

PARTICIPATORY POVERTY ASSESSMENT IN CAMBODIA

Asian Development Bank

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AIDS	acquired immune deficiency syndrome
CMR	Cambodia riel
CSES	Cambodian Socioeconomic Survey
FGD	focus group discussion
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
MoP	Ministry of Planning
NGO	nongovernment organization
PPA	Participatory Poverty Assessment
PRA	participatory rural appraisal
RRA	rapid rural appraisal
SEDPII	Second Socioeconomic Development Plan, 2001-2005
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
STD	sexually transmitted disease
WFP	World Food Program

NOTES

Unless otherwise indicated the units of measurement referred to in this study are metric. The unit of currency referred to in this study is the Cambodia riel (KR); at the time this study was completed, the exchange value was KR3,910 to US\$1.

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Without the participation of the people living in poverty in both villages and in urban settings, it would have been impossible to undertake this Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA). Their involvement is greatly acknowledged, and it is hoped that the findings of this study will be translated into pro-poor growth policies that will benefit these participants and others living in poverty in Cambodia. One of the purposes of this PPA is to allow the participants to use the assessment as a source of empowerment not previously available to them in attempts to reduce poverty in their communities.

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FOREWORD

After the July 1998 elections, a new government led by Prime Minister Hun Sen was established, which stressed poverty-reducing economic development as its first priority. This Government is committed to increasing the quality of life for its people and being a genuine partner in regional and global affairs. The past few years have witnessed Cambodia well on its way to becoming a truly free nation, free from want and free from poverty.

The Government has adopted a “Triangle Strategy” to fulfill this long-term vision. One side of the strategic triangle is sustaining peace, restoring stability and maintaining security for the nation and the people. Another side of the strategic triangle is Cambodia’s economic and social integration into the region and normalization of relationships with the international community. This will allow Cambodia to attract more foreign assistance and foreign direct investment, which are crucial to the achievement of development objectives. Already, Cambodia has succeeded in regaining its seat at the United Nations and has become the 10th member of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). The process of joining the World Trade Organization is soon to be completed. The third side of the Government’s strategic triangle is to promote economic and social development through the implementation of an ambitious reform program. The Government is aware that promoting sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction is directly linked to major reforms.

The key elements of the reform agenda are military and police demobilization, civil service reform, fiscal reform, strengthening the banking and financial systems, establishing systems for sustainable use of natural resources, facilitating private sector development, investing in social development and promoting good governance.

In the context of the Triangle Strategy, the Second Socioeconomic Development Plan 2001-2005 (SEDPII) presents the Royal Government of Cambodia’s strategies for achieving the primary objective of reducing poverty. The strategies are: (1) to foster broad-based sustainable economic growth with equity, with the private sector in the lead role; (2) to promote social and cultural development by improving the access of the poor to education, health, water and sanitation, power, credit, markets, information and appropriate technology; and (3) to promote sustainable management and use of natural resources and the environment.

The Government understands that economic growth and political stability depends on an improved governance environment in which government and the public administration are more responsive to the needs of the poor.

To tackle the many challenges ahead, the Government will need to listen to all segments of society, particularly those less fortunate. The voices of the poor have spoken through the Participatory Poverty

Assessment (PPA) conducted as part of the SEDPII preparation process and can easily continue to be heard as a result of the decentralization of power and resources from Phnom Penh to provincial and local institutions. The Commune Council elections planned for 2002 and the establishment of the councils will provide a crucial institutional mechanism for participation of the poor in the decision-making process. The PPA is the beginning of this process. It should also be viewed as a companion document to the SEDPII that can assist in refining and informing the strategic priorities of the Royal Government of Cambodia.

The PPA study was prepared under the leadership and guidance of the Ministry of Planning in partnership with the Asian Development Bank. The perspectives and judgments expressed in the report do not necessarily reflect the views of ADB or its Board of Directors.

I wish to thank Cambodians at all levels of government and society who contributed their insights to this report. In particular, I acknowledge those Cambodians who devoted their precious time during the fieldwork portion of the study to speak with us. Without your support the study would not have been possible.



Tadao Chino
President
Asian Development Bank

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Between late October and mid-December 2000, 154 villages in 70 communes in all 24 provinces of Cambodia and 15 nonrural socioeconomic groups participated by way of focus group discussions (FGDs) in the first nationwide Cambodian Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA). Of the 169 FGDs conducted, 47 percent took place in the Mekong Plain region, 29 percent in the Tonle Sap region, 12 percent in the Northeastern Mountain region and 12 percent in the Coastal region. More than 50 percent of the participants were female, and 13 percent were from ethnic minorities. In addition to the FGDs, selected semi-structured interviews with key informants were undertaken to clarify some of the issues raised in the FGDs or to obtain a more extensive historical background to poverty in the villages. The PPA is intended to inform poverty reduction policies emanating from the Royal Government of Cambodia's Second Socioeconomic Development Plan, 2001-2005.

Sites for FGDs were selected in a two-stage process, subject to the requirement that at least one FGD take place in each province. The Government endorsed the World Food Program's (WFP) poverty mapping in lieu of having reliable baseline data to target the poor. This approach was used to identify the poorest communes. Villages were then selected on the basis of guidelines established at the October 2000 PPA Questionnaire Workshop, and in consultation with provincial and local authorities, four PPA teams of three members each (six women and six men) made the selections and conducted the FGDs and the interviews.

Participants in the FGDs examined the definition of poverty, living conditions, the gender and ethnic dimensions of poverty as well as coping mechanisms used in

times of crises. They prioritized needs and possible solutions to poverty and poverty-related problems. FGD facilitators sought to ensure that all participants contributed to the discussions. All FGDs were documented with participants engaging in a series of ranking exercises that prioritized village and nonrural socioeconomic group concerns.

Issues and Results

- According to FGD participants, there are five broad socioeconomic strata in villages. The PPA defined the poorest as *toal*, people who live a hand-to-mouth existence on a day-by-day meal-by-meal basis. By way of contrast, the poor who are categorized as *kror imom* may have some land, very poor housing, perhaps a draft animal but no agricultural implements and insufficient rice during critical times of the year (usually from July until the first harvest in December-January). The PPA demonstrates the subtle differences among the five categories that need to be understood in any poverty reduction strategy. Being hungry is the primary concern of the poor. The PPA found that significant numbers of poor people, particularly women and children, have to spend an inordinate amount of time each year foraging for food. Consequently, they have no time to participate in village level activities. However, most FGD participants stated clearly that if they had enough food they would be more involved in village activities, including the construction or rehabilitation of existing physical infrastructure or other community projects.
- Another important finding is that in rural Cambodia, the poorest people have few, if any, assets (land, draft animals and adequate housing). It is clear that

when the poor face a major life crisis, usually arising from a natural disaster, illness or death of a family member, it is necessary to sell what few assets they have.

- Land issues are very important to the poor. These include limited land availability per household, low productivity of the land, the presence of land mines and landlessness (especially for demobilized soldiers).
- Educational opportunities are nonexistent or limited for the poor. Nearly 20 percent of all FGD participants stated that their children could not attend school because of a lack of physical accessibility, especially in the Northeastern Mountain region where minorities live. Another constraint is imposed by the cost of transport, clothing, learning materials and unofficial fees, which underpaid teachers ask for to supplement their salary. Lack of teachers, absenteeism and poor teacher quality are also identified as problems. Girls are more likely than boys to be kept out of school for a range of domestic and other activities.
- Water resources, whether it is for drinking or agricultural purposes, are widely inadequate. The lack of potable drinking water affects the poor no matter where they live.
- Lack of micro-finance is another key issue concerning the poor. Credit is needed for purchase of draft animals, farming implements and other agricultural inputs (particularly seed and fertilizer); meeting health care costs; establishment of small-scale businesses, including the raising and selling of livestock; support of technical/vocational training; and purchases of food (mainly rice).
- Inadequate physical infrastructure is also a major cause of poverty according to FGD participants. Poor or nonexistent roads and bridges not only limit access to social infrastructure facilities (health centers and schools) but also inflate the cost of goods and services transported into and out of villages. These problems are compounded by the high cost of fuel. Less than 30 percent of the villages in this PPA could be reached by vehicular traffic during the wet season.
- A significant concern for the poor is the decreasing access to community natural resources (forests and fishing grounds). Numerous examples of corruption or irregular practices by government officials were cited in the management of fishing lots (commercial concessions relevant in the lowland areas of

Cambodia), forest concessions (particularly along the Thai border), emergency food aid (everywhere in Cambodia but particularly in the northwest) and physical infrastructure projects (everywhere in Cambodia).

- Many FGD participants described local authorities as ineffectual, although during emergencies they are considered essential as a means of relaying information to the Government.
- The poor are concerned that they cannot afford to construct pagodas or mosques. This prevents the practice of their religious beliefs and weakens the social fabric of the village where there is no community meeting place.
- Young girls and women suffer disproportionately because of poverty. They work harder in the village; are forced to migrate to urban areas to work in garment factories, as domestic helpers, beer girls and sex workers; and are subject to domestic violence.

In summary:

The poor in Cambodia are in many ways no different than those in other developing countries—life crises render them even poorer; they lack access to natural resources, basic physical and social infrastructure and other services; they feel unempowered, hopeless about their lives and the lives of their children and are experiencing an erosion of family and community relationships; and women and ethnic minorities suffer from low socioeconomic status.

However, this poverty assessment has also revealed issues particular to the country:

- Poor Cambodians say they are worse off now than ever.
- Domestic violence is perceived worse now than in the past.
- The poor lack food security; many people still experience periods of hunger.
- People have a desire to participate in their communities' activities but cannot because of the immense amount of time spent looking for food.
- People are being denied access to their traditional hunting and gathering grounds by poor implementation of government policies, antilogging measures, co-optation of land and other activities which are also prohibiting people's access to land.
- The poor want information about government policies and programs including health, vocational and technical training, market information, and micro-finance availability.
- The poor have stated there is a general lack of confidence in local and provincial administration.

- One bright spot is that more women are being given or are asserting themselves in leadership roles in their community.

Potential Policy Considerations

- While the Government is well aware that food insecurity is a major issue for the poor, it needs to ensure that the poorest villages are actually targeted by programs aimed at enhancing food security. The WFP, through its poverty mapping, is playing an important role in ensuring that this occurs. It is important not to simply identify poor communes, however, as the WFP mapping does, but also poor villages need to be located. NGOs can also assist the Government in this poverty-targeting program. Food-for-work programs appear to be popular among the poor and should be continued.
- The stated need by the poor to purchase rice has to be seen in the context of what varieties of rice should be produced in Cambodia. Farmers with an eye for the export market want to produce varieties that the poor cannot afford to purchase. This being so, the Government should consider importing cheaper varieties of rice that the poor can afford to purchase. These varieties should be of acceptable taste and nutritional value.
- The Government has already stated that it wants to address land issues in Cambodia. But to really benefit the poor, the specific land issues identified by the poor must be taken into consideration. In terms of prioritizing how those issues can be resolved, the Government should explore more participatory means when dealing with the poor. The land issues at stake are not only about ownership, but of secure access to land as well. The findings suggest that the Government should reconsider the effects of land redistribution in the late 1980s on the poor. Urban housing could also be included in this land policy.
- Affordable public health care is essential for the poor. It is not simply a case of stationing trained public health workers in villages or providing a ready supply of cheap medicines, but it is a commitment to preventive rather than curative health care. Some important programs pertaining to women's health, such as reproductive health activities, have not been heard of in most of the villages visited by the PPA teams.
- To ensure that more educational opportunities are made available, the findings suggest that Government adopt pro-poor education policies. This would include providing teachers and health workers more incentives for working in rural, which are mainly poor, areas than in urban centers.
- The Government should recognize that small-scale irrigation systems contribute significantly to the enhancement of food security by providing dry season opportunities to cultivate rice and other agricultural crops. The Government acknowledges that operating and maintaining these small-scale systems will be more effective if forms of participatory irrigation management are encouraged. The PPA findings also recognize the importance of flood control.
- Potable drinking water is a real concern of the poor. The Government should devise a participatory mapping program of existing sources of potable drinking water and determine to what extent the poor have been excluded. PPA participants said they are prepared to contribute toward the cost of building tube or pump wells if they can benefit, but not toward the provision of ponds. Construction of ponds may work better as food-for-work programs.
- People want informal micro-finance, but clearly the Government currently cannot, by itself, meet the needs of all the rural poor. It also appears ineffective in trying to get urban-based banks in Cambodia to provide micro-finance to the poor—particularly in rural areas—although the Government could encourage these banks to make a portion of their funds available to reputable micro-finance providers for disbursement by way of re-lending to the poor. However, it is acknowledged that a sound financial system is needed to sustain micro-finance activities. Of course, the re-lending practice does increase the interest rate, which is even initially is often not affordable by the poor.
- In the field of natural resources management, the Government has made impressive gains in the past few years in some areas. Recently the Government announced that existing private fishing lots would be subject to critical scrutiny. The PPA participants strongly think this scrutiny has to be extended to fishing lots that are jointly owned by the Government (or some of its officials) and the private sector. Concerns with biodiversity have to be considered in the context of the impact on the poor. The Government encourages community-based management and ownership of natural resources as well as supports

alternative livelihood programs so that Cambodia's natural resources can be sustainably used.

- Local authorities would be more effective and accountable if they were to be directly elected by the community. The Government, by promoting commune elections, could ensure that local authorities are more effective at reporting the needs of communities they serve rather than simply relaying news in times of emergencies.
- Gender awareness and development policies that address the specific needs of women living in poverty must be implemented. Issues in relation to food insecurity as they affect women and men need to be clearly understood in order to grasp the differences, if they exist.
- The Government should not overlook cultural or religious development programs. It may be unrealistic to expect the Government to fund the construction of pagodas or mosques for the poor, but it can ensure that public land is available for such purposes and that it does not impose unnecessary administrative obstacles.
- Creating nonagricultural employment opportunities in the private sector is a high priority of the Government. The Government, however, has to be aware of how some private sector employers take advantage of poor and vulnerable people from the countryside and needs to ensure that labor practices are closely monitored.

INTRODUCTION

Background

My poverty is having no land, buffalo, hoe, rake, plow, transport, mosquito net, cooking pots or even plates to eat from and spoon and fork to pick up the food. This means I cannot possibly get enough food to eat because I lack the things I need to keep me alive for much longer.

The “voice” is of a woman in her mid-60s living in Kampong Thom, who in her lifetime has known the comforts of prosperity and the cruelty of war and in the return to peace is left with nothing.

The Royal Government of Cambodia, with technical assistance from the Asian Development Bank (ADB), conducted a nationwide Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA) between late October and mid-December 2000. This PPA was part of the preparation of the Second Socioeconomic Development Plan, 2001–2005. The primary objective of the PPA was to provide a qualitative assessment of poverty involving the participation of the poor themselves. It also acknowledges that poverty is multi-dimensional and more than the lack of income. This report includes a synthesis of the findings of the PPA and suggests how they can be of use to local communities, the Government, civil society and international funding agencies.

The current poverty line in Cambodia is the cash equivalent of KR54,050 per capita per month. This is based on the cash value of what it takes to consume 2,100 calories of energy and 58 grams of protein per day per person and to cover basic items like clothing and shelter. This is equivalent to US\$0.45 per day, which is considerably less than the World Bank’s “dollar-a-day” adjusted measurement for extreme poverty. As explained in

The People Assessed

The Cambodia PPA involved 154 villages in 70 communes of all 24 provinces and municipalities and 15 nonrural urban socioeconomic groups. Thirteen percent of the PPAs were conducted in the villages of ethnic minorities. People targeted for the PPA included the rural poor, women and children, farmers and fisherfolk, ethnic minority groups, female-headed households, demobilized soldiers, orphans, street children, sex workers, plantation workers, garment workers, garbage collectors and cyclo-drivers.

Chapter 2, the PPA has not simply relied on this poverty line to decide who is living in poverty in Cambodia; it also has included additional criteria developed by the World Food Program (WFP), which provides a sharper poverty focus. It is interesting, though, to briefly note the quantitative poverty assessments that were made in Cambodia prior to the PPA. These quantitative poverty assessments¹ are summarized below:

- *1993/94 Baseline Poverty Profile*, based on data from the 1993/94 Cambodia Socioeconomic Survey (CSES). It found that poverty was relatively low in Phnom Penh (only 11 percent of people living below the poverty line) but much higher in other urban areas (37 percent) and highest in rural areas (43 percent). Nationwide, 39 percent of the population were below the poverty line: 22 percent with per capita spending lower than the food poverty line. Poverty rates were highest in households headed by farmers (46 percent) and lowest in households headed by public sector workers (20 percent). More than 75 percent of the poor lived in households headed by farmers.

¹ See the results of the poverty profile and poverty assessment in the Government’s 1999 publication of the Cambodia Poverty Index prepared with support from United Nations Development Programme, Swedish International Development Authority and World Bank, and the World Food Program’s poverty mapping exercises prepared in 2000.

- *1998 Poverty Assessment*, based on data from the 1997 Cambodia Socioeconomic Survey. It found that of the 36.1 percent of people nationwide living in poverty, 11.1 percent were in Phnom Penh, 29.7 percent in other urban areas and 40.1 percent in rural areas.
- *1999 Poverty Mapping*, arranged by WFP using data from the 1997 Cambodia Socioeconomic Survey and the 1998 National Census. The WFP also developed its own criteria (explained in Chapter 2) to guide poverty mapping of each commune in Cambodia. This poverty mapping has resulted in identifying three categories of poor communes.

As explained in Chapter 2, the PPA linked its selection of communes to these quantitative assessments of poverty, the most influential being the WFP's mapping. The identification of poor communes was substantiated by local authorities, community members and nongovernment organizations (NGOs).

Sociohistorical Context of Poverty

There is an important sociohistorical and political economy context to poverty in Cambodia that sets it apart from most of its neighboring countries.² During the American war with Viet Nam, it was subjected to aerial bombardments. It was also during that period an innocuous Maoist rebel group, known as the Khmer Rouge (Red Khmer), gained tremendous momentum once its ambitions were supported by the forces of the then-deposed prime minister who was trying to regain power after being overthrown in a coup. But it was the Khmer Rouge, led by a man called Pol Pot, who marched into the country's capital of Phnom Penh in 1975 and took control. And so began, simplistically speaking, a three-year reign of horror in the name of social experimenting to return the country to an agrarian society. People in the cities were marched to the countryside and made to work along with rural people manually digging canals and planting rice to feed an already somewhat impoverished

nation. Up to two million people are believed to have died from disease, starvation or outright murder at the hands of the Khmer Rouge cadre (of people who disobeyed orders, of people whose "crime" was to be educated or prosperous) in that period that lasted until the end of 1978 when Viet Nam invaded to push out the Khmer Rouge and erect a new government. Opposition and outrage quickly divided into four major factions, including the Khmer Rouge, that remained in armed conflict for all the 1980s. It simmered only in 1991 when all the factions signed a peace pact that allowed for a United Nations peacekeeping force of military and civilian components to operate as an interim government and prepare the country for elections and ideally, some degree of democratic stability. Internal conflict did not subside completely although a Cambodian government was installed with the unique compromise situation of having two prime ministers, and two political parties, share power. The constitutional monarchy was restored and some degree of peace settled into the shattered remains of the kingdom of Cambodia. The Khmer Rouge, which had backed out of the earlier peace agreement, continued pockets of banditry and rebellion against the Government until an amnesty program for rebel soldiers was initiated in the mid 1990s. The final demise of the radical rebels and that brutal chapter of Cambodian history were marked with the death of Pol Pot in 1998.

The peace dividend is just now starting to pay off, but the destruction of both physical and social infrastructure and loss of trained people who were murdered long ago or more recently have emigrated abroad remains devastating. The number of Cambodians severely traumatized as a result of the internecine conflict that tore the society apart still lingers.

Many older Cambodians made it clear through the PPA discussion that before war engulfed their society in the early 1970s, Cambodia was a much better society to live in than it is today. By "better" they meant they were not as poor. This is a matter for further analysis, but it does pervade perceptions about poverty in Cambodia held by an older generation of Cambodians and cannot be overlooked.

Poverty in Cambodia is not a modern phenomenon, although its dimensions have changed over the years. There are recurring themes in Cambodian culture that address notions associated with poverty. Some of these recurring themes are briefly examined in this report.

Cambodians, or at least ethnic Khmer, believe Cambodia is rich in resources. They believe there are enough resources for all people who can be considered belong-

² See the following for a reasonably diverse view of Cambodia's recent past: David Chandler, 1988, *A History of Cambodia*, Chiang Mai: Silkwood; Jean Delvert, 1961, *Le Paysan Cambodgien*, Paris: Mouton; May Ebiara, 1968, "Svay: A Khmer Village in Cambodia" (unpublished PhD thesis), New York: Columbia; Hu Nim, 1982, "Land Tenure and Social Structure in Kampuchea," in B. Kiernan and C. Boua (eds), *Peasantry and Politics in Kampuchea, 1942-1981*, London: Zed; Ben Kiernan (1985), *How Pol Pot Came to Power*, London: Verso; Marie-Alexandrine Martin, 1994, *Cambodia: A Shattered Society*, Berkeley: University of California Press; Eva Mysliwiec, 1988, *Punishing the Poor: The International Isolation of Kampuchea*, Oxford: Oxfam (UK); Laura Summers, 1995, "The Sources of Economic Grievance in Sihanouk's Cambodia," *Southeast Journal of Social Science*, Vol.14 (1), pp.16-34; Paula Uimonen, 1994, *Responses to Revolutionary Change: A Study of Social Memory in a Khmer Village* (unpublished MA thesis), University of Stockholm: Department of Anthropology.

ing to *srok khmer* (literally the Khmer village). They point with pride to the archaeological grandeur of Angkor Wat and to what Cambodian people used to be capable of doing in the past. It might be questioned whether all the Angkorian “God-Kings” were wise, but most certainly Jayaraman VII, who built a portion of the Angkor temples, is credited as being a king that exemplified all the virtues of someone who truly cared for his subjects. Cambodia’s historic richness is also seen as extending to the perceived abundant natural resources with more than enough land to cultivate rice and other crops and a climate that is not particularly harsh.

