



Joint Submission by Relevant Stakeholders of Information on Gender-Responsive Budget

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in advance of the 4th Cycle of the Universal Periodic Review of Cambodia at the 46th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (April - May 2024)

This thematic report is jointly submitted by the following organizations:

- 1) Gender and Development for Cambodia (GADC)
- 2) SILAKA Cambodia
- 3) Women Peace Makers (WPM)
- 4) The Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia (COMFREL)
- 5) NGO-CEDAW
- 6) Banteay Srei
- 7) Women’s Network for Unity (WNU)
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1. Introduction

1.1 Overview of Cambodian Gender-Responsive Budget

1.1.1 While Cambodia has made repeated general commitments to gender equality, including ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and referencing it in the Constitution, few practical steps have been taken in the law to dispel the negative gender stereotypes that persist throughout Cambodian society. While Cambodia does have a Ministry devoted to Women's Affairs, that institution has the second lowest allocation of funds from the national budget of any ministry and is the only Ministry with a significant number of women in leadership roles.

1.2 Methodology

This report was created through the coordination of several feminist Cambodian CSOs who have been involved for years in advocating for equal participation in all aspects of Cambodian life for women and men. These CSOs contributed information from their work experiences, data and statistics from government sources, and their own research to create this report and recommendations.

2. The Cambodian Context of Prior UN Recommendations

2.1 Cambodia was last reviewed in March 2019 at the 32nd session of the Human Rights Council. It received 44 recommendations that either directly mentioned women or addressed an issue that disproportionately affected women in Cambodia. Cambodia accepted all of these recommendations. However, none of the recommendations specifically addressed gender-responsive budget. The closest recommendations were 110.173 "Continue ongoing mechanisms for gender parity and women's empowerment" in the 3rd cycle made by India and the recommendation by Cuba in the 1st cycle to "Continue the implementation of the necessary affirmative measures to achieve gender parity."

The UN CEDAW Committee, however, specifically addressed the issue of budgeting in its last review of Cambodia in 2019. The Committee noted that while Cambodia has a framework within the government to coordinate gender mainstreaming, that framework is largely ineffective in part because the government does not provide sufficient direct funding to it. During the review session, the Cambodian delegation reported that 3 percent of the national budget had been allocated toward gender-responsive programming. The Committee recommended that Cambodia ensure that the Cambodian National Council for Women has sufficient financial and technical resources and that Cambodia "Allocate sufficient resources and funding from the national budget for the implementation of action plans and policies for gender equality, including the fifth national strategic plan for gender equality and the empowerment of women (2019–2023)."¹

3. Specific needs of Gender-Responsive Budget

¹ Paragraphs 14-15 of the Concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of Cambodia, 12 November 2019. CEDAW/C/KHM/CO/6

3.1 As noted above, there are no specific recommendations on gender-responsive budget. However, gender-responsive budget is a key to achieving gender parity by the next UPR review and meeting Cambodia's commitment to its own Sustainable Development Goal targets. Cambodia has been overly reliant on international aid funding before it will commit to any action relevant to promoting gender equality. Such aid decreases each year, while the size of Cambodia's national budget has grown. The growth of the national budget can be attributed both to the economic successes of Cambodia and to larger percentages of the population using banks, documenting spending, and paying taxes, even from populations who were long part of the informal economy. Yet, the allocation of funds to government ministries is not subject to gender impact reviews, and local governments seeking funds are ill-equipped to request funds that sufficiently address programs that affect women. For example, local governments often have funds to build infrastructure, but not to provide emergency services to survivors of gender-based violence. In order to address this problem, it is important to integrate gender-responsive budget fully into all line ministries and local governments, rather than relying on the allocation of funds to the Ministry of Women's Affairs to address all gender mainstreaming and programs within the country.

3.2 Recommendations

3.2.1 Establish a budget line for a gender-responsive budget for every line ministry/agency to be funded from the Royal Government of Cambodia's national budget by 2025 and allocate 5 percent of the total national budget to these budget lines in addition to continued funding for the Ministry of Women's Affairs.

3.2.2 Enact all necessary measures, including regulations and policies, by the next review session requiring local commune governments to allocate 20 percent of their annual development budgets to support the administration and activities of the Commune Committees for Women and Children and support services, including housing and income, to those fleeing domestic violence.