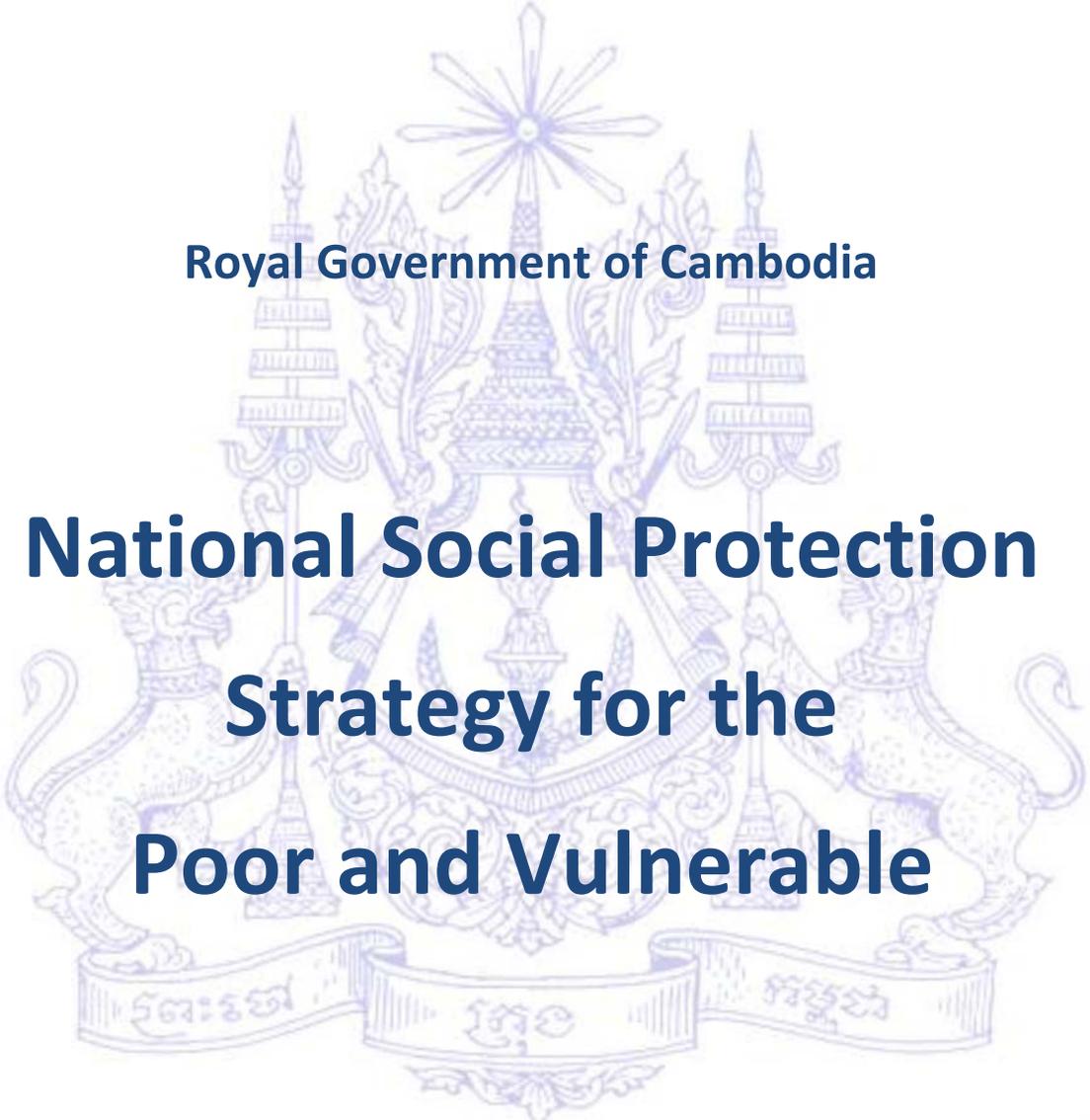




Kingdom of Cambodia
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Royal Government of Cambodia



**National Social Protection
Strategy for the
Poor and Vulnerable**

Executive Summary

The **National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS)** complements other sectoral policy, plans and strategies of line ministries and stakeholders involved directly or indirectly in social protection. The strategy is aligned with and makes operational the priority actions laid out in the Rectangular Strategy and the National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) Update 2009-2013.