Given that perception, which only until recently would have been true, it is hard for Cambodians to understand why the last three decades of the 20th century involved extreme hardship for them. Nowhere in Cambodian history is there mention of Cambodians being hungry or dying from starvation like many of them did during the 1970s and early 1980s. During this time, there was little or no food to see most people through the period between the planting and the harvesting seasons. It is one thing for some households in the village to experience food insecurity, but it is quite another for most of the community to be finding themselves in a similar position. As the findings from the PPA demonstrate, some people continue to know nothing else but regular periods of persistent hunger.

A recurrent theme in the discourses of poverty is the economic gap between towns and countryside. The Khmer Rouge exploited this theme to mobilize the rural poor against the towns, including the urban poor. The rural poor were the only moral Khmer, believed the Khmer Rouge (although many of them were also brutalized by the ruling cadre). The urban poor were “immoral,” irrespective as to whether they worked in a bar, tire factory or drove a cyclo, although it was the “parasitical” rich that received the most contempt from the Khmer Rouge. The rich, in this simplistic view of the world, simply live off the work of the poor. While rural people may think it is

wrong that the towns consume most resources, they believe there is little or nothing they can do about this.

Another recurrent theme is that some regions are more prosperous than others. For instance, Battambang in northwestern Cambodia is considered by many as the country’s “breadbasket” because of its very fertile soil. People do not believe that anyone could ever be poor in that province, although in reality there are many who are now living in poverty there. In a similar manner, local communities living around the perimeter of the Tonle Sap are considered prosperous, as are *chamcar* farmers living along the banks of major rivers, for example in Kampong Cham and Kandal provinces. People living in close proximity to the Tonle Sap have access to as much fish as they need, which is a measure of well-offness, while *chamcar* farmers have access to a reliable source of water and the means to access markets.

The Khmer Rouge treated such farmers very harshly during the time they were in power.

Conclusion

A number of quantitative poverty assessments have been undertaken during the past decade in Cambodia. But quantitative surveys traditionally measure poverty in consumption terms, leaving aside other important factors that impact the poor. It is widely recognized that poverty is multidimensional in nature, involving a host of sociological, historical and cultural factors. The Cambodia PPA was meant to incorporate that multidimensional aspect. What follows is a report that utilizes the strength of quantitative assessments in locating where the poor live, with a more qualitative understanding of why people are poor. The two approaches are designed to be complementary in enhancing a better understanding of poverty. At the heart of the PPA’s strength is the voices of the poor. This report reflects those voices.

THE PPA APPROACH

The Nature of PPAs

The PPA is a qualitative social research approach that is designed to find out what perceptions the poor have toward poverty, the issues that concern them and how they would like to see these issues resolved.

The PPA is an approach (and family of methodologies) for shared learning between local people and outsiders to enable the local people, government officials, civil society groups and development specialists to plan together appropriate interventions for poverty reduction. The PPA belongs to that family of participatory approaches (which have a history dating back nearly two decades to the introduction of participatory forms of rural appraisal) commonly referred to as participatory rural appraisal (PRA). The PRA was intended to complement methodologies associated with the rapid rural appraisal (RRA) that had been used in the socioeconomic analysis of rural communities.

Beginning with the work of Robert Chambers at the Institute of Development Studies (Sussex) in 1992, it was recognized that survey instruments associated with the more traditional socioeconomic surveys, and increasingly the RRA, were largely passive in nature and researcher-based with local people being treated as subjects to glean data from rather than as partners in the research process.³ Hence, the PPA is an approach that does not only rely on extracting information from local communities but also on facilitating processes whereby local communities can develop their own perspectives on poverty.

The following table compares PPA, RRA and surveys to illustrate the differences among the three methodologies.

Table 1: Comparison of PPA, RRA and Surveys

Feature	PPA	RRA	Surveys
Duration	Short	Short	Long
Cost	Low to medium	Low to medium	Medium to high
Participation	Medium to high	Low to medium	Low to none
Methods	Basket of tools	Basket of tools	Standardized methods
Major research tool	Focus groups	Semi-structured interviewing	Formal questionnaires
Sampling	Small to medium purposive	Small to medium purposive	Large random
Statistical analysis	Little or none	Little or none	Major part
Analysis	In the field	Back in office	Back in office
Validation	Preferred	Not necessary	Not necessary

To increase the PPA's representativeness, linkages, where possible, to quantitative poverty assessments can even further deepen our understanding of poverty. Identifying poor villages using nationwide socioeconomic surveys and census data along with other research can provide the basis for a more targeted setting for the PPA. Drawing on targeted sites using this approach can prove to be very effective in the broader context of designing poverty-reduction measures that benefit the poor. The qualitative portion of the PPA can provide "ethnographic flesh" that quantitative poverty assessment lacks.

In Cambodia, a variety of NGOs have utilized a variety of methodologies associated with participatory researching for much of the 1990s in selected sites, most notably where they have been active. However, this PPA is the first time the Government has supported forms of participatory research on a nationwide basis. If we take

³ See, Robert Chambers, 1992, *Rural Appraisal: Rapid, Relaxed and Participatory*, Sussex: Institute of Development Studies; Jules Pretty, 1995, *Participatory Learning and Action: A Trainer's Guide*, London: International Institute for Environment and Development; M. Sconhuth and U. Kievelitz, 1994, *Participatory Learning Approaches: Rapid Rural Appraisal, Participatory Appraisal. An Introductory Guide*, Frankfurt: German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ); and Jennifer Rietbergen-McCracken and Deepa Narayan, *Participation and Social Assessment*, Washington: World Bank.

into account the relatively short period of peace Cambodia has enjoyed in recent times, this must be considered a major step forward. How the process was designed by the stakeholders to facilitate Cambodia's first national PPA is described below.

Planning for Cambodia's PPA—The consultative process

As part of the PPA process, a Participatory Poverty Assessment Questionnaire Workshop was conducted in Phnom Penh in mid-October 2000. The workshop was designed to provide an opportunity for stakeholders, including the poor, to be involved at the start of the PPA process. The objective of the workshop was to discuss the criteria for village selection and access PPA methods and questions. In addition, a stakeholder questionnaire was distributed to civil society groups with invitations to the workshop. This questionnaire asked individuals and organizations to explain the nature and understanding of their involvement in poverty reduction efforts, including their definitions of poverty.

There were more than 90 participants in the workshop, including government officials of the relevant ministries (a first for the Ministry of Planning (MoP)), bilateral and multilateral organizations, NGOs and other representatives of civil society, the private sector and the poor. Originally, invitations were extended to 10 villagers to attend the workshop, but only four were able to participate due to the heaviest flooding in Cambodia in more than 40 years that blocked road access.

What the few villagers who did attend had to say about the meaning of poverty and how it affects their priorities and other discussions about practical interventions to reduce poverty highlighted the workshop. Making their observations heard took considerable courage and introduced an important dimension to the proceedings. Hearing the voices of the poor is the key concern of qualitative researchers who seek coherence (the extent to which methods meet the goals), openness and discourse (the extent to which researchers are allowed to discuss the researched data and interpret them together).

The workshop reached consensus on appropriate issues the PPA should cover. These issues included:

- Definitions of poverty;
- Categories of households in targeted villages;
- Criteria of each category;

- Number or proportion of households in each category;
- Causes and effects of poverty;
- Gender-related poverty issues; and
- Views of the poor for poverty reduction.

The workshop participants also agreed that the following methods, based in part on their own experiences to date in Cambodia, should be used as part of the PPA process:

- Focus group discussions (FGDs);
- Listing;
- Scoring/ranking;
- Prioritizing;
- Cause-effect solution analysis; and
- Individual case studies.

The PPA Steering Committee strongly believed that the ethnic dimension of poverty should also be focused upon, the argument being that ethnic groups as stakeholders also have a right to participate in and benefit from poverty reduction strategies.

The PPA coordinators decided that despite the acceptance of these methods, it was also important to retain a degree of flexibility and to utilize the best participatory practices available, depending on the local context. People familiar with rural activities have found that large numbers of uninvited villagers tend to mill around a particular discussion and actively interject unsolicited opinions. This kind of behavior was to be expected in the PPA proceedings, and the coordinators insisted these situations should be treated positively but in a way that doesn't disrupt the discussion. At the subsequent training workshop for the PPA facilitators (team members), it was stressed that where possible, FGDs should be facilitated but not dominated by the team members, this being the main participatory component of the assessment. (Throughout this report, FGDs and PPA will be used interchangeably to connote the sessions where villagers talked and shared their views and experiences.)

Participants at the workshop also discussed the selection of villages for the PPA. A consensus emerged that only households from villages specifically identified as being poor should participate in the PPA and that selection should be based on:

- Remoteness;
- Absence of accessible road;
- No school or other educational facility;
- Absence of marketplace;
- No health center;
- Lack of potable drinking water;

- Absence of irrigation system;
- No development project; and
- Lack of arable land.

During the actual PPA, these criteria were utilized in the selection process in addition to other criteria described in the following section.

Criteria Utilized for Selection of Poor Villages

For the purpose of the PPA, the Cambodian territory was divided into four regions: Northeastern Mountain, Tonle Sap, Central and Mekong Basin. Four teams of three facilitators were each assigned a region, and the number of villages to be included were approximately equally for each region.

The PPA was designed to maximize the participation of all stakeholders in the processes associated with it. The PPA used WFP's poverty mapping work to link the selection of potential PPA sites to the quantitative socioeconomic surveys and the National Census. The Government defines poor households as those with consumption expenditure below KR54,050 per capita per month, which is similar to WFP's description. This definition is based on the necessary poverty-line expenditure to afford a 2,100-calorie food basket per day and other minimal basic expenditures. Additionally, WFP used five other criteria for constructing indicators to determine where poor communes would be found in Cambodia: (i) cropland per household, (ii) forestland per household, (iii) female literacy, (iv) dependency ratio and (v) access to safe drinking water.

It is interesting to look more closely at the poverty mapping exercise and what this actually meant in the context of utilizing WFP criteria to assist in the selection of poor villages for the PPA.

WFP utilized the National Census of 1998, which was not only the first census since 1963 but it was also more comprehensive together with the Cambodian Socioeconomic Survey (CSES) of 1997 to identify areas of poverty in Cambodia. However, WFP discarded the first round of the CSES because of data problems. WFP instead relied on the second round of the 3,000-household socioeconomic survey, which it was satisfied was sufficiently indepth to complement the other stand-alone surveys. The WFP could not identify poor households in specific villages because the results at the village level

were statistically insignificant. Also, poor communes in most parts of Oddar Meanchey province were not identified by the WFP poverty mapping due to missing information. The PPA sought to identify poor households as per the recommendations of the October workshop and found the WFP work in identifying poor communes to be of great use.

As part of the poverty mapping exercise, WFP predicted consumption expenditure for 2.1 million households. This is how WFP came up with consumption expenditure below the poverty line. WFP calculated this to be KR54,050 per capita per month. This estimate was then compared to the 1997 WFP poverty index of a pre-selected 550 communes, the 1998 WFP selected high priority districts (41 out of 173 districts accounting for a total of 412 communes) and the 1999 WFP five-indicator poverty index for 1,600 communes described above.

Three different categories of communes were selected by WFP as being poor. The first category had the following characteristics: 40 percent of households classified as poor by the WFP analysis, the poorest 25 percent of communes in the 1997 poverty index, the 1998 analysis of communes within the high priority districts and the poorest 25 percent of communes in the 1999 five-indicator poverty index. According to this analysis, communes that met these criteria would have a projected March 2001 population of 505,000 people. The second category of commune was similar to the first except that it did not include an analysis of the 1999 five poverty indicators. There were 198 communes in this category with a projected March 2001 population of 1,502,000 people. The third category of poor communes were those where more than 50 percent of households were classified as poor, their projected March 2001 population being 424,000 people.

According to this analysis of the various databases and indicators, the total number of communes classified as poor was 358, totaling 2,431,000 people, or 20 percent of the population. Due to the lack of data, 27 other communes were also automatically classified as poor. These were communes that were not under government control until early 1999 (following the outcome of the 1998 elections), and prior to then, the Census and CSES could not be conducted in these communes.

The lists of poor communes were developed for poverty mapping, based on the combined work of WFP and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development staff in the field. The following criteria were identified as what

the WFP field staff had to keep in mind when selecting poor communes:

- Poor agricultural production and lack of potential;
- Access to natural resources severely diminished in the past few years;
- Ratio of rice-indebted households to nonkinship based households;
- Few development agencies or NGOs working;
- Problems with land mines and other land clearing difficulties;
- Comparison with other regions in Cambodia; and
- High positive-growth possibilities in the next three years.

The field staff then came up with a list of 424 communes, and the two lists (analysis involving 358 communes and field staff list of 424 communes) were then compared with each other. The following results were found: In 166 communes, both lists overlapped; in 206 communes the analysis suggested those communes as poor, while the field staff had not selected them for consideration; and in 248 communes, the field staff had selected them as poor, but the analysis had not. The differences are also in part due to the fact that in remote areas, an NGO or a WFP partner selected the poor commune and in certain provinces the staff had selected specific villages that had recently suffered from displacement, mines or other civil insecurity related problems but when analyzed according to WFP criteria, were not classified as poor.

How did the WFP poverty mapping influence the PPA? Where possible, the PPA was based on identifying the poorest communes in each of the provinces where WFP data was available. However, WFP did not have data for all the provinces so it was not possible to exclusively rely on WFP data. Moreover, because the PPA had to be undertaken in all 24 provinces it was not possible simply to focus on the poorest communes in Cambodia. For the most part, the WFP analysis has proven to be correct at the commune level. As WFP did not claim to identify specifically poor villages or households within these poor communes, it was necessary for the PPA teams to identify the poorest villages. A decision was made not to identify poor households because of the time factor involved but members of the poorest households in these villages were encouraged to participate in the PPA.

The PPA teams facilitated the participation of provincial authorities, most of whom could identify the poorest communes but not necessarily the poorest villages. This was complemented by the participation of local authorities at the district level who were able to identify the poorest

communes, except for some district level authorities who for their own purposes chose to identify some communes that were not necessarily the poorest. The PPA teams substantiated this information with existing data and with local authorities at the commune level. Where there was some doubt, PPA team members conducted a rapid observational appraisal of all communes. Where development agencies and NGOs, such as the Cambodia Area Rehabilitation and Regeneration program, had a good knowledge of specific communes, their advice was keenly sought by the PPA team.

Training for the PPA

Before deployment into the field on 25 October 2000, a one-week training course for PPA teams was conducted in Phnom Penh. To ensure that the MoP had an important stake in the PPA and to provide them with the learning experience necessary to participate in any subsequent PPA, six staff members, divided equally by gender, were selected from the MoP, with the other team members being selected by the PPA coordinators.

During the week of experiential training, there was classroom-based instruction in participatory research approaches with emphasis on the FGD technique and understanding the criteria for identifying poor villagers. The PPA teams rehearsed the way they would conduct the PPA in the field, particularly how to facilitate the FGD, which is the central component. The facilitators were told to introduce themselves to the participants and to elaborate about why the PPA was required and how the findings would be used and translated into actions. PPA team members decided they would rather let the FGD participants talk about poverty first, take part in ranking exercises next, and finally the facilitators would raise

Figure 1: A woman in Mondol Kiri using plastic symbols to rank her individual preferences as to how she would solve the problem of poverty as it affects her and her family.



issues that were not covered by the FGD participants. PPA team members were also told that they should cover gender-related issues, those associated with good governance and where relevant, ethnic minority issues. The PPA teams were also tutored on how to encourage FGD participants to talk about their own solutions to poverty.

For the ranking exercise, participants were to first be asked to list the problems in their community in terms of seriousness, frequency, causes and influences. Then they were to rank their problems in order of importance. This would enable a prioritization of issues to be made during the synthesis of the PPA's findings.

Because many participants would likely be illiterate, team members were to resort to using visual techniques as well. The PPA team members designed pictures and symbols in the classroom, though in the field they usually had to rely on plastic objects for participants to use to make their listings and rankings. Preference ranking works well as a technique because it can reveal interesting discrepancies among group members. It is also good for identifying gender differences. Team members were instructed to have separate discussions with women at each PPA site if gender issues could not be explored openly in the FGD.

To ensure that the teams had some hands-on experience, a pilot FGD was conducted among garbage collectors and streetchildren in Phnom Penh. On completing the pilot, the findings were synthesized in the classroom and then discussed with both participant groups.

The PPA team members also interviewed three people at random in the streets of Phnom Penh on the meaning of poverty. This was intended to give the team members some experience in conducting semi-structured interviews with people at the PPA sites. The results of the random interviews were discussed back in the classroom, and PPA team members were guided on how to write up the findings from interviews.

The PPA needed to be synchronized with the requirements of the first draft of the Second Socioeconomic Development Plan (SEDPII) Workshop in March 2001. The training period was deemed sufficient because the PPA teams would become more competent as they gained additional field experience. To ensure a consistent and proficient approach, a quality assurance monitoring system was employed. The Cambodian team leader randomly monitored approximately 50 percent of the PPAs while the international consultant hired to coordinate the assessment monitored another 10 percent and provided advice and guidance when needed.



Figure 2: Even by motorcycle it was difficult to access the flooded PPA sites like this one in Siem Reap.

Deployment to the Field

On moving to the field, there was a major logistical problem with which the team members had to contend: Cambodia's worst flooding in four decades. The PPA coordinators initially thought the timing could be mitigated by quick deployment to the Northeast Mountain region. The flooding proved to be overwhelming in some provinces, and the teams soon discovered that in order to access some villages they could only use a motorcycle, buffalo cart, small boat, bicycle or proceed on foot. Identification of and access to some of the villages took more than three times the length of time planned. This was in part because prior to deployment to the field, the names of specific villages were unknown (data from the National Institute of Statistics only identified villages by a code, not by their actual name).

Taking an optimistic view, the PPA teams decided the unfriendly weather situation presented an ideal opportunity to see how flooding impacted upon the poor. What they observed was echoed in the PPA findings, that the poor are more likely to be severely affected by natural disasters than nonpoor Cambodians.

The PPA team's initial visit to the field was to consult with the provincial level authorities to check if they agreed with WFP's assessment of poor communes. In most instances, this involved dealing with provincial MoP officials. At other times, it also involved dealing with Provincial Rural Development officials who had considerable experience with WFP. Consulting with provincial authorities added considerable traveling time for the PPA teams because most of the poor communes are located some distance from the provincial capitals. As the PPA progressed, it became increasingly clear that the

provincial authorities did not always know where the poor communes were located so the four teams decided to bypass consultations with provincial officials. Had they not done so, the PPA would not have been completed in the time scheduled by the MoP.

The next level of collaboration involved working with officials in the districts and communes that WFP had identified as poor and explaining to them the poverty criteria. While all district authorities could identify the poorest communes, they did not necessarily know the poorest villages within these communes. It was then necessary for the teams to have the commune authorities identify those villages.

Yet, there were some instances when commune officials identified villages that were not among the poorest and attempted to direct the teams to these villages. To counter this bias, at least one team member would undertake a visual appraisal of each village, noting the quality of housing, market-based activity, the quality and quantity of maturing rice in the field (early season rice was being harvested in the latter part of the PPA), whether there was a school and the quality of clothing worn by villagers. This was a very cursory appraisal, but given the lack of any existing data based on poor villages, this form of substantiation seemed necessary. While the teams were not always successful at countering local bias, as was discovered during monitoring visits, in general they only targeted the PPA in the poorest villages.

When selecting FGD participants, the teams relied on both their own assessment and that of village authorities. Sometimes commune authorities or even district authorities, and in even more rare instances, provincial officials from the MoP were involved in the selection process. Team members exercised the power of veto when the selection process resulted in too many of any group, such as men or older people.

In other instances, team members asked for volunteers from among the villagers and were inundated with too many volunteers (contrary to the prediction made during the questionnaire workshop that local people would be reluctant to participate). Of course, many of them thought the teams were interviewing for emergency assistance because of the floods; it took some time to explain that this was not their purpose.

The typical FGD involved one team member acting as facilitator, another as note-taker and the other doing a combination of things, such as recording the views of participants who could not read or write. To ensure that illiterate participants were not disadvantaged or that the points they were making were not put into the note-taker's



Figure 3: Focus group discussion by candlelight with the ethnic Phnong in Mondol Kiri.

language, they were asked to use plastic objects to rank and prioritize poverty issues they considered important.

It was a deliberate intention of the facilitators not to pre-empt the participants during an FGD. For instance, if someone raised the issue of his or her household having too many children, the facilitators did not suggest that family planning and birth spacing might be of assistance; instead they only listened to and recorded the participant's comments.

