displacement, trafficking in persons, pandemics, cybersecurity threats, climate change and violent extremism) have increased capacity to analyse and understand the different roles, experiences, needs and impacts for women and men, especially those from marginalized groups.

Output 3.2. Conflict-prevention and risk mitigation policies, measures and programmes are evidence-based, context-sensitive and gender-responsive.

Strategic Outcome 4: Peace and security institutions, mechanisms and processes are successfully preventing SGBV

Output 4.1. Methods and mechanisms have been identified, and research undertaken (and systems for updating data), to understand and identify early warning signs and root causes of violence, especially sexual and gender-based violence, in different communities and contexts, to inform targeted gender-responsive interventions for addressing these root causes and preventing violence, including SGBV.

Output 4.2. First responders, as well as policymakers and practitioners, have increased access to the data and trainings they need to ensure that peace and security institutions prevent SGBV, supported by multisectoral institutional practices, policies and a legal environment informed by WPS principles.

Relief and Recovery

Strategic Outcome 5: The needs of women and girls are met in relief and recovery processes at regional, national and local levels and women have equal and meaningful participation in these processes, including in positions of decision-making and leadership.

Output 5.1. ASEAN policy development and implementation are informed by women's experiences and priorities during the relief and recovery phase, including at the community level.

Output 5.2. Relief and recovery policies and processes at regional and national levels are designed and implemented through a multi- sectoral, multi-stakeholder and multi-dimensional process building upon networks and partnerships to ensure social cohesion, inclusivity and participation by key stakeholders.

Output 5.3. Relief and recovery policies and initiatives are gender-responsive and context-sensitive with the needs and priorities of both women and men addressed and their rights protected, including for those from marginalized groups.



UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
United Nations Building, 12th floor.
Rajdamnern Nok Avenue, Bangkok, 10200, Thailand



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www.linkedin.com/showcase/un-women-asia-and-the-pacific/



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