The NSPS has been developed based on a consultative process with active participation from line ministries at both national and sub-national level, development partners and civil society. During the Cambodia Development Cooperation Forum (CDCF) on 3-4 December 2008, the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) and development partners agreed to undertake a scoping and mapping exercise and gap analysis on existing social safety nets and to identify a policy direction towards the development of a more integrated social safety net system commensurate to the socioeconomic situation of Cambodia. The Council for Agricultural and Rural Development (CARD) was tasked with ensuring effective coordination among the stakeholders involved.

In February 2009, CARD set up an interim working group involving representatives from line ministries and development partners to develop a concept note and inventory of existing social safety net programmes. In July 2009, CARD organised the National Forum on Food Security and Nutrition under the theme of Social Safety Nets in Cambodia and was mandated to coordinate the development of a National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS) for the Poor and Vulnerable. A number of technical consultations and field studies were carried out to review social protection policy, focusing on several aspects of social interventions, including cash transfer to address maternal and child nutrition, public work programmes, education and child labour. At the beginning of June 2010, the NSPS was presented to the 3rd CDCF for endorsement and collaboration. Upcoming tasks will include a comprehensive analysis and detailed costing exercise for the design of specific activities in the strategy.

The NSPS is organised into six chapters. The introduction defines social protection, social safety nets and other related terms and determines the scope of policy and activities and the development process of this strategy. Social protection helps people cope with major sources of poverty and vulnerability while at the same time promoting human development. It consists of a broad set of arrangements and instruments designed to protect individuals, households and communities against the financial, economic and social consequences of various risks, shocks and impoverishing situations and to bring them out of poverty. Social protection interventions include, at a minimum, social insurance, labour market policies, social safety nets and social welfare services.

The second chapter, "Social Protection as a Priority of the Royal Government of Cambodia," details the need for and importance of the development of such a strategy, based on the Constitution, the Rectangular Strategy for Growth, Employment, Equity and Efficiency Phase II,

the NSDP Update 2009-2013 and national legislation, as well as international conventions to which Cambodia is a signatory.

The third chapter profiles poverty and vulnerability in Cambodia, including an analysis of types of existing and unseen risks, shocks and crises, based on research papers and data obtained from the 2008-2009 Cambodian Socio-Economic Survey (CSES). This chapter also raises the issue of the negative impacts of economic and financial crises and climate change on people's livelihoods.

The fourth of chapter, on "Existing Social Protection for the Poor and Vulnerable," presents line ministries' institutional structures, mandates, sectoral policies and strategies and existing interventions in terms of the provision of social protection services to the people. Informal/traditional social safety nets and civil society interventions are also described. This chapter links with the previous chapter on poverty and vulnerability to identify gaps in implementation.

Over the past 20 years, Cambodia has implemented a number of social safety net projects and programmes, mostly funded by external sources, to improve the livelihoods and food security situation for the poor and to respond to emergency needs. Many successes have been recorded, especially in relation to delivering services to large numbers of beneficiaries and enhancing food and income security:

- **Food distribution** to food-insecure areas, school feeding, take-home rations and food for work have provided the basis for responding to issues of food insecurity, chronic poverty and malnutrition in some cases.
- **Scholarships** have helped address the poverty of school-age children.
- **Public works programmes** have helped address food insecurity, underemployment and chronic poverty among the working-age population.
- **Health equity funds** (HEFs) and **community-based health insurance** (CBHI) have provided the basis for protecting the health of the poor.
- **Social welfare services for special vulnerable groups** have assisted people with disabilities, the elderly and orphans, among others.
- Other programmes have been rooted in tradition and the culture of resource redistribution for **humanitarian purposes**.