In addition to the FGDs, the team members conducted semi-structured interviews with key informants, often village, commune or district authorities, but sometimes with older people, including a small number of Buddhist monks and Muslim imam. These interviews were designed into the PPA methodology to clarify issues that appeared unclear in the review of the FGD, which was always done the same day or the morning after. It was sometimes necessary to schedule the FGD in the late afternoon or evening, particularly among upland ethnic minority groups, because they would spend all day hunting and gathering. In most instances, the PPA teams tried to analyze the findings of the PPA on the spot, with participants joining in the analysis.

As had been expected, there were times when it was nearly impossible to conduct the FGD with selected individuals because many nonparticipants kept adding their opinion. To avoid turning the FGD into a community-based discussion dominated by the most talkative members, it was sometimes necessary for one of the team members to distract the nonparticipants in a separate conversation, which also provided useful information. Given the fact that this was a PPA, it seemed unnecessary to exclude people at a particular site because they were not formally involved in the FGD. By stepping out of the

formal arrangement and talking with other groups, a team member still gathered useful assessments, particularly from women, and the FGD could smoothly continue.

There was only one occurrence (Stung Treng) when a team was denied permission to initiate a PPA. The village authorities were in an intoxicated state and told the team members to leave the village immediately even though they were in a very remote location. The team decided it would be counter-productive to argue and left quite discouraged as this turned out to be one of the poorest villages in the entire PPA.

The four teams were able to complete the PPA in every province of Cambodia. The last discussion took place with monks in Phnom Penh on 20 December 2000, 57 days after the assessment process began.

Codification and Analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), a quantitative software package, was used as a supplementary tool for data preparation, counting, grouping, presentation and relating the disparate data.⁴ The most productive use for SPSS was in generating frequency tables based on qualitative variables in order that the cross-tabulation of various observations could be aggregated from the four regions in Cambodia. For instance, the frequency table demonstrated that 26 percent of all FGD participants considered domestic violence to be a major issue affecting the poor. But through cross-tabulation it was found that this was a larger issue in the Mekong Plain region at 32.1 percent compared to 25 percent in the Northeastern Mountain region, 20.5 percent in the Coastal region and 7.1 percent in the Tonle Sap region.

During the FGDs, particularly when women participated without men present, there was often more complex accounts of domestic violence than provided in mixed groups. Using cards, women could also identify whether they ranked domestic violence as a major problem. This was helpful for women who did not want to be outspoken;

no one except the facilitator knew how these women ranked the causes of violence in the household or village. The sequence ranking revealed the seriousness that domestic violence was given as an issue. The frequency of domestic violence was fixed; women estimated the number of days in the previous month (30 days total) that they had been physically or verbally abused by their husbands.

In another example, the PPA tried to determine what physical infrastructure projects the poor think need to be funded. Participants were asked to draw a matrix on either the ground or on paper with the options (roads, bridges, irrigation schemes, community wells) along the horizontal axis and the elicited criteria (food-for-work, micro-finance, paid labor, voluntary labor) along the vertical axis. The participants were asked to assign scores to each of the items, according to their relative merit, distributing a fixed number of plastic objects among the different items. When the matrix was complete, the ranking results were cross-checked by asking participants if they could pursue only one of the choices, which would they choose. SPSS was used to tabulate the frequency of these rankings from all PPA sites.

As noted earlier, preliminary analysis of the PPA occurred in the field and involved both the PPA team members and the local communities. In some instances where local officials accompanied the PPA teams, they also participated in this preliminary analysis. The results of this preliminary analysis, where possible, were discussed with all FGD participants and any necessary amendments were made. The synthesis of all the findings from the national PPA was then compiled in Phnom Penh. Ideally, once this synthesis has been completed, via this report, it would be useful to return to the PPA sites to validate the findings with the community, not just with those who participated.

This PPA has incorporated both qualitative and quantitative techniques to draw out findings, deepen, and clarify the understanding of poverty in the Cambodian context. By their very nature, PPAs are characterized by their methodological flexibility. What follows in this report is the synthesis of the findings.

⁴ For an account on the uses of SPSS, see S. Saranatakos, *Social Research*, Melbourne: MacMillan, especially pp. 319-27.

CHARACTERISTICS OF PEOPLE LIVING IN POVERTY

Definitions of Poverty by the Poor

In a PPA it is critical to understand how people living in poverty actually define poverty. The following examines the range of perceptions among the poor in Cambodia, including how they perceive poverty on a regional, gender and ethnic basis.

A lack of food security was the dominant characteristic in villagers' definitions. Explained a man in Prey Veng:

When food is there you eat it as though you might not get any food for some time. When work is offered you treat this work as though you might never get any more. And when you get more food than you can eat, you think the Lord Buddha must have shown you compassion.

A study of the overall synthesis of the PPA findings implies a certain resignation among many Cambodians that there is not much they can actually do to reduce their own poverty. At the very most, it seems the best they think they can hope for is the temporary alleviation of their hunger.

In a coastal village of Kep where a PPA was conducted among a Cham community and both men and women spoke out, two participants defined poverty as:

The inability to be certain that one can use as much of local natural resources as necessary for household purposes or to be able to sell to purchase basic necessities.

It is also the inability to be certain that the land one occupies truly belongs to your family and that no one can take it away from you. If you can't be cer-

tain about these two things then you cannot be certain that you will have enough food to feed the family.

Uncertainties in relation to local natural resources and land are definitive characteristics for many poor people in Cambodia, not just a lowland ethnic minority group such as the Cham.

This does not mean that all ethnic minorities in Cambodia had the same perception as the Cham **or even a clear sense of poverty**. Explained a few Stieng participants in Kratie province:

We do not have a term for poverty. It is not in our culture to compare our life with other ethnic groups. We are not envious of other people.

They can have as much as they like so long as they do not destroy us.

We cannot imagine a situation where we have nothing: All around us there is something. But perhaps poverty is when we begin to worry about whether we can continue to live the way we have.

As it is difficult to ensure we will have all the food we need, then this must be poverty.

The Tumpoun in Ratanakiri are more explicit about how they would define poverty as is evident from the following point made by a tribal elder:

Our whole identity is bound up with the land. It is not ours to give to anyone else but to take care of because it was given to us by our ancestors, and it is our responsibility to make sure this land is handed down to the next generation. If we cannot do that then we are really living in poverty. Having enough food to eat is linked to whether we can please our ancestors. Even if we have all the money in Cambodia, if we lose our domain we will not be rich.

Lack of food certainly tops nearly every groups' list of what defines poverty. Of course, what precipitates the food depletion differs among Cambodia's different peoples; for the Stieng and Tumpoun it is linked to loss of land and cultural identity. For the ethnic minorities in general who participated in this PPA, loss of cultural identity is another defining characteristic of poverty. However, this problem does not exist for the ethnically dominant lowland Khmer, the Cham or Vietnamese ethnic minority groups.

While men and women generally offered similar definitions for poverty, there were instances where women clearly had their own interpretations. During an FGD in Kandal, a female traditional midwife made the following distinction:

Poverty is not just whether you have enough food to eat, but when people no longer cooperate with one another, when a husband thinks a wife does not know anything, when we villagers are told that it is our fault that we are poor, and when we let outsiders take advantage of us.

This is an interesting multi-dimensional definition of poverty with which other women in that particular FGD agreed. But when the definition was put to male FGD participants in the same village, they disagreed with the statement that men no longer listen to women. During another PPA one younger woman offered:

Poverty is when we lack the ability to recognize what the cause of poverty is. If we did not agree to go to war with one another, we would not have poverty today, that is, if you believe what older people say. I was not born when there was peace and prosperity so it is hard to imagine what it was like. But if it was so good why did we have war?

There was little consensus about this definition, particularly the argument that people themselves were responsible for their own poverty.

Some of the villagers who participated in this PPA were quite bitter when they defined poverty, such as a group of demobilized soldiers living close to the border with Thailand in Banteay Meanchey province:

If we had money, we could have everything. But for so long we have had nothing, not even the regular payment of our wages.

We made so many sacrifices to bring peace to this country, but we have absolutely nothing except these old uniforms we stand up in...now we are like beggars.

At least when we were soldiers we had our guns and food rations. War brings death to many people, but peace brings death to people like us.

Asking people their views about poverty brought out a range of opinions as well as experiences. During an FGD in Kampot province, a 30-year-old man explained:

Being poor is not just about having enough food to eat, although if you do not have enough food to eat you cannot think of anything else. Rather being poor is also about being ignorant, to have people look down upon you and to not be able to support your own family. It also means the nonpoor can do anything they like to you. That is why some of the poor supported Pol Pot.

For people living in the margins of society who spoke out in the PPA, hopelessness and lack of empowerment accompany their poverty and their outlook seems smothered with the sense that there is little they can do to enhance their lives.

Characteristics of Poverty

Participants at all PPA sites defined poor households as those where hunger is persistent, a chronic condition from which they could not escape, except perhaps on a temporary basis. In Kampong Cham, a mixed group of villagers defined poverty in a context that is relevant for many rural communities in this province:

Poor households never have enough food to eat and cannot satisfy their other needs, such as being able to send all their children to school, paying for necessary health care and meeting cultural obligations.

These households usually just rely on the cultivation of rice and often have poor harvests.

These households also live in permanent debt, and their housing conditions are very poor.

Kampong Cham has the most diversified rural economy in Cambodia, and it is not surprising that participants there defined poverty in the context of household economies that are not very diversified. But other lowland PPA sites also recognized that nondiversified household economies are a definitive characteristic of poor households. And yet, many of the households of upland ethnic minorities where poverty is considered great are actually quite diversified.

Most of the poverty indicators identified in rural communities were also relevant in the urban PPA sites. Although chronic hunger was not a major problem for some of the PPAs visited (discussed more at length in Chapter 7), there are uncertainties associated with the

lack of a stable income, especially for the urban poor (cyclo-drivers and sex workers), who are dependent on the informal service sector to earn a highly variable income.

Having many small children, a lack of adult wage-earning workers, death, illness or departure of an adult member, define a household as being particularly poor. During an FGD in Battambang province, the following points were made by participants to underscore this notion:

You are poor if you have too many young children in the household because they have to be looked after more closely than older children who can attend school or work for you in the fields.

The problem arises when wage-earning adults leave the household for marriage or for other opportunities or they die or become ill. There is also a problem when older adult members can no longer work or they become ill. This is when households become poor.

You should also be considered poor if school-age children are not attending school.

These ideas surfaced in sites where there are alternative employment opportunities available in close proximity, which in this PPA constituted a minority of PPA sites, or where schooling facilities were also in close proximity. It also needs to be recognized that the departure of an adult member for the purpose of employment in a provincial capital or Phnom Penh (such as garment factory work and sex work) results in the repatriation of some earnings from outside the village, possibly making these households less poor than they otherwise might be.

Nonattendance of children at school was another often-mentioned characteristic of poverty, though not always a view shared among ethnic minority groups in the upland provinces. This is not highlighted to suggest that ethnic minority groups do not want access to schooling for their children, but rather to bring attention to the definitional differences of poverty that exist in Cambodia.

Other frequently heard characteristics of the poorest households are those that are vulnerable to crises and shocks, including the illness or death of an economically active person as well as the gambling or alcoholic habits of anyone, theft, damage to the physical structure, death of livestock or crop failure. In Svay Rieng province, a male farmer pointedly remarked:

When someone is ill you have to pay for them to be treated. When they die you have funeral expenses and you have lost their labor, if they are young enough. Someone that drinks or gambles takes all

your money and does not do enough work. A thief can take everything you have but especially your draft animals. Fire can burn down your house then you need more money to build a new one, which costs more to build than the one destroyed in the fire. If a draft animal dies you have to buy a new one and get into debt doing it. If rats eat your rice then you have nothing to eat. The same applies if flooding destroys your rice; drought means you cannot plant your rice.

There are variations on this as they impact upon different groups. Urban socioeconomic groups face additional problems associated with unemployment (a sex worker with AIDS who becomes too ill to work or a garment worker who loses her job). Urban socioeconomic groups are more likely to encounter problems associated with substance abuse (such as street children sniffing glue) than in the rural areas. Obviously, issues associated with the theft of draft animals or loss of the rice crop are not relevant to them, except in the sense that some may have experienced many of these shocks back in their village that resulted in some degree of poverty, which then compelled them to migrate to the city.

There are crises and shocks that are region specific, most notably those associated with the aftermath of the low-intensity conflict that characterized much of northwestern Cambodia until Pol Pot's death in 1998 and the continuing legacy of land mines. In Oddar Meanchey, most FGD participants highlighted the lingering impact of the civil war in the border areas. In the other three provinces of northwestern Cambodia, FGD participants identified the shock that followed a land mine-related death of people or cattle or a land mine injury to a household member. Living at the margins and being forced to use land mine-affected areas for farming is a precarious but unalterable existence for the poor. FGD participants define households that have to farm mine-affected land as being among the poorest households.

Villagers, at least in most of the lowland Khmer PPA sites, identified five broad socioeconomic strata in their villages. The poorest households are variously referred to as *toal*, *kror bamphot*, *kror menten* and *kror niyeay leng chenh*. *Toal* refers to those people who have no way out of their present situation; *kror bamphot* refers to people who are "extremely" poor; *kror menten* refers to people who are "really" poor; and *kror niyeay leng chenh* refers to "words that cannot describe people's poverty." Poor households are referred to as *kror* (literally poor) or *kror thomada* (typical poverty). Lower medium income households are called *kror imom* (reasonably poor) or *kandal* (medium),

while middle income households are referred to as *mathyum* (average), *imom* (fairly), *krubkroan* (adequate) and *kandal* (medium). The least poor households in the villages are referred to as *thouthear* (fully self-sufficient without any debts), *neak leu* (living above poverty) and *kroan beu* (reasonably well-off).

The *poorest* households according to the PPA findings have the following characteristics:

- Little or no land (2-3 acres);
- Perhaps one draft animal but no farming implements;
- Housing made of thatch in very poor condition;
- Few household utensils;
- Live on hand-to-mouth basis (food shortages for up to eight months);
- Much reliance on natural resources to meet subsistence needs;
- Accumulated debts and inability to repay or borrow additional amounts;
- No kinship support; and
- Large young families with 5-12 children.

The *poor* households are characterized as follows:

- Have land of less than 2 hectares in unfavorable locations (slopes, no water source);
- Usually have at least a pair of draft animals and at least some farm implements;
- Houses made of thatch sometimes with tile roofs and bamboo walls;
- Limited number of household utensils;
- Food shortages of 3-6 months duration; and
- Able to borrow money for rice farming.

Lower medium income households are characterized as follows:

- Have land of less than 3 hectares;
- Draft animals and farm implements;
- Houses made of wood or bamboo, thatched roofs and walls and tile roofs;
- Limited number of household utensils;
- Food shortages of 3-4 months duration; and
- Able to borrow money for rice farming.

Middle income households are characterized as follows:

- Landholdings of up to 6 hectares;
- 2-4 draft animals, some livestock and all farm implements;
- Houses made of wood with either bamboo or wooden floors and tile roofs;
- Reasonable number of household utensils;
- No food shortages except when major crisis (ill-health) or ritual (wedding) occurs;
- Limited cash savings;

- Small-scale business; and
- Old motorbike or boat.

The last category is not defined as being poor but they could sink into poverty if a series of major crises occurs within close proximity to one another, for instance, the marriage of a son (who then might go to live in his spouse's natal household) followed by the death of an economically active household member. These are household-specific shocks or crises, which should not normally result in a descent into poverty.

Among the five non-Khmer lowland villages that participated in this PPA, those households that rely primarily on a wet season rice crop to meet their food security needs are in broad agreement with the above characterizations. Participants from the two Vietnamese villages visited have additional characteristics of what constitutes the nonpoor. These include:

- Residential status in Cambodia;
- Ability to pay local Cambodian officials "informal" monthly fees;
- Possession of boat and fishing nets; and
- Other nonagricultural or fishing-based employment opportunities.

The Vietnamese who participated in this PPA claimed that unless a Vietnamese household possessed these four characteristics, it would be very poor. It needs to be noted that none of the nonurban-based Vietnamese who participated in this PPA have residential status in Viet Nam because they were not born there, nor had most ever been to Viet Nam, but many of them lack citizenship or permanent residence status in Cambodia.

Among the upland ethnic minority groups who participated in this PPA, the poverty gradations among households were not made. The ethnic minorities do not approach poverty issues on an individual household basis, or at least this is what was stated during the PPA. In these villages, crises that affect individual households are buffered by support extended by the rest of the community. The shocks that affect ethnic minority villages are those of a community-wide basis, such as the loss of crops due to drought, flash flooding, fires, pest damage or the loss of livestock due to epidemics.

Poverty also affects the urban sector in Cambodia. The poorest persons in urban socioeconomic groups are defined in the PPAs as follows:

- Those without regular daily or monthly employment;
- Those involved in "illegal" occupations;
- Income of less than KR3,500 to KR4,000 per day;
- Need to sleep and bathe in public places;

- No change of clothes; and
- Suffering from a chronic physical affliction, including tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS or substance dependency.

Urban socioeconomic groups dependent on work in the industrial and service sectors who participated in this PPA argued that in the aftermath of the 1997 political turmoil, there was a period of up to 18 months when they were affected by businesses closing down or failing to re-open (affected garment workers). In Chapter 8 it is noted how some of these urban Cambodians are now beginning to understand the consequences of the nonagricultural sector being linked to the regional and global economy.

Where the Poor Live

To get a general picture of where the poor live in Cambodia, the PPA relied on the poverty mapping of WFP, which has already been explained.

Utilizing 1998 Census data and the second round of the 1997 Socioeconomic Survey, the WFP identified poor communes throughout much of Cambodia, the exception being in most of the upland communes of the North-eastern Mountain region and Oddar Meanchey province. The results of the WFP mapping exercise are presented in Figure 4.

The participants in the PPA generally live in villages that are not easily accessible by vehicular transport during the wet season. The four-wheel drive vehicles hired by the PPA teams could reach only 25 percent of these villages. Motorbikes could be used to reach 40 percent of the other villages, but the remaining 35 percent of villages had to be accessed by the PPA teams using oxcarts, boats, bicycles and on foot. The problems associated with the teams' access made it easier for them to understand the problems the poor have with transport to and from their homes.

The poor do not always live in these villages by choice. Because of war, large numbers of the Cambodian population fled to Thailand in the 1980s after Viet Nam helped Cambodians opposed to the Pol Pot regime establish a new government in Cambodia. Some of the PPA participants who fled to Thailand did so of their own volition in the hope that they could find a better life in another country, while others had no choice but to accompany soldiers from the various factions opposed to the new government. When the repatriation of refugees from Thailand began in 1992, those without relatives in the countryside were sent to areas where land had been set aside for them. Often, as the women from PPA sites in northwestern Cambodia point out in Chapter 6, the re-

settlement sites were in areas difficult to access or the land set aside was not actually available.

PPA participants from Oddar Meanchey had the following to say about what happened to them upon returning from a refugee camp:

When we came back to Cambodia after being in border camps for nearly 10 years we had almost forgotten what it was like to live in Cambodia.

We were taken to a new village and told that we should use our rice rations, money and housing materials to make a new life for ourselves. This new village was in a remote locality, and we found out that land mines had been laid in the forest during the war...we had no choice but to settle here, as there was nowhere else we could go.

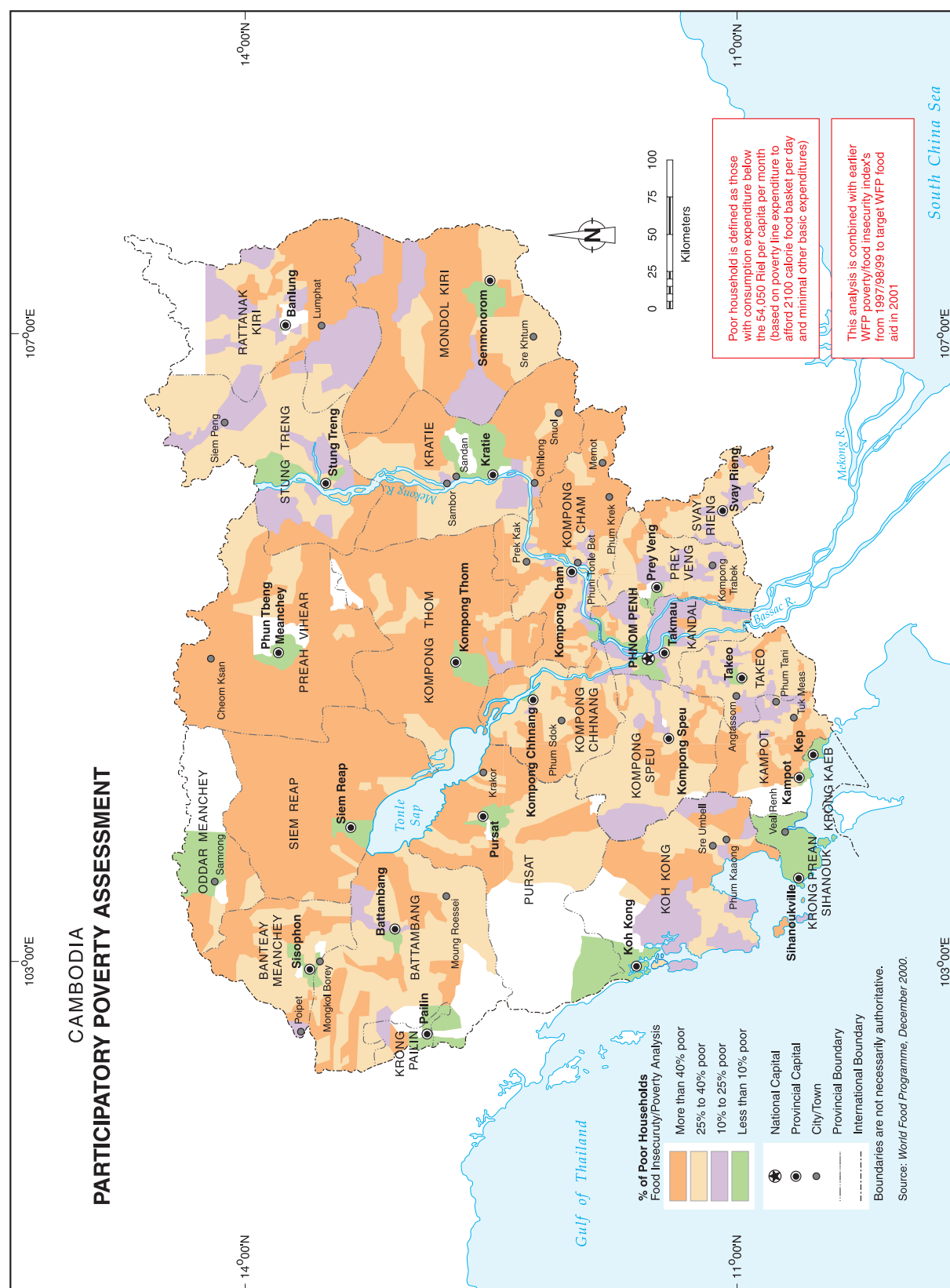
PPA participants who were displaced by fighting between government and antigovernment forces within Cambodia during the 1980s and early 1990s provided similar stories. These participants stated that had it not been for the fighting, they would have remained in their villages, which in many instances were better than the villages where they were forced to live after being displaced. On the other hand, there were also some PPA participants in provinces like Kratie and Kampong Thom who had moved from middle or upper watersheds to lowland areas. This resettlement was to avoid the insecurities they associated with remoteness. But these people claim they became poorer as a result. Not only were their draft animals often stolen, but also they were given the worst land in the areas where they resettled.

The ethnic minorities reside in the upland provinces because that is their traditional place of residence. Most of these ethnic minority groups want to continue living where they have always lived and do not consider themselves poor because of their remoteness. Instead, it is the threats to their remoteness posed by new settlers from the lowlands that they view as one of their major problems.

The Chams do not typically live in remote villages. Even the Chams from Kratie province who participated in this PPA were living in less remote localities than some of the other participants, including the lowland Khmer. The Vietnamese claimed they reside in villages either where there has been a lack of overt hostility by other Cambodians or because these are their birthplaces. These Vietnamese are aware that some Cambodians believe that they only came to Cambodia after Vietnamese troops were sent to help install the post-Pol Pot government in Cambodia.

The urban poor also suffer greatly. Street children generally live on the streets, as the term denotes, often

Figure 4: Poverty map of Cambodia.



Source: World Food Program, 2000.

sleeping out in the open or under shop awnings. Cyclo-drivers will usually sleep in their cyclos, covering themselves with a mosquito net if they are lucky to have one. Garbage collectors mostly have small rooms in houses, as do garment workers and “promotional hostesses,” a term used for women working in restaurants and bars pushing sales of a particular brand of alcohol. Sex workers, on the other hand, tend to live on the premises (brothel, massage parlor or karaoke club) of where they provide their services.

How the Poor Live

While the PPA did not undertake a formal analysis of the foodstuffs consumed by the poor, it was obvious to the PPA teams what people can afford to consume based on observations made in the field. The PPA teams paid local villagers to prepare simple meals for them, and they ate together. All poor villagers, including most of the upland ethnic groups in the Northeastern Mountain region, eat rice as one of their staple foodstuffs, although it is a glutinous rice. If lowland Cambodians cannot eat rice everyday, according to the Khmer, Cham and Vietnamese participants, then they are very poor. The same stricture does not apply in the upland provinces.

In addition to rice, most of the lowland poor Khmer consume *prahok* (fermented fish), fresh vegetables when possible and some soup. The Cham and the Vietnamese have their own food preferences, which are moderately different. Ideally, the poor in the lowlands would like to eat fresh fish and on celebrations, or during rituals, eat pork (being Muslim, the Chams obviously do not or should not eat pork for religious reasons), beef and chicken. Fish is not an important component of the diets of upland minority groups. Instead, they prefer wild animals and birds. The reality for most of the poor is that they do not eat much protein. Moreover, in the very poorest of households, rice is not readily available for up to eight months between planting and harvesting. This does not mean that the poor do not eat rice during this time, but rather they have to make the rice go further through preparing *bor bor* (rice porridge), something that was very common in many areas of Cambodia during the Pol Pot regime.

Food insecurity in the past, reported older participants, was partly mitigated by being able to access natural resources. But now, as the Phnong in Mondol Kiri complained, it was no longer possible to hunt wild animals in the forest the way they had years ago because of encroachment by loggers and punitive government action against hunters and gatherers like them. People

living in many of the lowland areas complained that logging upstream had altered the climate causing both flood and drought. There were also complaints about restricted access to fishing, particularly in the Tonle Sap region, where fishing lots (commercial fishing concessions) have once more restricted the rights of local communities to fishing and aquatic food resources.

Some social relations in Cambodian society have been altered, though whether poverty triggered this is unclear. Intra-household cooperation and support appears to have been much more pervasive in the past than it is currently. When all or most households were of similar social and economic status, people looked after one another more easily, as they still do in some villages that are not completely impoverished. Yet, generalizing in this regard should be used with caution because among ethnic minorities, most notably the lowland Cham and upland groups, considerable kinship and community support continue to exist. This means that no household member will go completely hungry, even if in some instances male members get access to more food than female members, as will be explained later.

The housing of the poor is relatively easy to identify. According to the PPA data, more than 90 percent of the PPA villages had houses (perhaps shelters is a more apt description) that are constructed out of palm thatch, which are not effective at warding off the cold drafts or keeping out the rain during the wet season. Nearly 60 percent of these structures are built upon stilts. And 33 percent of poor households lived in dilapidated dwellings that resemble huts used by the nonpoor to raise chickens. Of course, conditions do vary. In Oddar Meanchey, some families had houses constructed from very good wood, which they had cut from the nearby forest. In the upland provinces, the ethnic minorities still construct their houses out of traditional building materials, such as leaves and bamboo. Also in Oddar Meanchey, some of the returnees from the refugee camps in Thailand as well as internally displaced people (IDPs, or people who lost their homes because of military or rebel conflicts) have their houses in areas that have not yet been cleared of mines.

Only 11 percent of the PPA villages had schools, many of which were in disrepair. In some instances, classes were conducted under trees in the open. Fifty-five percent of the PPA villages were located in communes that lacked even one school to serve the whole commune. Health centers are even scarcer: approximately 85 percent of PPA villages do not have any health facility. According to PPA participants, few of the existing health centers were functional.

Electricity is also scarce. Eighty-four percent of PPA households use mainly kerosene fuel lamps for lighting, although in the upland provinces it is mostly former lowland villagers who can afford the fuel. Some people use rechargeable batteries for lighting and watching television, but none of the people in this PPA used generators or were in villages with micro- or pico-hydro power technology. Cooking is done on a wood fire made of small timber from the forests or branches and twigs collected near the rice fields. There were no reports of households using other forms of energy, such as liquid petroleum gas, for cooking.

Eighty-three percent of the villagers devote their land to rice cultivation. (The exception to this rule is in the upland provinces and some villages in northwestern Cambodia where displaced persons had returned.) Market gardening, or *chamkar* agriculture, is the major activity of 16 percent of the villagers for whom rice cultivation is of secondary importance. Raising livestock is the third major livelihood activity. Very few households have alternative livelihood opportunities, such as handicraft production, to supplement their agricultural activities.

There is a decrease in women fulfilling traditional roles in both domestic and nondomestic work but an increase in them taking on roles once dominated by men, such as organizing public ceremonies and dealing with commune officials. Currently, 78 percent of women in the PPA continue to engage in their traditional roles compared to 98 percent in the past, and 36 percent are involved in community-based activities compared to only 10 percent in the past. As one middle-aged woman in Siem Reap explained:

In the past, village women would not normally plow, climb palm sugar trees or attend village level meetings. This changed back in the early 1970s when war took the young men away from the village, many of whom never returned because they were killed in fighting. This is heavy work, but we do not have the money to pay someone else to do it for us.

There are some noticeable gender differences among the four regions. More than 90 percent of women in the Northeastern Mountain region believed that women continue to fulfill their traditional roles in household and nonhousehold labor activities compared to only 57 percent in the Coastal region. With the exception of the Northeastern Mountain region, the changes have been quite significant. More than 65 percent of women in the Northeastern Mountain region are involved in some form of community-based activity compared to only 28 percent in the Mekong

Plains region. As will be taken up in the analysis of gender in Chapter 6, this had the net effect of making women work harder and longer hours than in the past.

In most villages, children older than 10 years of age work in the fields when necessary, look after younger family members and tend to livestock. These activities are maintained often at the expense of education, particularly for young girls who are more likely after just one or two years of schooling to be delegated such responsibilities. Young boys are often able to continue attending school.

Who are the Nonpoor?

PPA participants are quite clear about who are the nonpoor in their village or other villages in their commune. They described them as:

- Having more than one hectare of very productive agricultural land;
- Having at least two draft animals and many other livestock and farm implements;
- Houses made of permanent building materials, including corrugated iron and tiles;
- Full food security with limited surplus for lending, sale or labor exchange;
- Well-furnished households, often with television; and
- Able and willing to lend money to other villagers.

While these households might experience some difficulties in the event of a series of major crises, for instance, more than two major illnesses of household members at the same time or sequentially, their asset base is such that they can avoid sinking into poverty.

An interesting feature is how these Khmers are able to participate in forms of household cooperation, extend patronage to poorer households, play a crucial role in safeguarding the village spirit cults and sponsor Buddhist religious rituals. A somewhat different dynamic appears in non-Khmer villages. For instance, the Cham claim that money is never lent by more prosperous Cham to poorer Cham because of Islamic religious strictures; but money is lent, ostensibly as donations, and lenders have ways of making poorer Cham compensate them, such as with labor-based services.

Urban poverty was not as thoroughly covered as rural poverty because of the greater numbers of people living in poverty in the countryside. But some urban PPA participants, most notably sex workers and monks, described the people who are not poor in the urban Cambodian context as having:

- Secure occupation of house and land;
- Subsidized use of public utilities;

- In-house toilet;
- Range of electronic goods;
- Car or motorcycle;
- Mobile phone and sometimes a fixed land line;
- Children either in or able to complete secondary school;
- Diverse food consumption;
- Ability to lend and advance money;
- Ability to speak foreign language; and
- Extensive kinship support both domestically and abroad.

THE MAJOR CONCERNS OF THE POOR

Lack of Food Security

From Chapter 3 it is made very clear that this PPA identifies the lack of food security as a major indicator of poverty. Table 2 illustrates this concern region by region from a tabulation of findings in the sites where the PPA was conducted.

Table 2: Major Indicator of Poverty: Lack of Food Security

Region	Percentage
Coastal	86
Northeastern Mountain	78
Tonle Sap	75
Mekong Basin	54

Source: PPA Frequency Tables.

This lack of food security has many widespread effects. It influences health and nutritional standards. It pushes people, mainly girls and women, into physically dangerous and culturally detrimental activities, such as commercial sex work. It also forces the villagers to have less concern for environmental considerations because they need to use these natural resources in a nonsustainable manner.

The lack of food security has a gender dimension. According to some of the female FGD participants, women will go without food so that other adult household members and their children can have enough to eat. This lack of food security also has an ethnic dimension in that upland ethnic minorities are starting to lose access to their traditional food resources in the forests.

Food insecurity is widespread among the upland ethnic minorities in the Northeastern Mountain region, where 17 out of 19 of the FGDs undertaken reported that

not having enough food to eat was the major problem that the poor in these communities faced. However, food shortages among these ethnic minority groups affect the entire community, not just simply poor households living within these communities. During an FGD in a Kavet village in Ratanakiri, participants described what it is like to have lack of food:

This year we have had flash flood after flash flood that have destroyed all our crops, not just the rice we grow but also our vegetable and tuber crops as well. Right now, none of us has any real food to eat, except some leftover rice seed from last year, which we should keep to plant when we can.

All of us have been trying to share what we have. We eat cassava, tree roots, tree leaves, and whatever we can find in the forest. If we can hunt down a pig or deer then we need to share it with everyone. Some people have left their houses for the time being and set up camp in the forest where they can survive.

In an FGD in Mondol Kiri, a Phnong woman described the problems associated with lack of food security:

Heavy rains have not affected our crops, but last year armed men we did not know stole all our crops during the hot season, and we did not have much food. We tried to appeal to the district authorities, who provided a bit of rice, and then some outside group came and distributed some strange tasting rice to us. When we first ate it most of us got sick, but we had to eat this rice until we could harvest our own crops.... It was a terrible time.

In an FGD in Preah Vihear, several Kuy people suggested that the communal approach to problems of food insecurity is changing. An elder Kuy male explained:

Anyone who has lived with the Kuy, including people from Phnom Penh during the time of Pol Pot, will know that it is our custom to share everything we have, including of course, all our food. When Angka (reference to the Pol Pot regime, or Democratic Kampuchea) demanded we send food to Kampong Thom, we only did so after everyone had enough to eat. During that time, no one died of hunger. Since then there are some Kuy who only think of themselves. So now we have a situation where there are some households who go without food while others never go hungry.

In the past, community-enforced norms would clearly ensure that even if there was little food to go around, it would be shared by all people, hence alleviating to some extent the threat of food insecurity. The breakdown in these norms may either mean individual Kuy households will have to devise new coping strategies or community norms will have to be re-established.

In the Coastal region, food security is also a major issue, but as an older woman observed during an FGD involving Khmer in the province of Koh Kong, it is not new:

I cannot remember when we ever had enough food to eat everyday of the year. Before Pol Pot, we still had to struggle to get enough rice, and it was only after the harvest that we had enough to eat. In Koh Kong, you can try to catch a few fish from the sea, but we Khmer are not very good at doing this. Or you can go into the forest looking for food, but now that much of the forest has been cleared this is very difficult. Also, a big man from Phnom Penh has taken over a lot of the land near our village for agricultural activities, but he does not like to employ us. I estimate that until the harvest, my family will have to eat rice porridge every day. We have not eaten any solid rice for more than four months.

Her view of food security was contradicted by another older woman during a FGD in Kandal province who argued:

Before Pol Pot, we always had plenty of rice to eat. I never had to worry whether I would get enough rice to eat. In fact, we got sick of eating too much rice some times. During Pol Pot, we did not have much rice to eat but we did not starve. It was during the time when the Vietnamese were in the country when we had less because they came here to settle, and now it is even worse. During Pol Pot's time, I knew what it was like to be hungry, but now I know

what it is like to starve. This makes me different from my children who have never experienced anything else.

In this woman's village, people who have a little surplus rice help the poor, but clearly it is not enough. Other participants in that Kandal FGD made the point that irrespective of community assistance to the very poor, if there is little food to go around, it is impossible to meet the needs of all poor households in the village.

Some Khmer PPA participants contended that if the Vietnamese living in Cambodia have problems with food security, they would simply send their daughters to sell sex in Phnom Penh. This stereotype was tempered by a Vietnamese participant:

Our mothers and grandmothers always used to tell us when we were young that sometimes there would never be enough food to eat, that it was necessary to go without, so it comes as no shock to us when we face food shortages. We just have to think of finding food from somewhere, looking for paid work or trying to sell something. To say that we would sell our daughters so we could have enough food is wrong. Daughters have their obligations to the family, as do sons, but these obligations do not mean they have to become sex workers. Of course, some do, but so also do some young Khmer women.

In the event of food shortages, many women have commented that they will go without food. During a PPA among the Cham in Kampot province, some women added that their culture expected them to sacrifice in times when there is not enough food. Most of the males claimed that they would never like to see their wives consume less food than themselves. They pointed to one of the Islamic tenets that ordains men to provide for their wives. Men that could not would be shamed in traditional Cham culture, a view that is somewhat different in traditional Khmer culture where women must ensure that men do not go without food. In some of the FGDs involving non-Khmer women, several women acknowledged that they would go without food if necessary.

In Phnom Penh, the problems associated with lack of food security partly depend on the socioeconomic group.

Street children will rummage through garbage disposal bags and bins, particularly outside restaurants, to hunt for food. They also try to beg restaurant owners or patrons to give them a bowl of noodles or a plate of rice. Sometimes they are able to convince bakeries to give them leftover bread and cakes, and occasionally they are able

to convince fruit sellers to give them a piece of fruit. Such sources of food are not always guaranteed, as one street child illustrated:

The old restaurant manager was really good to me. He would let the staff give me food and even sometimes let me sit out in the kitchen and eat. I would go there at least once a day, usually during the middle of the day. But then a new manager came along, and he got the police to get rid of me. They beat me and told me that they would send me to jail if I ever came round this restaurant again.

Cyclo-drivers, who on average are older than most street children, try to pay for their meals because they want to retain their dignity, according to those who participated in this assessment. This is sometimes difficult, as they also want to save money to send home for other relatives. One very old cyclo-driver, who used to drive cyclos in Phnom Penh before war broke out in 1970, spoke despairingly:

Back in my village in Svay Rieng we have always been poor, but I could come to Phnom Penh between harvests and make enough money each day to feed myself and still have some money to take back to my family in the village. Nowadays I can scarcely make enough money to buy my own food because people don't want to use cyclos, or they don't want to pay us so I sometimes have to look through rubbish bins for food. I did not start my life off as a beggar, but now I have to become one to have enough food to eat.

Importance of Natural Resource Management

Hunting and gathering are not the preserve of only upland minorities in Cambodia. The poor everywhere spend much time gathering edible roots, tubers, vines and plants for their daily food consumption. If they are lucky, particularly if they live close to or in forested areas, they can hunt for wild boars and antelopes. Even rodent infestation has some advantages for the very poor in providing sustenance. The problem is that the rodents are likely to appear during the early dry season when rice is being cultivated and when people usually have enough food. Yet the PPA participants make the cogent point that as their access to forests is being restricted for conservation purposes or forests are disappearing due to logging, an important source of alternative foodstuffs is being denied to them. The same of course applies to inland freshwater fishing in the numerous streams and rivers. For the poor, it cannot be stressed strongly enough how important it is to more effectively manage the remaining natural resource base in Cambodia.

Garment workers try to skim on their food so they can save money for sending back to their villages. Sex workers said how much they can spend on food depends on their income for the day. And the promotional hostesses admitted that what they get to eat each day depends on how close they are prepared to sit with a customer. Only monks stated they never had to worry about whether they would get enough food to eat.

Sex workers and the promotional hostesses who participated in this PPA understand fully well the lack of food security back in their own villages. This is one of the reasons they left their villages, but interestingly, both groups remarked during the PPA that their food security depends to some extent on how they can “please” their clients and customers. On the one hand, it provides a “skillful” worker with food security for an interim period, but on the other hand, it has its attendant risks, including physical violence, pregnancy and STDs. Most of these young women are aware of such risks, a point that is reiterated in Chapter 6, but it is a reality they live with.

Life Crises and the Lack of Assets

In Chapter 3 there was some focus on both household-specific and community-wide shocks. This section deals with the nature of shocks affecting households as reported in the PPA and the consequences of having no assets.

Cambodians have a saying, *Kror kror choh kom aoy tae chheu*—being poor is better than suffering from ill health. Sickness can reduce a household to poverty very quickly. People in more than 40 percent of the PPA villages cite ill health associated with malaria, tuberculosis, typhoid, dysentery and a range of reproductive tract and upper respiratory tract infections as being one of the major reasons for their fall into poverty. The situation is compounded when there is neither a functioning health center in the locality (this is true for 57 percent of communes in which the poor villages are located) nor affordable medicines. Indeed, many of the FGD participants complained that most of the medicines available are not effective and the side effects have sometimes been worse than the actual illness.

Under such circumstances, the poor risk losing whatever savings they have (not much in even the best of circumstances) and/or incurring debts that they cannot repay. Consequently, they are forced to sell assets including land and draft animals. Often when death occurs, they lose not

only family members, which is emotionally a traumatic experience, but if the deceased is young, they also lose their productive labor. A 23-year-old former Khmer Rouge soldier in Banteay Meanchey best illustrated this point:

I am living in a poor family of 12 members. My mother fell ill years back. We did not have anything but rice land and draft animals. In order to save our mother's life, we had to sell them to pay for the cost of her treatment. Afterward, we became hired laborers and at the same time went to the forest to cut wood to sell. However, now the Government does not allow us to do that, and we do not know what to do anymore. I request the Government to pay attention to assisting people living in poor remote areas, particularly demobilized soldiers.

Such households, while being poor in the past, were not necessarily living in poverty as they had access to rice land and draft animals.

A 41-year-old woman in Kratie province put the importance of this issue for the poor into poignant context:

Malaria-carrying mosquitoes bit two children of mine. I spent all of my money on treating their illness, but it did not work. I could not go out and earn money because I tried to look after both of them. Eventually they died, and now I have neither my two children nor any money. The Government should provide me with rice so that I have enough to eat now and rice land so I can grow rice in the future.