Yet Cambodia still does not have an effective and affordable social safety net system in place. Many of the interventions have been patchy and *ad hoc*, and are highly dependent on specific donor funding sources. Coverage for the poor and vulnerable is still very limited: programmes do not necessarily focus on the poorest areas and efforts have been largely fragmented, with weak coordination between the many ministries and institutions involved.

Based on the legal framework analysis presented in the second chapter, the poverty and vulnerability profile in the third chapter and the review of existing social protection

programmes and gaps in implementation in the fourth chapter, the fifth chapter, the “National Social Protection Strategy for the Poor and Vulnerable,” describes in detail the approaches, vision, goal and objectives of the NSPS. An effective NSPS requires a balance of three approaches:

- Protecting the poorest and most disadvantaged who cannot help themselves;
- Preventing the impact of risks that could lead to negative coping strategies and further impoverishment;
- Promoting the poor to move out of poverty by building human capital and expanding opportunities.

The broad vision of the NSPS includes contributory social security (social insurance) for formal sector and civil servants, as well as a high level of human development and appropriate opportunities for all Cambodians. The NSPS envisions that **all Cambodians, especially the poor and vulnerable, will benefit from improved social safety nets and social security as an integral part of a sustainable, affordable and effective national social protection system.**

The main goal of the NSPS is that **poor and vulnerable Cambodians will be increasingly protected against chronic poverty and hunger, shocks, destitution and social exclusion and benefit from investments in their human capital.**

Within the framework set in place for working towards 2015, the NSPS will link existing programmes by establishing systematic and integrated objectives to enable improved service delivery for the poor and vulnerable, protection from poverty and the promotion of investments in human capital. To achieve this, the NSPS entails several strategic steps:

- Promote the development of a **mix of programmes that cover both chronic and transient poverty as well as hunger and that also help promote human capital;**
- Strengthen the coordination, scaling-up and harmonisation mechanisms of current programmes to ensure they match the root causes of vulnerability;
- Evaluate and, if necessary, improve the current IDPoor programme (the mechanism to identify poor households);
- Scale up coverage of **ongoing interventions** and improve efficiency and effectiveness;
- Pilot, evaluate and scale up new programmes based on effectiveness and sustainability to fill the gaps in existing social protection programmes.

Under this goal, the NSPS has the following objectives:

- The poor and vulnerable receive support, including food, sanitation, water and shelter, etc., to meet their basic needs in times of emergency and crisis.
- Poor and vulnerable children and mothers benefit from social safety nets to reduce poverty and food insecurity and enhance the development of human capital by

improving nutrition, maternal and child health, promoting education and eliminating child labour, especially its worst forms.

- The working-age poor and vulnerable benefit from work opportunities to secure income, food and livelihoods, while contributing to the creation of sustainable physical and social infrastructure assets.
- The poor and vulnerable have effective access to affordable quality health care and financial protection in case of illness.
- Special vulnerable groups, including orphans, the elderly, single women with children, people with disabilities, people living with HIV, patients of TB and other chronic illness, etc., receive income, in-kind and psychosocial support and adequate social care.

The sixth chapter of this document covers “Coordination of Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation” of the NSPS. This chapter presents arrangements for the coordination, monitoring and evaluation of NSPS implementation through the active participation of all stakeholders and budget requirements for medium-term implementation of the NSPS. Implementation is the responsibility of line ministries and decentralised government institutions. The NSPS thus complements the efforts of line ministries to achieve sector targets by developing a **framework for sustainable, effective and efficient implementation**. Most programmes in the NSPS are by nature inter-sectoral and require coordination across ministries and government agencies, to avoid thematic and geographical overlaps, to **harmonise implementation procedures** and to coordinate the effective and efficient use of available funds from the national budget and development partners. This also entails **active dialogue** with supportive development partners and civil society organisations and **management of information sharing**. **Capacity development** at the national coordination unit and with stakeholders at national and sub-national level is the immediate priority, including on institutional arrangements, functional coordination and the monitoring and evaluation structure in the medium- and long-term implementation of NSPS.