Malaria prevention is helped by the use of insecticide-impregnated mosquito nets, and the Government is launching a major malaria-reduction campaign in the countryside, about which many of the villagers in the PPA are aware. Participants also pointed out that living in poverty increases their vulnerability toward being infected with malaria more than for those people not living in poverty. While malaria affects most of the rural poor, it is much worse in the upland provinces, where the ethnic minorities are found, than elsewhere in Cambodia. In Phnom Penh, malaria is not so much a problem although street children are affected by dengue fever, according to their statements during the FGD.

Poverty can also occur when large families, especially among the Khmer, have to organize wedding ceremonies for their daughters. While the groom's family should contribute toward some of the costs associated with the wedding, if both families are poor, then it is an

The Costs of Ill Health in Battambang

Samouth's family has 14 members. They used to be one of the richest families in the village but now they are among the poorest. Samouth's father was shot dead two years ago and that left Samouth and his mother to work the land. Recently Samouth's mother was overcome with some strange illness, and the family had to sell its buffalo, plow and leveler to pay for the hospital expenses in Battambang. His mother is supposed to receive treatment free of charge but she is charged for everything, even the plastic bag to dispose the rubbish. It is uncertain how long she will remain in the hospital because no one can determine what is her illness. It is most likely that Samouth will have to sell part of the rice land to pay for his mother's yet-to-be diagnosed ailment to be cured.

additional burden. It leads to a situation where families need to borrow to pay for the wedding. According to PPA participants, this tradition even creates problems for the households who are not poor. It appears that most poor families avoid lavish weddings. But living in communities where such rituals are an indicator of prestige, it is sometimes very difficult not to overspend. And as many of the FGD participants declared, the poor have their dignity and desires for tradition.

Interestingly, none of the FGD participants in the countryside brought up the issue of HIV/AIDS. There can be no doubt if a disease like malaria contributes to further impoverishment of the already poor that HIV/AIDS will also have a profound impact on rural communities. This issue was raised by the PPA team in selected FGDs, and it then transpired that some people had heard of HIV/AIDS, and that people who had been to Phnom Penh were likely to catch HIV/AIDS from sex workers. Of course, the impact of HIV/AIDS is a major concern for sex workers who participated in the PPA. This is elaborated in Chapter 6; most sex workers have rural origins, and they know what the consequences of HIV/AIDS are for them and their families.

Community-wide shocks and disasters include loss of crops and other material possessions due to drought, flood, storms, wind damage and landslides. During the PPA there was extensive flooding throughout Cambodia and most of the PPA participants were able to relate the damage to houses (one FGD was conducted in a nearly submerged house in a flooded village in Siem Reap). In the lowlands, PPA participants were able to show PPA team members the damage done to rice crops. More than half of the schools in the PPA villages either collapsed or were damaged by the flooding, making it both difficult and dangerous to attend school.

Access to and Ownership of Land

Access to and preferably ownership of land is a major concern of the poor as it is for any group of farmers in three of the four regions in Cambodia. It is a major concern for all FGD participants in the Coastal region, 81 percent in the Tonle Sap region and 79 percent in the Mekong Plain region. In the Northeastern Mountain region, where the person-to-land ratio is extremely low, this concerned some 30 percent of participants. The land issue in Cambodia is very complicated given the impacts of the previous three decades of turmoil.

The most basic land problem, according to FGD participants, especially among the lowland Khmer, is whether they have been able to get access to additional land since 1989 (when land was handed back to individual households by the State) because their households have grown in size. It is clear that some households benefited more than other households because they received land that is more fertile and lived in areas of relative peace and stability—not all of the countryside was involved in fighting during the 1980s. Moreover, these issues were unimportant to upland ethnic minorities, most of whom retained communal ownership of land.

In the Khmer kinship system, daughters and sons have generally had equal rights to shares in property and inheritance. Traditionally all members of the same kinship group could inherit land. Parents often made the transfer of land to children after the marriage of children, with equal parts transferred to daughters and sons. It was common for the son-in-law to move in with the family of the wife and to work for the father-in-law for a certain period after marriage before the married couple established its own household.

For most FGD participants, the pre-1975 situation in Cambodia is less relevant than what has occurred over the past decade, in relation to household size. A 61-year-old woman from Kandal province elaborated:

Before, we had enough to raise the children but my family has fallen into poverty because we have eight children....We did not have enough to eat so we sold our draft animals and then our land to pay for food, the treatment of illness, clothing and our children's weddings....But when you have eight children you cannot give them all much land.

Interestingly, while many FGD participants considered large families to be a major issue, this was in the

context as to whether they could have access to land or not. As reported in Chapter 6, women's concerns with large families are not only linked to whether there is enough land but other reproductive health issues, something that concerned male participants to a lesser extent.

It is not surprising that in the world's fifth most heavily mined country, land mines were an issue for some participants. A widow in Battambang relayed how access to seemingly productive land can even reduce relatively prosperous farmers to poverty:

My family had about 20 hectares of land, three tractors, a sedan, motorbike and a full range of farming implements....One day my workers drove over anti-tank mines that we did not know about and the tractors were destroyed. Later, the drivers died, and I had to sell other assets to provide compensation to their families and organize their funerals. Not long after, my husband fell ill with depression and died. There is nothing we can do about the fact that we have become poor.

The confiscation of land is also an issue that concerns some of the poor, particularly in border districts. In Kampong Cham, a 30-year-old woman complained that people from neighboring Viet Nam had killed her husband and seized their land. This forced her to rely on wage labor to keep her and her two sons alive, but with one of her sons seriously ill, she is in an extremely vulnerable position. Accounts of land confiscation are readily available from the media in Cambodia. Many FGD participants related how land disputes have led to violence.

Confiscation of land is not a major issue for most of the poor in the Northeastern Mountain region, except as will be demonstrated in Chapter 7 where this is now changing in some communities because the shortage of land per se is not the major problem. Rather, it is the restriction of access to traditional hunting and gathering domains that angers people. As will be described in Chapter 6, it is not possible to treat all of Cambodia's poor as a homogenous category. Indigenous concepts of land entertained by upland ethnic groups are not the same as the mostly utilitarian concept of land entertained by lowland peoples, whether they are Khmer, Cham or Vietnamese. Nevertheless, it should not be assumed that upland ethnic groups do not also understand issues associated with the market value of land.

In some provinces, such as Svay Rieng, surprisingly some FGD participants argued that there is not a shortage of land but of capital and equipment needed to clear the land of large bushes and stumps. In several of the

FGDs facilitated in Kratie, it was also discovered that people lacked the resources to clear land. Participants claimed there are large areas of uncleared land in parts of Cambodia, including the upland provinces of the north-east. As one 55-year-old man in Kampong Speu argued:

All the uncleared land in my district or in other districts is useless for the poor unless it can be cleared. We are told there is a lot of vacant land in Cambodia that is suitable for farming but if this were so, none of us would be living in poverty...I can say there is a shortage of suitable land that the poor can access.

For the most part, the FGD participants are not convinced there is enough suitable land unless the nonpoor agree to share their land. They are also realistic enough to know that the nonpoor will not willingly share their land without some kind of pecuniary agreement.

What the poor living in the lowlands of Cambodia do not realize is that the ethnic minority groups occupying these vast tracts of “unoccupied” land in the Northeastern Mountain region do not believe they are occupying a vast land frontier. The land that they occupy, and this was made abundantly clear during the PPA, is their traditional land, and it should be used to support their traditional practices. What is a possible land frontier for lowland groups in Cambodia is anything but that for the ethnic minorities in the region.

Nonexistent or Limited Access to Educational Opportunities

The poor are concerned that they have limited or no access to educational opportunities. More than 34 percent of FGD participants made this point, but it varied from region to region. In the Mekong Plain region, only 24 percent of participants considered this a major concern compared to more than 43 percent in both the Tonle Sap and Coastal regions. In the Northeastern Mountain region, 50 percent of participants considered this a major concern. One of the reasons this is less of an issue in the Mekong Plain region is that the Government has built more schools there than elsewhere because of the greater population density.

Villagers made a clear linkage between lack of education, particularly literacy, and poverty. The PPA did not quantify the extent of illiteracy among participants,

but all team members during the course of the PPA were aware that very few of the participants in the PPA could read or write. Those who could were mostly male, which is consistent with other research and data on female illiteracy in rural Cambodia.

Villagers also offered interesting perspectives on education that seemed to reflect their own lack of self-esteem. For instance, there is consensus among participants in a rural district of Sihanoukville that lack of education is a cause of lack of empowerment among the poor:

We are poor as we have no money and no idea as to how we make life better for ourselves. For this we need education, but without education we are ignorant and narrow-minded.

Education is not just about making money but also having dignity in society, having people recognize you as a good person. This is what we, the poor, lack in comparison with people who are not in our position.

There are mixed views about the importance of education in the Cambodian context, which were expressed by participants in Kampong Cham:

There is a school in the neighboring commune but the teachers are not always there. We have to buy books for our children that we cannot afford, and at the end of a few years in school our children return to the rice field not being able to read and write. Schooling is not much good if one cannot read and write after being at school...And we know some rich people who also cannot read and write. Not having enough education is a major problem but not having the means to survive is more of a problem.

The Phnong participants in Mondol Kiri noted the conflict between survival and identity and the role of language:

Not being able to speak the Khmer language, let alone read and write it, puts all of us at a major disadvantage with Khmer-speaking people.

If we just learn Khmer and forget our own language we will lose our identity as well. We have pride in our cultural identity even though we are poor. But if we lose our identity, we would end up being very poor Khmer. Poor Khmer have no status in their society, but we still have status in our society.

Many ethnic Cambodians determine the value of education not only by how it can help to alleviate their poverty but also how it influences their cultural identity, which is intrinsically linked with their self-esteem.

Factors Hindering Access to Education

- Distance from nearest school;
- Shortage of teachers and irregular teaching schedules;
- High cost of clothing;
- Lack of teaching materials;
- Extra fees charged by teachers; and
- Low salaries of teachers.

FGD participants are highly critical of teachers who observe irregular teaching schedules and charge excessive extra fees. According to most of the FGD participants, they are charged a minimum of CMR2,500 per child per term; in some cases families have been asked to pay up to CMR10,000 per child per term, which is nearly beyond the reach of the very poor. While villagers understand that teachers have to get by on low salaries, they resent teachers who collaborate with local authorities to gain advantage at the expense of the poor. Teachers, according to FGD participants, should behave better than local authorities.

Flooding and Drought

The poor rely almost exclusively on agriculture for their survival. Most of the villagers in this PPA argued that they have access to either the least fertile land or land that is subject to excessive flooding, which in effect means that they have access to the least productive land.

Nearly 60 percent of FGD participants claimed that both flooding and drought are major concerns of the poor. Not surprisingly, more than 65 percent of participants in the Mekong Plain region identified flooding as a major concern compared to 60 percent in the Tonle Sap region, 50 percent in the Northeastern Mountain region and 36 percent in the Coastal region where the flooding patterns differ. In the Mekong Plain and Tonle Sap regions, flooding occurs gradually as water levels rise in the Mekong River Basin. In the Northeastern Mountain and the Coastal regions there is more flash flooding because of the topographical nature of the land. FGD participants argue it is difficult to avoid flash flooding.

As was mentioned elsewhere in this report, flooding during the PPA period was at its worse in 40 years in Cambodia. While it affected large numbers of people in the Mekong River Basin, it was the poor who were disproportionately affected. According to FGD participants

in a number of Mekong Plain region provinces, the poor were more likely to lose their lives than the nonpoor because the latter could flee to higher ground. In Kampong Chhnang, Kampong Thom and Kampong Cham, the PPA participants complained that despite the Government's good intentions, it was the better-off villagers who received emergency flood aid first. The PPA team members noted in the three provinces where floods were occurring that provincial officials failed to perform any form of needs assessment.

Drought is much more of a problem for the poor than excessive flooding. Many participants identified at least four planting seasons where drought has been a major problem. In addition, drought also affects their ability to grow vegetables and sufficient fodder for their livestock. During times of excessive flooding they can more easily catch fish than during the dry season. Of course, the other effects of excessive flooding—damage to housing and rural infrastructure—is also a huge problem.

There are many requests for the rehabilitation of existing irrigation systems or the supply of pumping equipment. In the province of Kampong Speu, FGD participants complained that an irrigation system built during the Khmer Rouge period, when many friends and relatives died from overwork, had not been rehabilitated due to the advice of international experts:

Some years ago we were told that an international expert had decided that the irrigation system we were forced to build under the Khmer Rouge was useless and could never work for us.

This international expert does not know what he is talking about. He was not here during the Khmer Rouge period to know whether it worked nor did he come and ask us whether it worked or not. Are we, the poor of this commune, people who know nothing?

Not being able to take advantage of irrigated agriculture during the dry season was a concern to more than 53 percent of FGD participants in the Mekong Plain region and to 43 percent in the other major rice-growing region, the Tonle Sap. Only 33 percent in the Northeastern Mountain region and 50 percent in the Coastal region expressed a similar concern with the lack of irrigated agriculture.

But the issue goes beyond water for agricultural purposes. There is also widespread concern about the quality of water for drinking, cooking and bathing. In nearly

25 percent of the FGDs, participants noted that unclean water leads to diarrhea, dysentery and other water-related infections, which take their toll on the very young, weak and older people. Many of the poor households lack access to a well or even water jars, as one participant in Battambang province described:

In the wet season, as we have neither wells to draw water from or water jars to collect water, we all use the rainwater that can be found in the ruts along the roads made by vehicles. In the dry season we use water from a distant stream, but it is not very clean either.

In the province of Pursat, notorious in Cambodia for its alleged poor water quality, a FGD participant underscored the village situation:

In the dry season there is very little water so we have to get up very early in the morning to compete with one another to get what water there is. The water is not very clean and often some of our children get diarrhea....But we know in villages where they have a lot of good clean water people neither compete with one another nor do their children get sick.

The poor in this instance appear to think that the lack of access to potable water contributes to unavoidable conflicts that would not exist if there were enough drinking water. Fighting over access to a basic need such as drinking water contributes little to social harmony in a society that still has to heal the scars of more than three decades of internal conflict.

Lack of Micro-Finance

More than 35 percent of FGD participants stated they could not get access to any form of credit, whether it be to purchase basic foodstuffs or support micro-enterprise activities, including locally based trading activities. More than 50 percent of FGD participants in the Tonle Sap and Northeastern Mountain region considered this a major concern while around 20 percent in the Mekong Plain and Coastal regions indicated it as an issue.

All FGD participants strongly argued that the worst possible scenario was the necessity to borrow money to purchase basic foodstuffs, particularly rice. It is bad enough having to provide services, such as unpaid labor, to meet debt repayment obligations but for most of the poor this is a nonmonetary transaction. The opportunity costs of foregone wage labor earnings do not enter into the calculations in poor villages where such

opportunities are nonexistent. The angst of borrowing was dramatically described by a 45-year-old woman in Oddar Meanchey:

Under the Khmer Rouge, we never had to borrow money to buy rice as they would always ensure that we had some rice to eat. But now people like me must borrow money off moneylenders at very high interest rates. It is really impossible for us to escape poverty. Like a rat we are caught in a trap that we cannot escape.

The need for credit to treat chronic health conditions or emergency illnesses has already been documented in this report. Here the need for decent credit is highlighted in relation to agriculture needs, particularly farming failure, as one 32-year-old man elaborated:

I used to grow rice and sell my labor to earn a living....My rice farming was not profitable because even though I had land it was necessary to borrow money from private sources for land preparation and the purchase of fertilizers....After the harvest, the lenders came to collect their loan. After repayment, the surplus rice I had left to support me was sufficient for one to two months....To grow rice I had to borrow repeatedly, and my debts simply kept accumulating. To settle my debts I had to sell my land little by little, and now I have no land left. Now I am totally dependent on the sale of my labor.

Unfortunately, there are many stories like this among the poor who live in provinces such as Prey Veng. Indeed as this account illustrates, rice farming has failed many of the very poor, and they need alternative sources of income to survive.

During the PPA it was evident that many of the villagers understand that using credit to finance rice-farming activities will not reduce their poverty. A demobilized soldier and his spouse in Siem Reap elaborated:

It is very difficult for us to survive as we do not have any money to invest in a small business. If we had access to credit we would initially buy five pigs and ten chickens and repay the lender on the sale of the produce, but it is very hard to get credit extended on such terms that would leave the borrower with anything at the end of it all.

That 11 percent of the FGD participants throughout Cambodia had similar ideas about credit demonstrates that for a small minority this is a major concern. There seems to be a pent-up demand among a significant portion of the poor for access to micro-finance.

Poor Physical Infrastructure

It is evident that much of Cambodia has very poor physical infrastructure and that has affected the ability of the Government to promote social and economic development in the countryside. Nearly 35 percent of FGD participants expressed a major concern for this deprivation. By region, that anger was mentioned by 79 percent of participants from the Coastal villages, by 38 percent in the Mekong Plain and 30 percent in the Tonle Sap.

Surprisingly, only about 8 percent of participants in the Northeastern Mountain region identified lack of physical infrastructure as a major issue. The PPA team assigned to this region spent more time traveling between sites than in any of the other three regions.

Initially the team was at a loss to explain why so few participants in the Northeastern Mountain region expressed concern. Some locals suggested that because of limited market penetration, there was little concern with physical infrastructure. Certainly the market has not penetrated upland communities to the same extent it has lowland communities. Another argument was that upland peoples feared that better physical infrastructure would bring outsiders wanting to exploit local natural resources. This argument is underscored by roads built in some remote areas by logging companies so they can haul logs for processing elsewhere. Another argument is that upland peoples see the survival of their culture as a major priority threatened by the more dominant lowland culture expanding their territory. This issue is examined more closely in Chapter 6, but it does illustrate that poverty issues for the ethnic minorities are more complex in most instances than for the dominant ethnic groups.

The inability of parents to send their children to school, to transport the sick to faraway health centers and hospitals and the costs associated with accessing the market are major issues expressed by most participants. The inability to send children to school in terms of acquiring skills in literacy have already been mentioned and the consequences of having to transport people long distances because they are ill will be discussed in a coming section. A general concern raised is the impact of poor physical infrastructure on the supply of goods and services both to and from the village.

A farmer in Battambang explained how the physical infrastructure influences the market:

When we have good crops there is no market because the access road is very poor. All the inputs we use—corn and bean seeds, fertilizers and pesticides—are very costly. But if we do not sell our produce, we do not have any money to buy rice. In the wet season the road is very muddy and accessibility is extremely difficult. Then the traders do not come. When they do come they give us a very low price. If we do not sell the corn and beans then the bugs will destroy them. It is useless if we grow these crops under such circumstances.

In Kampong Speu the impact of poor infrastructure in the marketing of vegetables was highlighted by one participant:

We can grow vegetables, but it is difficult to access the market because the roads are very poor. Should we persist with trying to sell these vegetables, we will find that the very high transport costs will result in us making no profit whatsoever.

Just how long it takes some of the poor to reach a district market, as well as a health center, is illustrated by a participant from Koh Kong province:

If we want to go anywhere we need to spend 5-6 hours because we can only travel by footpath. It takes us 6 hours to reach the district market of Sre Umbell. Taking vegetables to the market like this will only result in the vegetables not being sold as the market demands very fresh vegetables. And if someone gets seriously ill, he has to be taken in a hammock or oxcart in long distances to a health center. Sometimes he dies before reaching the health center on the long difficult path.

In some PPAs it was stated that goods and services provided by the poor to buyers outside the village are sold at a very low price, while goods and services purchased by the poor from outside the village are high. Unequal exchange due to market imperfections exacerbated by poor physical infrastructure only serves to intensify poverty.

Decreasing Access to Community Natural Resources

It is very clear that the poor rely on the local natural resource base, whether it be fish in the inland streams, rivers and lakes and both timber and nontimber products

from the forests and areas surrounding the villages. Of the four regions, both the Coastal and Northeastern Mountain regions identified this as a larger concern than the other two regions. This is partly because the natural resources of the Coastal region have been subject to serious depletion over the past decade, particularly the coastal zone fishing resources. In the Northeastern Mountain region, the native forests have become subject to both legal and illegal logging. In both instances the poor feel they have no control over the depletion of these resources.

In the Coastal region, an FGD participant argued that when only local fisherfolk were fishing in the coastal zone there was enough fish for everyone. The participants were not aware that provincial governors had awarded concessions to commercial fishing companies from Thailand, and therefore did not realize these companies could fish in areas that used to be the preserve of local fishing communities. They criticized the new fishing techniques that catch all species and sizes of fish leaving local people with little. At the same time, logging has continued in the hinterland thereby constraining local

communities of the traditional products they used to rely on from the forest and nearby areas.

The limited access to a traditional resource was illuminated by a participant in Mondol Kiri:

A logging truck can leave the forest, and it is surrounded with armed guards to ensure that other armed groups, which are often found in the forest, do not steal the logs. But if we even dare take one small log from the forest, we will be stopped by armed guards who tell us they have been assigned to protect the forests from illegal loggers like us. In the past there was no such law. It should be directed at the loggers, not us. It is they who plunder the forests where our ancestors lived in harmony.

Unfortunately, there are many similar accounts that the poor can provide to illustrate their concern with loss of control over, or even continued access to, the traditional natural resource base. In addition, conflicts over access to natural resources have led to an upsurge in social conflict among the poor themselves. In some instances, there have been outbursts of violence, particularly in a context where the natural resource base has shrunk quickly.

ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH GOOD GOVERNANCE

Good Governance

Good governance depends on transparency, accountability, predictability and participation. Transparency entails low-cost access to relevant information. Accountability is the capacity to call public officials to account for their actions. Predictability results primarily from laws and regulations that are clear. Participation is required to obtain reliable information and to serve as a reality check and watchdog over government action. Clearly none of these pillars in a fully developed sense is particularly strong in Cambodia,⁵ especially given its recent past. Nevertheless, during the PPA most participants were keen to talk about related issues, the results of which are presented here.

Delivery of Government Services

Up to 8 percent of FGD participants attributed their poverty to poor governance, such as corrupt practices associated with the misallocation of aid projects, policing functions that discriminate against the poor and the misallocation of development projects. The major issues relating to governance in the delivery of government services, as identified by FGD participants, were the extra-official charges imposed by teachers on their children attending school, loss of control over local fishing resources and denial of access to forests. Many of the poor do not like the extra-official charges imposed by teachers. They argue that it is already very difficult to

send their children to school, particularly if they have a large number of school-age children, which is often the case. There is a recognition that teachers are forced to survive on inadequate salaries, but many villagers think that a considerable number of teachers still use their position to extract as much as they can from local communities. One PPA participant's disgruntlement in Takeo illustrated such perceptions by some of the poor in relation to the provision of teaching services at the village level:

We accept that teachers are underpaid and that they also need to live, that is why we provide them with some rice even though we often go hungry ourselves. Some teachers are not contented with the support we provide them and want to take money off our children....They do this by forcing them to buy books purchased by the teacher, pencils, paper and snacks. This is money we do not have. But worse than this, they try to plunder local resources and even get access to land....Of course there are some really good teachers, or so we have heard: It's just that they do not teach in the school attended by our children.

Teachers trying their best to teach local children is all most PPA participants expect. What they strongly resented were attempts by teachers to "rent-seek" off them, the argument being that the poor have very little by way of cash or other material goods to give away to anyone. These PPA participants also recognized that teachers should not have to face the same hardships as themselves. Realistically though, many teachers in rural areas, while marginally better off than the very poor, are only living just above the poverty line.

Food-for-work programs appear to be very popular with FGD participants, and, as will be argued in the

⁵ See, Asian Development Bank, *Cambodia: Enhancing Governance for Sustainable Development*, Manila, Programs Department (West), October 2000.

concluding part of this report, should not only be retained but also expanded to ideally cover all poor communities. Unfortunately, many participants complained that the good intentions of the Government to target the poor were often undermined by local authorities implementing the program. This complaint also applied to the distribution of emergency flood aid. It is symptomatic of one of the important reasons why large numbers of Cambodians who participated in the PPA want to replace existing commune leaders, although in the upland provinces this opinion was infrequently expressed.

A participant from a commune in Pursat province described many people's feelings regarding respect for local authorities:

Our commune leader has two wives that he always spoils with gifts. We learned that we were being provided with food to upgrade the very poor road that goes through our village, but we worked for nearly a month and received nothing. It was a terrible time because the commune leader told us that we had to move 3 cubic meters of soil each day to qualify for food aid, which we did. This meant we could not go to the forest to forage for food. By the end of the month we were practically starving. Our complaints led nowhere. Meanwhile the two wives of the commune leader were getting fatter and fatter from doing nothing....It's always been like this in our commune where the friends and relatives of the commune authorities get rich while we stay poor....A similar thing is happening right now with flood relief [early November 2000] and will continue to happen.

During that Pursat PPA, the participants expressed extreme annoyance with the local authorities but were reluctant to pursue the issue to the point where they would advocate collectively the removal of those officials. In the interviews that were conducted by the PPA team, such a desire was clearly indicated.

The people in this PPA did not direct all their complaints at local, district, commune or village authorities. There are also complaints about the Department of Fisheries, Department of Forestry and the Ministry of Environment, even though few of the villagers can differentiate between the agencies concerned, preferring instead to subsume them under the rubric of the Government.

It has been noted in Chapter 4 how many villagers are concerned about the diminishing freshwater fish catch. Fish, of course, constitute the most important source of protein to most Cambodians, with the exception of

upland ethnic groups in the Northeastern Mountain region. There was a litany of complaints from PPA participants in the Mekong Plain region directed at the Department of Fisheries for attempts to impose a "resource" tax upon local communities that have the right to fish in lakes and rivers close to where they live. This same department has attempted to charge a "usage" tax for the right of local people to use their own boats to go fishing. None of these taxes is legal, or at least this is what the people believe, though some, particularly the ethnic Vietnamese, know they have to pay them anyway.

While this is a major problem for the very poor as they lack the financial resources to comply with such demands, an even larger problem for all the poor is loss of local fishing grounds to commercial fishing activities. Local people only have rights in these lots if the owners confer such rights on them. This practice was denounced by a FGD participant in Kandal province:

The lot owners work with the fisheries people to deny us the right to fish in areas we used to fish in. These areas are close to where we have always lived, and should we dare go and fish there we will be chased away by the armed guards. They are not frightened to shoot at us—look at the way the young boys run away when you came by boat. This is because they thought you were armed and going to shoot at them. They are frightened, and we are frightened. You should also know that in the past when the lot was abolished, we did not take all the fish we can catch but the lot owners do as they want and can sell whatever fish they do not want to someone to make fish paste.

The problems with the Department of Forestry are equally serious. In Kampong Thom during an FGD, most of the participants related what had happened to them over the past five years with the logging that has been going on in the province's watersheds. When the logging companies moved in they informed villagers that while they had a right to hunt and gather in the watershed, they had no right to cut trees and would be actively prevented from doing so. One participant in Kompong Thom railed against the way "policies" are enforced and at people's new defenselessness:

This logging company came to our commune and told us that it had exclusive rights to log the trees in the forest. It showed us a signed document from the Government, which we could not understand, but at the same time stood over us with guns to make sure we listened. Less than a month later

soldiers employed by that company burned the carts of some of the villagers and shot dead a person that was not even in the forest....We were very frightened but there was nothing we could do. Even the local authorities would or could do nothing.

Unfortunately, the PPA collected other similar accounts that the villagers wanted to report to authorities but were frightened of harassment by officials who benefit from logging.

As though to make matters worse, the Ministry of Environment, in its haste to demonstrate its commitment to the environment, has created problems for some of the upland ethnic groups in Stung Treng, Rattanakiri and Mondol Kiri. FGD participants in all three provinces talked of difficulties they had with government officials on environmental matters. Local people have been told they must care for the environment and that includes changing traditional hunting practices to avoid killing rare species of wild animals. A Lao man in Stung Treng expressed many people's anger:

We have been hunting wild animals for a long time. They are an important source of food for us and also symbolize our prowess in the forest. However, in the past we did not hunt so many animals that there were none left to hunt. Now the situation is different—yet we cannot simply decide when we are hungry not to hunt this animal or that animal. As hunters we must hunt what we can. Now we get officials, who by their appearance look as though they have never slept a night in the forest, ordering the local authorities to order us not to hunt.

There is apprehension on the faces of FGD participants when they talk about such matters, as they believe government officials can come back and arrest them for talking so candidly. The participatory culture fostered in the Ministry of Environment in relation to community-based natural resource management regimes is not evident among the poor of the Northeastern Mountain region.

The problems of the poor with the existing administrative structures in the Northeastern Mountain region are not the same as with the poor in other regions. For instance, in the Mekong Plain region there are complaints about the Government not providing services that could benefit poor farmers. There is no veterinary service, and this contributes to the loss of draft animals, which as this PPA discovered, can be extremely devastating for most poor households, particularly those where such a loss results in a downward spiral to poverty.

Similarly, some FGD participants complained that the Government does not provide officials with technical expertise in agriculture but only skills in extracting money from the poor, as a participant explained in Kampot:

We are told the Government spends money on training people to be technical experts in agriculture, but we have never seen such people. At the district office there are agricultural officials, but we never see them. In fact the only officials we see are those who give us orders and take money off us.

Despite their bitter view toward local authorities, nearly 60 percent of FGD participants turn to them for assistance in times of emergency. The reason, they argued, is that only the local authorities can effectively access the Government. Interestingly, only 14 percent of FGD participants in the Coastal region have or would turn to local authorities for assistance, but in the Northeastern Mountain region, a massive 88 percent said they would rely on local authorities. In the Mekong Plain region, nearly 54 percent would seek out public assistance while in the Tonle Sap region it was nearly 67 percent. A Kuy participant in Preah Vihear clarified the situation:

Few of us speak the Khmer language well enough to communicate directly with government officials even if we wanted to. Therefore we have to rely on local authorities that can speak both our language and that of the Khmer.

During the PPA, it was observed that when local authorities in the Northeastern Mountain region are of a similar ethnic background to other people in the local community, they are more widely respected than many local authorities are in the lowland regions of Cambodia. Relatives, because they are also poor and unable to assist during a real emergency, like neighbors, are less likely to be called upon, as they too are considered poor and powerless.

Limited Coverage of Civil Society Organizations

Despite the proliferation of civil society organizations in Cambodia since 1993, less than 10 percent of the PPA sites had any active involvement by an NGO or community-based organization, either in the recent past or currently. Indeed, few FGD participants had even heard about NGOs although some were aware that such organizations existed in other villages. This did not mean that

FGD participants who had experience with NGOs had negative attitudes toward such organizations. In Svay Rieng, where a small number of NGOs have been active for at least a decade, one woman in her mid-40s talked of the positive impact from such organizations:

Before an NGO came along I was very poor. No one from the Government would or could assist me but the NGO took me aside, listened carefully to my problems and then arranged for villagers in a similar position to meet together and discuss our problems. We were encouraged to come up with our own solutions, which made all of us feel very happy, and then we discussed whether the solutions were realistic or not. After that the NGO supported us with poultry, pigs, medical assistance and a limited amount of money. It also encouraged us to send our children to school. I think NGOs are good for the poor because they really try to understand us.

Some PPA participants were wary of NGOs because of experiences they had encountered. In the province of Kampong Thom, according to participants there, representatives of an alleged NGO, visited a poor village. They told people that if they joined in demonstrations against the Government, international donors would help them because these donors did not like the Government. Explained one of the villagers:

We were told by this NGO that the reason we are poor is because of the corrupt Government, which is really only supported by local authorities that are also corrupt. The NGO said that if we joined in demonstrations in Phnom Penh, not only would we get paid for participating, we would get a new government that would really care for us poor people. Some of us were tempted to join because money was waved in front of our faces, but then we thought if this NGO was so powerful why did it need to rely on us. We also believed that it would be crushed by the Government if the NGO dared challenge it.

While the poor do not necessarily have an overly positive attitude toward the Government, they do not think NGOs (where they have experience with them) have the same capacity to deliver services as the Government. They think that the Government and NGOs should work together to assist the poor.

At the time of the PPA, few NGOs have actually accessed the poorest communities in Cambodia where assessments were carried out. Security reasons are partly to account, particularly as far as development-oriented NGOs are concerned. This is starting to change as security conditions have improved. Most PPA participants

would welcome a presence by NGOs in their communities, especially if they could make a real difference in their lives.

Weak Community Mobilization Strategies

Not all the PPA sites had a focal point, such as a temple or mosque, where the local community could meet. Yet it was commonly argued by FGD participants that without a temple or mosque, people were not only unable to observe their religion's traditions but could not join together to assist one another. One Cham religious leader (*hakkam*) in Kratie explained:

The Khmer think that we Chams are very well organized, that the rich always help the poor. In Islam this is ideally what should occur but then you need to have people that are rich to help the poor. In our village, all people are poor and we do not get assistance from outside. The rich Muslims from Malaysia and places like that are very happy to fund the building of a mosque on the main road, and then they can show it to everyone. As you can see here, we are far from the main road. I think the rich Muslims would never dare travel here....If we had a mosque, at least on Friday we could meet and discuss issues that affect all of us.

In this particular FGD, the participants also argued that to build an all-weather road or rehabilitate the existing irrigation system (two priorities for these participants) required a good deal of organization at the local community level. This was impossible when people had to spend much of their time, when they were not growing rice or fishing, trying to meet their daily food requirements. It would be impossible for most poor people to give up this type of activity unless food is provided to compensate for time spent on community-based activities.

In Khmer villages, similar points were made in relation to the absence of Buddhist monks. According to an FGD participant in a village of Kampong Chhnang province:

Buddhism provides us with a meaning in our lives. We are very poor and always have to worry about whether we have enough rice. This would not stop us from supporting several monks if someone would help us build a temple. We know the rich men and women always like sponsoring the construction of a temple, and we would have no objection to them coming to our village—perhaps they could help us with other things as well—but we never get a visit

from the rich people....If we had a temple it would be quite easy to get people to meet, and we could then organize ourselves to do things that are really needed in the village.

Particularly in the lowland regions, FGD participants complained that government officials or even more affluent households would remark that the poor were lazy and incapable of organizing themselves. Such remarks are resented by many of the poor, who point to the fact that their time is occupied just making ends meet.

Referring to a perennial problem with riverbank erosion, a participant in Kampong Cham clarified the argument:

Unusually heavy flooding this year has caused more erosion of the riverbank than in the past few years, but this is not a new problem. In the past the local authorities used to organize all of us to undertake some necessary rehabilitation work during the dry season and would ensure that we got some rice to eat....Now these same local authorities complain that we won't do what we did in the past, even though they are not offering any rice. The real beneficiaries of this work are not us poor people but those who are well off and live close to the river. Let them provide us with rice, and we will assist them, but otherwise we cannot.

It appears that the refusal of villagers, or the nonbeneficiaries, to collaborate as they did in the past has led to a deterioration in community-level social relationships.

Another side of the need for greater community mobilization, particularly in relation to preventive health care programs, is that villagers do not think the Government properly informs them on a range of public health issues. Many participants do not know about the reasons why, for example, they should have their children immunized or mothers should breast-feed for as long as possible without introducing other liquids and solids. In Oddar Meanchey, a woman reported:

When anyone gets sick we have to take responsibility for them, but in our case no one in the community except our older sisters or mothers really knows how to help us. We have heard that in some other villages nursing mothers do not get as sick as their children and are healthier. We wonder whether this is because they have more food to eat, or they also know how to look after themselves better than we do.

In this context, people would like to have more information but feel the Government is not interested in providing them with much. Exceptionally, it must be

noted, at least in the villages of Oddar Meanchey where the PPA was facilitated, land mine awareness and HIV/AIDS posters could be found. If the poor appear ignorant and misinformed, it is often largely because they do not have access to accurate and reliable information. Disseminating information *en masse* enables the poor to compare and contrast alternative sources of information. This, as many of the FGD participants pointed out, is not something they are able to do currently. The problem is more acute in the upland provinces where ethnic minorities do not understand Khmer. Here information has to be largely visual in nature, utilizing culturally appropriate symbolism. Designing communications strategies and campaigns in Phnom Penh without active input from ethnic minorities, indeed from the poor themselves, are likely to result in unsuccessful forms of information dissemination.

Conclusion

People in Cambodia want to know more about government programs that are planned or being implemented in areas where they live. Relevant information on public health programs is a concern of the poor, as is information on policies that may have an impact upon their lives. Government policies on access to land by the villagers and policies to safeguard the environment are major concerns, especially given the fact that many of them need access to forests and rivers to meet their subsistence needs. But very few PPA participants had any idea of government policies that affect them, even those designed to reduce poverty. The poor noted repeatedly that the Government has never asked for their views on how it could make their lives better. The situation is even worse in the upland provinces where most of the PPA facilitators found little evidence of local community awareness or understanding of government policies and programs.

There is clearly a need for greater accountability by government officials. Teachers were cited as officials who are not answerable to the local communities they serve. Likewise, commune officials, who are appointed to their jobs, are not always held in high regard because by not being elected they are not answerable to their local communities. On the other hand, at most PPA sites it was recognized that their help in mediating with higher level government officials was necessary, especially during natural disasters. Also, the idea surfaced during PPA discussions that accountability might be greater if NGOs were involved and could monitor the actions of government officials and where appropriate act as facilitators.

In terms of predictability, the PPAs did not directly focus on this pillar of good governance. Laws and regulations imposed by the Government are not often known in advance, nor are they uniformly and effectively enforced. The Vietnamese who participated in the PPAs are especially affected by this lack of predictability, particularly in relation to alleged infringements of fishing laws and regulations. Laws and regulations relating to land, which affect all ethnic groups, are also not evenly applied.

The PPA team members found that the poor are not active participants in developing policies and designing programs that affect their lives. The Government has yet to develop effective mechanisms for the poor

to participate in decisions that affect them. Generally, participants did not know how their voices could be heard. Although NGOs have played a limited role to date in the communities where most of the participants are living, most PPA participants welcomed an expanded presence by NGOs in their communities.

It would appear that access to better information would be a first step in empowering the poor to participate in local decision making and for their voices to be heard at the national level. As reflected in the PPA discussions, villagers are generally skeptical toward the Government. And yet at the same time they want the Government to develop a greater interest in their plight.

WOMEN AND POVERTY IN CAMBODIA

Meeting Basic Subsistence Needs

Both women and men participants considered themselves to be equally poor. Yet when the focus is on the domestic and nondomestic roles of women and men, it can be seen that the burden of labor falls disproportionately on women.

All women in rural Cambodia take on a greater range of domestic and nondomestic roles than men. In all four regions women reported that they usually wake up before men and go to sleep after men. Women also reported they rest less than men do. It does appear that poverty is an issue that influences the amount of time each day women have to spend on domestic-related activities, something that most men avoid.

During an FGD in Kandal, there was a consensus that women spend more time working each day than men do. However, one middle-aged man took issue with that position:

My wife might wake up before dawn and go to sleep after me but because we are poor I have to go far from the house to look for any kind of work I can find. This is very tiring, especially when you can find no work, as this means you get no food to eat. When I find work it is physically more demanding than the work my wife does, so I need to rest more than she does.

Women disagreed that men often worked physically harder, although they admit plowing or climbing palm sugar trees are physically demanding activities. A middle-aged woman argued:

When men are resting in the house or in the field, women are usually doing a range of other activities, including the collection of firewood, the washing of clothes, the care for children and the preparation of food. While we do not have much food to eat, it

still takes a long time to think of how we can use the available food to make sure no one is hungry after eating. As a poor woman, I have observed that women who are less poor than me also work harder than men, but they work at activities that give them money. I have also observed that men who live in their households do not complain as much about work being physically demanding. It seems if you can make money then nothing is really that demanding.

In Rattanakiri, a female member of the Kavet ethnic minority complained of longer working hours than men in her village. But she also noted that one of the reasons she had to work hard is because it is now more difficult to find things to eat than previously:

I do not seem to get as much rest as the men in the village, although I know when they go out hunting wild animals it is impossible to rest until the animal being hunted is caught. Sometimes this is very dangerous as they can be bitten by a snake or charged at by a wounded pig. My work is almost the same each day....Actually I now have to work harder for us to survive because it is harder to collect the foods from the jungle that we eat with our rice.

It appears that there is a growing link between a shrinking natural resource base right across the country and an increase in the amount of daily work that women have to undertake to ensure that basic subsistence needs are met. This is not to deny that this problem also affects men as well. But men contribute to meeting subsistence needs on an ad hoc, irregular or seasonal basis. It has emerged from this PPA that poor women perceive they are spending more time each day than in the past ensuring that the basic subsistence needs of the household are met.

A young woman being interviewed in Banteay Meanchey talked of how poor women had to work very hard at activities that were not recognized by most men as lessening the impact of poverty. Without the women's

contributions, she argued, the effects of poverty would be even worse:

These days you are only recognized by men as working hard if you can bring cash into the house for them to spend. Men look at government officials and see what good lives they can have and they think the low-ranking official can get this money from the work that his wife does. But I know that both husband and wife work together to squeeze everyone else, including of course the very poor. For a poor woman like myself, I have to be constantly thinking about how I can satisfy all the demands of my family. Even thinking about this makes me tired....It also means that I cannot rest properly during the day.

Young women and girls are more likely to be disadvantaged than their male counterparts, particularly when it comes to access to education, because they, more so than males, are taken out of school to help at home or are kept from traveling long distances when there are no local facilities. While schooling does not always guarantee better life chances for the poor, it does not lead to further poverty unless debts are involved in the financing of school attendance or income is foregone because younger people are not out working.

The PPA revealed that the most vulnerable group to poverty in rural areas were widows with young children and no adult labor in the household. In such a situation, a widow not only has to generate all or most of the household's needs on her own account but also has to care for her young children. As a widow observed during an FGD involving women, including many widows, in Kampong Speu:

Women today do more nontraditional work than they did in the past, including plowing and climbing palm sugar trees [a dangerous activity that often results in injury and sometimes death]. The widow has to do this more so than the woman that still has her husband or some older men living in the same household with her....But even if she has draft animals and plow, it is hard for her because someone has to look after the young children. If she cannot do this then older children have to care for young children. This task usually falls on the shoulders of a widow's daughter rather than her son. While it is hard for the boys to go to school, they are more likely to go than a widow's daughter.

School attendance does not guarantee a high level of functional literacy for the poor but it does ensure

that at least young women have the opportunity of working in nonagricultural jobs, such as in the garment industry.



Figure 5: Women participating in a focus group discussion. More than 50 percent of PPA participants were women.

Household Decision Making

In traditional Cambodian culture it has always been assumed that while men participate in public affairs to a greater extent than women do, albeit with women indirectly influencing the decisions that are made, in the household it has been assumed that women are more influential than men. At one level this is correct, perhaps even more so in poverty-affected households where the oldest woman living in the household controls what little money the household may have. This imposes a tremendous responsibility on that woman, according to older women participants in Kampong Thom. One woman who had experienced the peace and stability of the pre-war era in Cambodia argued:

The money my family has to spend is for when someone gets sick or we have to pay for one of the young ones to go to school. Keeping this money is my responsibility, and I can decide whether it should be spent on cheap liquor, school books or some cloth....If my husband wanted money for drinking and playing cards I could say no, although this might lead to a fight. But I would not buy something for myself if it meant others would have to go without. So it seems that I have the responsibility to make sure that what little money we have is spent wisely....Having lots of money, which I can't imagine, might reduce this burden on me—I simply don't know.

The PPA identified situations where women are the nominal money managers but do not actually have the power to curtail expenditure by male household members. This was illustrated during an interview that was conducted with a poor woman in her late 20s in the province of Kandal:

You can see for yourself—we are very poor. Not a month goes by when I do not worry whether we will have rice to eat every day. But my husband, who cannot find any work because he lacks skills that people want, except growing rice, takes our money and spends it on alcohol. I do not see many rich Cambodian men spending all their families' money on drinking. It is depressing being very poor and that is the reason my husband drinks a lot, but it makes our situation even worse, and then I am cursed when one of the children gets sick or we do not have enough food to eat.

Among some of the ethnic minorities, women said that control over household finances was largely irrelevant to them. Explained a Kuy woman in the upland province of Preah Vihear:

I cannot control my husband or any other men with money because we do not have any. My husband does not blame me if we do not have enough to eat because the only thing we use money for is to buy fermented fish, MSG, salt, fish sauce and some sugar. Even then we do not always need money if we have something to exchange, although these days it is becoming more difficult for us to exchange products from the forest for other things.

From this PPA it has emerged that few women perceive that they actually have the power to curtail expenditure by other household members, not least of all because they have little by way of cash reserves. There is a general perception that poor households rely on women to manage what little money they have. For the women themselves this is an onerous responsibility.

While the cash reserves of the poor are very limited, control over reproductive decisions is something that impacts the degree of poverty, as can be seen by the claims of many women that they have too many children. During the PPA, women were asked whether they had any control over reproductive decisions. In one group located close to the border with Viet Nam in Kandal province, one woman laughingly remarked:

We do not talk about making children, we just do it. Don't you know this is the Cambodian way? Poor or not, we don't sit down and discuss with our

husbands in the mosquito net whether we should have children just in case we get bit by a mosquito....Some NGOs came to our village and talked about husband and wife deciding when they should have children—but you try telling this to a Cambodian man.

As the discussion proceeded, one woman with 10 children said:

I think I do have too many children....It is impossible to look after all of them but if some die then who will look after us when we get old? I try to help my mother out when I can, and I want my children to help me if they can. It would be good if I did not have to have one child after another because it makes me feel weak, but of course I dare not discuss this issue with my husband. This is not a Cambodian custom, and I would be criticized by other people, including women, in the same village.

A Phnong woman in Mondol Kiri also admitted that even though women there had too many children, several of them died of diseases because there was no health center:

We were born to die. You see in this village there are too many elders and orphans without supports. Now the village is almost quiet because diseases have taken many tolls.

Similar issues were raised in another PPA site where women were asked specifically whether they had knowledge of reproductive health techniques, including birth spacing, contraception, sterilization and abortion. In Sihanoukville a newly pregnant woman made this observation:

According to Buddhism it is wrong to have an abortion. I do not personally know whether this is right or wrong but I do know in the village some midwives can help you have an abortion. I have also heard it can be very dangerous and you could die. I also have to be careful as to what my husband and my own family would think. As for eating medicine to stop babies or some operation so that you could never have babies again I am not too sure. If I had many children (more than three or four) I would consider this. The problem is that I cannot talk about this with my husband as he might not agree. As for birth spacing, I know that breast-feeding is quite good, but if you are poor like me perhaps I cannot produce enough milk.

Some men agreed that women could or should not make unilateral decisions on reproductive matters. But they

were not always against some reproductive-controlling techniques. The following claim was made by a middle-aged poor farmer in Prey Veng:

It is true that all of us have too many children, but this would not happen if women did not agree to have the children. I do not agree with women taking medicine to stop them having children—there needs to be a natural way of doing this.

Such a position could be strongly supportive of birth-spacing programs in poor villages, although as the PPA has illustrated, there has been little outreach to the poorest villages by either the government or nongovernment sector.

A larger number of men argued that the problems associated with having too many children were related to the fact that there was not enough land, draft animals or farming implements. Explained another middle-aged farmer:

We cannot help the fact that we have too many children. This is natural; in some families many of the children do not live to be adults, and some do not even survive infancy. We love our children and see nothing wrong in having a large number.... The real problem is that when we do not have enough land or the children are too young to help us in the field, we become poorer than in the past. You look at the rich or even the King and his large family. It is poverty—not the large number of children—that is the problem.

This also illustrates that men of the same age do not necessarily share the same opinion on similar issues. The lesson that can be drawn from this point is that programs targeted at the poor have to avoid the pitfalls of overgeneralization.

On the other hand, some of the women of a similar age in a different FGD in close proximity to the above village argued quite differently:

What a man thinks are the right number of children to have and what we think are not always the same. It is our honor, our obligation to have children, that is expected of us.... But many of us have been pregnant a lot of times and often our babies die in our womb or die soon after we give birth to them. We also know women who die during childbirth. So while bearing children is normal for women it is not always easy. While it is hard to say we are poor simply because we have too many children, it is also necessary to understand the hardships that we experience during pregnancy, childbirth and child raising as our health can suffer and then everyone in the family is poor.

It is a serious enough problem when any member of a poor household suffers from a protracted illness, but there is little disagreement with the fact that when women fall ill, the consequences are even more severe.

However, the PPA illustrated that there are differences among ethnic minorities on this very issue. Among the Cham, whom the Khmer consider have much greater community solidarity than the Khmer, there is an ambivalence that possibly reflects the disproportionate loss of life among this ethnic minority group during the civil war, most notably during the Pol Pot period.

During an FGD with Cham males in Kep, one man noted:

We do not want to see our children grow up to be poor but as a small group of people in Cambodia we know we have to look after ourselves. During the Pol Pot period many of us were killed, and we have to increase our population. When there are more Cham, we will not be so poor.

Ethnic Phnong women in a village of Mondol Kiri also argued differently:

If we do not have more children we will become even poorer because people will come from other parts of Cambodia and take all our resources. You can see that for yourselves from the people who have come [to resettle] here. They said they were poor where they come from, which might be true, but here they are not so poor while we are getting poorer.

In this instance it is not men per se that are influencing the reproductive decisions of women but the dynamics of the land frontier, where the poor from elsewhere in Cambodia are now starting to migrate into areas inhabited by ethnic minorities, due in part to population pressures.

The inter-ethnic differences do not stop there. During an FGD with a group of ethnic Phnong females in Mondol Kiri, one woman said:

Many babies do not live long as the spirits decide who can live and die. Therefore, we must give birth to more children to avoid not having a family to support us. Also we are quickly becoming a minority in our area and have to deal with different people who do not respect the same traditions as us. If we do not have more children we will have to adopt their traditions, and we will lose our identity.

It would appear then that for different reasons, reproductive health programs targeted at the dominant Khmer female population would not work very well

among some of the ethnic minorities. This is an argument for designing culturally appropriate programs.

Domestic Violence

Some women raised the issue of domestic violence, although most FGD participants argued that verbal rather than physical abuse was more of a major problem. Interestingly, the region with the greatest degree of food insecurity, the Coastal region, reported the lowest incidence of domestic violence. Only 7 percent of FGD participants there considered this a serious issue compared to 32 percent in the Mekong Plain region, 20 percent in the Tonle Sap region and 25 percent in the Northeastern Mountain region.

The most interesting finding from the PPA is that 76 percent of participants believed much more domestic violence occurs now than in the past. The highest reported percentage of domestic violence is in the Northeastern Mountain region at more than 80 percent and the lowest at just over 70 percent in the Coastal region.

It was very difficult for people to establish a linkage between domestic violence and poverty because almost all FGD participants considered they are poorer now than they were in the past. If domestic violence leads to marital separation, rare for women who are subject to strong cultural constraints not to break up a marriage, participants considered it a cause of poverty for both women and men. This is expressed by a 50-year-old woman during an FGD in Pailin:

During the time of the Khmer Rouge, married couples were free to dissolve their marriages if they did not work out and the organization would still take care of both the man and woman....But now there is no one to take care of a divorced woman, and if she has young children she is like a widow. Under the Khmer Rouge, discipline was strict and a man did not speak strongly to a woman as the Khmer Rouge respected the rights of women. This is not true today because women are having no real rights.

This argument overlooks the fact that in many instances the Khmer Rouge forced young couples to marry against their will, the penalty for refusal sometimes being death. Still, it is necessary to bring out into the open such perceptions. The woman's view also overlooks the fact that for the first time in modern Cambodian history women have a basket of rights guaranteed by the 1993 Constitution and a government ministry specifically created to look after the affairs of women. The problem is

that this does not guarantee that the Government can effectively target poor women living in rural areas. For now it appears that NGOs have a more effective outreach to women living in rural areas than the Government, though not always to the poorest of rural women.

Another dimension to domestic violence relates to the powerlessness, the sense of frustration that the poor feel at not being able to climb out of poverty. A group of men during an FGD in Kampong Thom freely admitted there was domestic violence but one younger man pointed out:

I would only hit my wife if she hit me first, but the problem is women tend to scream at you to make you look silly in front of other people. It looks as though I have no control, especially when she refers to me being poor, which both of us are, so I feel inclined to hit her.

Women in one FGD initially denied there was any domestic violence in their village. When told there is domestic violence in many other villages, they reluctantly agreed to share their perceptions. According to one older woman:

They say men never beat women in the past—that is untrue. But we also beat men who were no good. What you are seeing today is men beating up women and not using nice language with them even when women use sweet language. This is not whether you are rich or poor but how you choose to deal with other people. Being poor today means having not enough food to eat and money to pay for things that are needed. Being poor in the past meant using bad language.

Among ethnic minority women this was a difficult issue to discuss because they do not want outsiders to probe into all aspects of their domestic relationships, although many of them believe that in the past there were greater levels of domestic violence than currently. Ethnic Vietnamese agreed there is considerable verbal, nonphysical violence in their households but none of them were prepared to attribute this to their poverty.

The issue of domestic violence is very complex when dealing with different socioeconomic strata and especially different ethnic groups. This PPA does not argue that because men are poor that they are more likely to engage in acts of violence, verbal and physical, nor does it argue that different ethnic groups have different levels of domestic violence. What the PPA does support is the argument that being poor does little to resolve the problems of domestic violence.

Finding Suitable Marriage Partners

For younger women one of the consequences of poverty is the difficulty in finding a suitable spouse. All young female FGD participants argued that men never want to marry poor women although very few of the poor women actually wanted to marry poor men either. The pressure is on younger women to find some form of income, and that includes, if necessary, working outside the village.

Many women acknowledged that when a young woman leaves the village in search of work, she would end up doing something that she is ashamed to do. In remote upland villages, particularly in the Northeastern Mountain region, no one really knows what happens in such instances because young women do not leave the village in search of employment. In provinces closer to Phnom Penh, the poor are quite aware as to what will or may happen to young women. As one person in a Kandal discussion pointed out:

When young women leave the village, given their lack of education, they might end up working for some rich family as a maid or as a beer hostess in a bar or restaurant and even as a sex worker. If such young women come back to the village with a lot of money then perhaps no one will care, but until this day we have not seen young women bringing much money back to the village—at least not enough to buy land, draft animals or farm implements. If young women have this kind of money, they would have no trouble getting married.

In deconstructing the notion about the ideal marriage partner, the poor appear pragmatic enough to realize that a young woman with money, irrespective as to how she earned it, enhances her marital prospects. The ethnic Vietnamese living in Cambodia appear to have a similar position to the ethnic Khmer in this respect, as evidenced by the following points made by an older Vietnamese living in Kandal:

The Khmer always argue that the honor of their young women is important. Having access to land for growing rice or other crops or a boat to go fishing is also important for survival. How people get the money to buy land or a boat is also important, and I know from experience it is not easy. I do not think any young man would marry a young woman that did not come from a family with land or a boat, or preferably both.

The issues associated with honor and prestige do not escape the poor. In a village in Siem Reap, one young woman who is aware of income-generating opportunities outside the village argued for staying home:

I do not honor my family if I go and work in Phnom Penh or even Siem Reap because there are many things to spend money on in both those places and you need money to buy these things. From what I have heard, a young woman like me might have to do something that will bring dishonor on my family, such as working as a beer girl.

Yet other young women from poor families who are living and working in Phnom Penh spoke differently of their honor and their prospects:

It is not always good what we do but we need money. When we have a lot of it we will return to the village and bring more honor to our family than if we had stayed in the village. But if this cannot happen then we should stay here because there is no future in the village.

There are multiple layers of reality when an issue such as this kind is discussed, but it cannot be argued that the poor have completely abandoned any meaning associated with the notion of honor. That there are few local employment opportunities in most villages means that for the poor it is necessary to work elsewhere. On the one hand this exposes them to greater social risks, including those associated with HIV/AIDS, but on the other hand it might also provide practical learning experiences that can be applied to the reduction of poverty, if and when such young people return to their local communities.

Health and Education

For poor Cambodians, access to health and education is highly problematic. Not one woman, during either FGDs or interviews, considered she enjoyed good access to either health care or educational resources. Women reported that the most stressful times in relation to accessing basic health care occurred during their pregnancies or when their young children became ill. In all villages visited by the PPA teams there were no antenatal and postnatal services offered, and women had to rely on services provided by traditional midwives, which are quite satisfactory when there are no medical complications. Indeed most women prefer to be seen by a traditional midwife with whom they are familiar. In this respect there was no difference between women living in upland provinces such as Rattanakiri or a coastal province like Sihanoukville.

The real problems occur during the postnatal period, and while the effects include anemia, back pains and gynecological disorders, the causes are lack of proper rest following childbirth, the need to work hard and the inability to afford extra nutrients required during breast-feeding. Women in an FGD organized in Pursat argued:

When you are poor it does not matter when you give birth to a baby because you are always busy trying to manage household activities. Just because you give birth to a baby does not mean that other family members do not need your support. It is even worse if we have rice to transplant or harvest.... Then there will be no rest. Everyone tries to give you a little more food but if they do not have it to spare what can they do?

The women who are not poor are lucky because someone will look after them, they do not have to go out and work as hard, and there will always be more food.

In the upland provinces it is even more problematic, as expressed by a woman suffering from malaria who had just given birth at the time of the PPA:

I feel weak as it is from giving birth to my child but now I am also suffering from malaria. It is terrible, as I have to go and work in the field with my husband since we are about to harvest our upland rice. He cannot do this job on his own, and we cannot afford to employ anyone. Without the rice we would starve to death. When a man gets sick, the woman is expected to look after him. I know my husband would try to come and help harvest the rice if he were the one that is ill, but I could not let him. All of us poor women are in a similar position.

Malaria is endemic in much of the Cambodian countryside, especially in the upland provinces, and it exacerbates other illnesses that women may acquire following childbirth. Supplying poor households with mosquito repellent- impregnated nets, Vitamin A supplements and even access to clean water would go a long way to resolving some of these postnatal problems. The poor women have some knowledge of these solutions but lack the financial and political resources to access the providers of such services in Cambodia.

Serious problems also arise when another member of the household falls ill, particularly infants whom women are breast-feeding or young children who are in their maternal care. While most women prefer to breast-feed, irrespective of their ethnic background or where they are located in Cambodia, the ability to continue breast-feeding depends on whether the lactating mother

is adequately nourished. All women interviewed agreed that attempts should be made to provide additional food to lactating mothers, but they also noted that during months when there was inadequate food this proves to be a major problem. Of relevance is the serious food shortages for the poor in most regions of Cambodia, which usually occur from July until after the December-January harvest. However, in the upland provinces, serious food shortages can occur at any time during the year because upland ethnic minorities rely to a greater extent on hunting and gathering than do the lowland Khmer, Cham or Vietnamese.

There is some gender bias in the way poor communities deal with women's health problems. In a village inhabited by the ethnic Kavet in Rattanakiri, it was learned that if a family member was seriously ill and required hospitalization, the family would be more likely to try and arrange for a man to be transported to hospital than a woman. One male villager explained:

We cannot afford to be without women in the household, even a woman who is seriously ill because women look after the house. Men spend a lot of time in the forest so they can manage the forest but not the house.... Yet we really do not like taking anyone to a faraway hospital because they are not much good anyway. It is better to understand what caused the illness in the first place, such as not treating the bad spirits with respect. Good spirits would never cause illness.

As this man pointed out, transporting seriously ill people to a culturally alien hospital is not the preferred alternative for either gender among the ethnic Kavet. Culturally sensitive health workers or, alternatively, a training program in public health designed by the Kavet, and the other groups are affected this way, in conjunction with public health workers is more likely to meet the needs of those ethnic minorities.

Most poor families try to send all their children to school if they can but for the very poor, attendance at school is almost a luxury. But often, they cannot afford the school uniforms, transport fees and formal and nonformal fees that are paid to teachers, points that were made in Chapter 5. The reality for many young girls is that they cannot even complete the basic four years of education. This is put in context by a group of women in Svay Rieng who argued:

We want all of our children to attend school but when there is a family illness or young children need to be looked after we always ask our daughters to do this rather than our sons.

Daughters are better at doing this kind of thing, and it is their duty to do so. Sons should try to stay at school so they can at least read and write Khmer. If we were not so poor and did not have to spend all day looking for food, then our daughters could attend school.

It should come as no surprise that more males in FGDs were literate than females because of such cultural attitudes. Interestingly, the few women who considered themselves literate in the Khmer language did not have the same argument. In Oddar Meanchey, a group of women who returned to Cambodia in the early 1990s after spending nearly a decade in displaced people's camps just inside Thailand and who joined one of the FGDs remarked:

If we take our daughters out of school we will always be poor.

It is daughters who are capable of earning more money than sons and are always around to assist in times of need. Sons will get married to someone else's daughter who may not live in the same village as us. We know this is not just what happens in Cambodia but what we have observed in Thailand—the men laze around getting drunk all day in Thailand and have other wives while the women work really hard.

An important point that emerges from this PPA is that because of nearly three decades of civil war and significant internal migration and displacement, the poor have experiences that the poor in some other countries in the region do not have.

In the upland areas, access to education is problematic for both males and females because there are few schools in remote localities. Where these schools exist they do not often employ bilingual teachers, so most of the teachers only speak Khmer. It is expected of the students that they must learn Khmer. Among some of the ethnic minority groups there is a reluctance to let young female students learn Khmer lest they cast aside their indigenous language. A Kuy woman in Preah Vihear told the PPA team there that to learn to speak Khmer was a real struggle for her:

My family asked me why I needed to learn Khmer, to which I replied that if I wanted to live and work among other Cambodians then I needed to learn Khmer. They then asked me why I wanted to live and work among other Cambodians, to which I replied that this would be the only way to have an opportunity to escape from poverty. This did not convince my family who thought I was only trying

to become like a Khmer. But look around you. All my village is poor. At least I can go to a place like Kampong Thom and ask for work.

The remoteness from schools is another obstacle for young females living in the upland areas. Families are not keen to permit their daughters to spend a long time away from home attending school, partly because they are worried about what may happen to their daughters but also because they are needed for essential domestic work. Concerns about sons living away from home are less than for daughters.

This last point is also found among concerns of lowland Khmer to an important extent, as mentioned during the PPA. Kandal province, for example, is not far from Phnom Penh but young people living there need to go away from home if they want to attend school. According to a man in one of the Kandal FGDs:

Send your sons away to school if you have the money....It is a good idea and they might be better off, but send your daughters away and what will happen to them? Perhaps they will return to the village pregnant. No one in Cambodia sends their daughters away to study.

Such an attitude reflects traditional Cambodian cultural values, and it is not surprising that some Cambodian men subscribe to this attitude. Cultural traditions that do not benefit poor Cambodians, especially young females, have a pervasiveness that is not easily challenged. Clearly one of the solutions may well be the establishment of single-sex dormitories in Phnom Penh and provincial capitals, although the more effective solution is to provide education at the village level. Even then, some flexibility in teaching hours needs to be offered so that young girls can attend classes, according to FGD participants.

Some of the Cambodian women who were interviewed stated they also want relevant forms of vocational education and training, such as dressmaking, hairdressing, food preservation, craft manufacture and silk weaving skills. Women also would like to have information on available sources of credit and how they can qualify to access this credit. They would like real information on what they can produce for the market. They would like training in cattle, pig, goat and poultry raising, tree and vegetable farming. These vocational and training needs vary from those of men that relate to skill development in motorcycle repairs, irrigation pump maintenance and woodworking. Men also want training in some animal husbandry, industrial agriculture (rubber, palm oil and cassava) and technologies associated with growing

export-quality rice. Like women, they are also very interested in credit, but less interested in developing greater levels of market knowledge.

There appears to be regional differences in training demands. In provinces such as Siem Reap, women would like to learn silk weaving whereas in Mondol Kiri, ethnic Phnong women would like to receive training in craft manufacturing, particularly in making baskets that they could sell to non-Phnong people. Most Khmer women would like more training in pig raising but Cham women, who are Muslims, would like to learn goat raising. Ethnic Lao women in Stung Treng want training in poultry while the ethnic Tumpuon women in Rattanakiri want training in cattle. Vocational training in food preservation is sought among all upland ethnic minority groups while the lowland Khmer women would like more training in dressmaking.

Labor Activities

Women would participate in almost any labor activity that would provide them money. The problem, as this PPA has revealed, is that there are few opportunities for paid labor for the poor.

To find paid work, out-migration, either temporary or permanent, is necessary. Young men are supposed to be encouraged while young women are to be discouraged; and yet, some women recognized there are more opportunities for young females than for men. According to an older woman from Prey Veng:

The garment factories in Phnom Penh want young women to work in them, not young men. At first when we heard about this preference we thought it was quite strange because we always thought young men would be preferred over young women. We thought that the factories must be paying the young women very low wages but when we heard they could earn KR160,000 to KR200,000 per month we realized that young men would probably work there as well. If you are lucky to pick up paid employment in the local area, the most you can earn is about KR3,000 per day. Nowadays, having daughters is much better than having sons because garment factories generally recruit girls. Boys are rarely employed in this area.

A young garment worker who returned to her village in Kampong Speu during the PPA painted a different picture:

When you see the long line of young women lining up for a job you think it must be quite a good job. Once you have worked in the place for a few months

you realize that you have to work for every riel. Most of our earnings go to pay for a place to sleep and our food. If we want to send money home, we have to work very long hours. Of course, it is better than nothing, but one day I would like to return to my village. Whether I can return will depend on if I have enough money to buy some land and animals or find some kind of paid employment here in the village.

In spite of this, the other women participating in the FGD still believed that this young garment worker is better off than if she had stayed in the village.

Where there is limited paid employment locally it appears to be a common practice that women get paid less than men, but rather because it is considered there are some jobs that women cannot do well. For instance, in several PPAs organized in Kampong Thom, women complained about differential payments for agricultural labor. Men could receive up to KR5,000 per day to work as casual laborers harvesting corn, peanuts and sesame, but women could only receive KR2,500 to KR3,000 for similar work.

Employers of this labor claimed women take more time off during the day, whereas men work the whole day. Women questioned this claim but the men argued there was little difference whether women or men received higher daily rates because it all went back into the household finances. This was quickly disputed by women, one of whom pointed out:

Every riel we earn goes back to the family but not every riel the man earns goes back to the family. In fact some of this money is used by the man for drinking. Sometimes he uses it all and has nothing to bring back home. This rarely occurs in the case of a woman.

As wage labor is quantified, so too are some forms of labor exchange. Among the upland ethnic minorities, there are forms of generalized reciprocity that imply that assistance needs to be rendered whenever necessary. Ethnic minority women provide their labor when necessary for a range of everyday activities but men only generally provide it when logging, hunting, harvesting or house-building activities are required. During FGDs among ethnic minority groups, men claimed they were more deeply involved in reciprocal forms of labor than women, which was mildly disputed by women. The system of generalized reciprocity among upland ethnic minority groups ensures a culture of shared poverty.

Men from all regions felt rather comfortable with the fact that they could be paid more for doing the same or less work than their female counterparts, even though

it would be in the interest of everyone to be paid at the same daily wage rates. As one male construction worker from Prey Veng offered:

Women cannot work as hard as we can on building sites. The work is heavy and often dangerous. At a certain time of the month, women are even weaker. Also, women should be looking after older and younger family members, so when something goes wrong they return to the village. That is why we should get paid more.

Access to Land, Water, Credit and Agricultural Extension

In Cambodia, large numbers of landholders do not have full legal ownership of their land. Most have legal access to their land as allowed by the 1989 law that resulted in the allocation of land in the rural areas to all households. However, more than 300,000 people returned from refugee camps along the border with Thailand between 1992 and 1993. And, there were significant numbers of internally displaced persons due to the civil war that did not effectively end until after Pol Pot's death in 1998. In the upland provinces, the situation is more complex because most of the ethnic minorities claim customary access to land on a communal basis rather than access on an individual household basis.

Bias against those who left Cambodia in the 1970s and 1980s have affected many people when they returned from border camps. In Battambang province where significant numbers of these returnees were offered land, much of it full of land mines, there have been difficulties, according to women in PPAs there. One widowed woman explained:

When I came back I thought it would be good, as now there would be peace but I found that the land allocated to me was claimed by a man already living in the village. First he told me that it had land mines, and I would not be able to clear it of the mines by myself. When I protested, he then told me that the village head had wrongly allocated the land to me. I went and complained to the village head, but he told me that I left Cambodia in the hope that I could find a better life abroad, and he was not going to help me.

Similar accounts can be heard from other areas where significant numbers of returnees were sent, including some provinces far from the border. These returnees want

protection from local officials, who are either insensitive to their plight or continue to harbor a bias against them.

Internal displacement has also created some problems for women. For instance, in Oddar Meanchey, a group of women complained during an FGD that the original land they occupied had been seized by the military for its own use. The military told them that the women had no legal proof of occupation. Despaired one woman:

Soldiers created the problems in this area. During war they take your sons for fighting and your daughters for their own pleasure. Once peace arrives they take your land, and local officials either can do little about this or provide support for the soldiers to do this. These soldiers and local officials do not listen to us.

Problems for the internally displaced occurred throughout most of the 1990s. These problems were generally more specific to the northwestern border provinces, but during the PPA similar troubles were found in Kampong Thom, Kampong Chhnang and Pursat.

Highlighted issues in the upland villages occupied by the different ethnic minority groups include people's rights to access areas for hunting, the gathering of other nontimber forest products, including wild foods or those considered sacred, which have been restricted. This has an impact upon all community members. An ethnic Prov women in Rattanakiri told this story:

Some strangers came to our village to look at the land, and then went into the forest with a military escort. A few months later we were told by local officials that there were some areas in the forest we could no longer hunt and gather in. We protested but were told that local Prov men agreed to this rule because they were given money by these strangers. We think it is not the local Prov men but the officials who did this.

It would appear, based on discussions with other ethnic minorities in the upland provinces, that instances of this co-opting of land are increasingly occurring.

Water is a problem that involves all women, whether it is access to and utilization of safe drinking water or for household garden plots or the irrigation of agricultural crops. There are many points that emerged here that illustrate the gender-specific problems associated with water.

All women complained that they spend a lot of time each day accessing water for cooking, washing and bathing purposes. In all regions women stated the time spent was almost double what it was in the wet season. The situation is even more serious in the upland provinces, where near drought-like conditions occur by the middle

of the dry season. And then during the wet season in all regions there are more problems associated with young children getting diarrhea because of the water quality and the less time women have to look after young children because of wet season agricultural activities.

The problem is exacerbated when heavy flooding occurs, as it did during this PPA. Once flooding occurs, women have to spend much time ensuring that young children do not drown in the floodwaters, the livestock are shifted to higher ground and that food supplements are found from nonflooded areas.

In the upland provinces because of topography and most villages' close proximity to the watersheds, flash flooding is more likely to occur. In the lowland areas women get more time to prepare for flooding. Women in FGD in Kampong Cham, where flooding was very bad during 2000, complained about flood warnings. According to one woman's experience:

Local officials did not receive information from the Government in time to tell us that the flooding would get worse, and we continued working in our rice fields until the floodwaters started to rise and then we found our rice fields flooded. Next we found we could not stay in our houses. Flooding has always occurred but nowhere near as bad as this.

These women did not know about flood forecasting and the importance of an early warning system, but they were concerned that the Government appeared nonresponsive to their plight. There is clearly an argument for more detailed flood forecasting, using if necessary the observations of local villagers in the absence of reliable data, and the establishment of an early warning system. This would be information that should be shared with local communities, including women.

Distinct gender differences relate to what priorities should be attached to the delivery of water services at the community level. Women everywhere want more convenient access to safe water for drinking, cooking and bathing purposes. They do not want to spend as much time per day as they do currently accessing water for these needs. This does not appear to be a major concern of men, who think as long as water is available then the problem is solved. Men asked for irrigation systems for agricultural crops but not irrigation water for household gardens or systems that could be designed so that women could take advantage of them for bathing and washing.

Few of the women who participated in this PPA have access to credit. Indeed, as Chapter 5 demonstrates, some women and their households sank into further poverty because they had to sell land, draft animals and often much

of their rice crop. It is clear that women everywhere would be very enthusiastic about a micro-finance program if they could benefit from it. It also appears that women are more specific about how they would repay credit extended by such a program, as one person in Siem Reap said:

If we borrowed money at a low interest rate to buy a cow, pigs or poultry, we could repay this loan by returning to the borrower a calf, piglet or chickens up to the value of the loan plus interest. In the event of illness we could borrow money and agree to repayments over a period of time so that we do not have to sell our land or livestock.

Men in the same FGD were nowhere near as explicit about how they would repay a loan, focusing instead on why they need to have access to micro-finance. This PPA appears to corroborate the widespread perception that women are more creditworthy than men.

There are no agricultural extension services in the villages where the PPAs were undertaken. And women did express support for extension services targeted specifically at them. In particular, they wanted to know how they could increase the productivity of the wet season rice crop they jointly cultivated with men, although in the upland provinces where they grow different glutinous rice this was not considered a priority because there is normally less pressure on the land.

Women also thought technical training courses should not target only men. The men claim that women are not capable of participating in training courses because many of them are not literate. While this is partly correct, one woman interviewed in Svay Rieng argued:

Just because I cannot read and write does not mean I cannot learn by watching what needs to be done. I can then take what I have learned out into my own fields and see if it works. Maybe they could even teach me how to do this myself by coming out into my field. It is not necessary to have some local village man being trained and then teaching me because he might not even do this.

This is a good argument for promoting a farmer-centered extension strategy that is also gender-sensitive.

Influence in the Public Domain

The PPA found that women have a significant role to play in decision-making at the community level. Only 10 percent of FGD participants previously considered that women had a responsible role to play in decision making

on issues that impacted upon their lives at the community level. By the time of this PPA, more than 36 percent of participants agreed that women now deserve greater authority. This trend, participants acknowledged, started during the revolution in 1975 when women became more involved in community roles and responsibilities. However, there is considerable variation from one region to the next.

Both in the past and currently, women in the Northeastern Mountain region have played a greater community role than in the other regions—16 percent in the past and 65 percent nowadays. How the big percentage increase can be explained is not clear from the findings of the PPA although historically it can be argued that gender relations have been more equal among upland ethnic groups than lowland ethnic groups.

In the Tonle Sap region, 41 percent of participants considered that women now play a larger role in community-based decision-making processes than in the past.

In the context of poverty reduction, the involvement or noninvolvement of women in these processes

is thought to demonstrate the depth of poverty in the local community. This was not cross-tabulated but intuitively there appeared to be a correlation between villages with more active involvement of women in community-based decision-making processes and lower poverty. Women in some of the FGD made this point as did a number of male FGD participants.

No women or men were so naïve that they thought it possible that communities by themselves could solve all the problems associated with poverty. As one female FGD participant in Takeo explained:

It would not matter if every man and every woman participated in the affairs of the community—poverty would not be reduced by this fact alone. We need things that our community cannot provide, such as supplementary food in order to work on local projects....It is impossible for us to train our own teachers...We lack the technical knowledge to redesign irrigation structures.... Our knowledge of modern health care does not exist.

POVERTY AMONG ETHNIC MINORITIES

Social Exclusion of Ethnic Minorities

Cambodian society, like in many other Asian nations in the region, has a complex approach to its ethnic minorities. As argued elsewhere in this report, some ethnic minorities are more readily accepted than others. The ethnic minorities featured in this PPA where the Kuy, Stieng, Prov, Kavet, Phnong, Kroeng, Tumpuon and Lao from the upland provinces of Rattanakiri, Mondol Kiri, Stung Treng, Preah Vihear and Kratie and the Muslim Cham and Vietnamese in lowland provinces. There are other ethnic minorities in Cambodia, including several significant upland minorities (especially the Jarai), and Chinese and Thai, who do not feature in this PPA. The Chinese do not feature because the PPA teams and workshop participants did not consider them poor.

As a very broad generalization, most Cambodians regard the upland ethnic minorities as “legitimate” inhabitants of Cambodia but don’t seem to make citizenship an issue for the Chinese and Thai. Only the ethnic Vietnamese have the most problematic status for social and historical reasons, even though the 1993 Constitution accords the same rights to all citizens irrespective of their ethnic or racial background. It is useful to deal with the problematic status of the ethnic Vietnamese first because it is a complicated issue.

At several of the PPA sites close to the border with Viet Nam in Kampong Cham, there was considerable criticism of the Vietnamese, with the ethnic Vietnamese-Cambodians being lumped together with the migrants. In one instance, a group of women participants claimed Vietnamese from across the border supported by troops

took land belonging to poor people in their villages. That this may happen in isolated incidents, especially along the border, must not be discounted but the problem is that all Vietnamese people living in Cambodia are affected by such accusations. As a Vietnamese female hairdresser from Ho Chi Minh living and working in Phnom Penh argued during an interview for this PPA:

I came to Cambodia looking for work because I realized it was easier for me to find work here than in Saigon where I come from a really poor family. Whenever there is some criticism of Viet Nam or at least the Vietnamese, all of us Vietnamese tend to be blamed for the wrongdoings of other Vietnamese. I will not say that all Vietnamese are honest and reliable people but in general we are no worse than other non-Cambodians living and working in Phnom Penh.

Other immigrant groups and expatriates living and working in Cambodia usually are not the subject of criticism by the ethnic Khmer majority, even where they are not poor. Only the Vietnamese are accused of migrating to Cambodia to extract resources from the country, enrich themselves and then return to Viet Nam. The irony is that Vietnamese illegal immigrants are likely to be considerably poorer than other immigrant groups in Cambodia, but whether they experience the same levels of poverty as other Cambodians is another matter.

Many Vietnamese living in Cambodia consider themselves Cambodians. They are not migrants, temporary or permanent, from Viet Nam. They are ethnic Vietnamese who have lived in Cambodia for generations, but after Pol Pot came to power in 1975, the situation worsened for most Vietnamese and many naturally sought refuge in the neighboring country. One Vietnamese participant spoke for many:

Some Cambodians think we are rich, even poor Cambodians who live close by and know that we too are quite poor. Yet it is assumed that because we are quite good at catching fish that we must have more money than the Cambodians but everyone knows that we are always forced to pay money to officials from the Department of Fisheries—the Khmer refuse to do this....We are not anti-Cambodian as it is well known. Our children go to the local school when we can afford to send them and we speak Khmer just like other Cambodians.

The poorer Vietnamese are at a great disadvantage in relation to poverty targeting than other Cambodians because of the racial discrimination they experience. All poor Cambodians experience a form of cultural discrimination that also has a class basis but poor Vietnamese are doubly disadvantaged.

In the context of mainstream Cambodian society, the Vietnamese, again both migrants and ethnic Vietnamese, suffer a form of social exclusion as they are not considered to have a legitimate right to reside in Cambodia, despite the 1993 Constitution that recognizes this right. They do have the right of access to neighboring Viet Nam but this option is not realistic for most Vietnamese living in Cambodia because they believe they would be even poorer in rural Viet Nam. Culturally, however, they are not organically disconnected from the broader currents of Vietnamese culture, and they do have a reference point that a number of other ethnic minority groups lack in Cambodia.

The Khmer ethnic group in Cambodia does not look down on the Cham or have the same apprehension about the Cham in the same way it does the Vietnamese. One of the participants in the FGDs conducted in a Cham community in Kampot stated:

If you study our community carefully you will find that we are poorer than neighboring Khmer communities in this commune. They have slightly bigger and better rice lands, more draft animals, a health center, a school and some outside political support. We do not begrudge the Khmer communities these things as they too are poor but we wish people could understand our poverty....Yes we are Cham and are supposed to be well organized, but being well organized does not mean we are rich.

During the PPA it was difficult to get the Cham to complain about their poor standard of living because they did not want to be seen criticizing other Cambodians, perhaps due to their shocking treatment at the hands of Pol Pot's cadres during the late 1970s. Cham appear

grateful for the fact that other Cambodians gave them a great deal of cultural space after the demise of the Pol Pot regime in late 1978.

There can be little doubt that the upland ethnic minorities experience a great deal of social exclusion, albeit unintentional, from the mainstream of Cambodian society. Culturally this had a significant impact on how poverty affects these groups. Being poor is one thing, but not being able to understand the dominant ethnic group or being misunderstood by the same group creates its own set of problems. Take the example from an FGD in Mondol Kiri involving the ethnic Phnong, which had to be facilitated by a commune leader who was the only person lingual in both the local language and Khmer. One villager expressed the situation keenly, according to the commune leader's translation:

Even to communicate with you people we have to use someone who can speak both our languages. It is really difficult to understand one another....You were probably told that it would be easy to work with us because we listen to everything our leaders tell us, but these leaders have to be really good and understand us as well. Poor leaders cannot last in our community.

The Phnong do not like the conclusion readily reached by lowland peoples that they simply follow their leader, but they realize it is now necessary to rely on someone who can deal with lowland groups. It is noted when lowland groups move to the upland areas the culture of the lowlanders prevails, particularly in the use of language. The Phnong along with other ethnic minorities would like to learn Khmer but they would only encourage it if attempts were made by officials to learn their language.

The social exclusion experienced by upland ethnic groups in Cambodia is quite different to that experienced

Figure 6: A group of ethnic Phnong who participated in a focus group discussion in Mondol Kiri.



by other ethnic groups in Cambodia. While poor Khmer do not always understand the culture of nonpoor lowland ethnic minority groups, they have some idea of their social setting. Similarly, there is some understanding of the Cham, so it is more possible to understand their social realities. It may be very difficult to promote a subtle awareness of difference, which is not what any of the ethnic minorities participating in this PPA expect, but it is not too difficult to accept that ethnic minorities may have to be treated differently. The remainder of this section will focus on the findings of the PPA as they relate to ethnic minorities.

Food Insecurity and Diminishing Natural Resources

In the upland provinces, ethnic minority groups rely less on the traditional foodstuffs that lowland Cambodians (consumption of nonglutinous rice, fermented fish and vegetables) and more on the types of foodstuffs they can forage from the forests that surround their villages. While upland ethnic minority groups will also eat nonglutinous rice, it is the glutinous rice they prefer along with edible wild plants and herbs and wildlife that can be found in great abundance in uncleared forest areas. Going without rice is a major problem for the upland ethnic minorities, but they are also used to starchy foods such as manioc and cassava and can get by without rice if they need to do so. This is not preferred, however, and glutinous rice must still be seen as a basic foodstuff.

From the FGD conducted in 19 different sites in the four upland provinces, it appears that food shortages do not occur at the same time of the year as in the lowlands, or they occur at any time of the year given the nature of shifting cultivation in upland provinces. For instance, during an FGD involving the ethnic Phnong in Mondol Kiri, an elderly woman stated:

Many years ago, if fire swept through our swidden land this would create many difficulties for us in the short term because our crops would be destroyed and within a short while we would be hungry. As fire can occur any time from the fourth month of the dry season [February] this would mean even before the beginning of the heavy rains we would be hungry. These days there are more and more fires as people are clearing more land and this creates some difficulty. Another problem relates to sudden flooding

during the wet season and to counter this we have to plant crops higher up where the soil is not very good. In more recent times there is also the problem with people stealing our ripening crops. This never happened in the past.

Several related issues are raised here. The first involves natural disasters, whether they be fires or floods, and the second addresses what appears is a breakdown in the social cohesion in some communities. Even the natural disasters, as a man in the same FGD pointed out, are linked to human activities:

Before, no one apart from us was living here, but now other poor people from areas a long way from here are coming to live. We are not opposed to them coming here, but they do not have the same ideas in relation to the area we live in. They do not take any notice of forest spirits, laughing them off; and their actions annoy the spirits and we all suffer. This means that fires get out of control and streams flood very quickly.

This could possibly point to the fact that while the upland provinces are relatively underpopulated, they have a fragile ecosystem that can only accommodate lower population densities.

A slightly different perspective on food security was provided by a mixed group of ethnic Kavet minority in Rattanakiri who were trying to come to terms with the fact that nontraditional foodstuffs are fast becoming a feature of their diet, often with implications for food security:

Before other people came to our area we used to trade wild animals and forest products in exchange for dried fish and fish sauce, but after these people came to settle nearby they opened up a market selling all sorts of things.

Some of the things they sell like instant noodles, cakes and biscuits and sweets, our children want to eat because they think they taste good. Even the older people quite like some of these foods. But we do not have the money to spend on them so we have to exchange some of the wild foods that we can gather, and this is now starting to affect our health....And we seem to be more hungry than in the past.

The Kavet are not starving but the impact of including nontraditional foodstuffs in their diet, especially when these foodstuffs are of dubious nutritional value, is not without consequences for this ethnic minority group. People in the lowlands of Cambodia complain about not having enough money to buy some of the nonvillage-

produced foodstuffs, partly because they do not have enough local food sources. While the traditional food base is shrinking in the upland provinces, it would also appear that adapting traditional diets to include processed food has important ramifications for food security.

For lowland ethnic minorities, the problems of food security are more or less similar to those of the lowland Khmer. Fish supplies appear to be considerably on the wane for some groups, however. All the ethnic Cham who participated in an FGD in Kep commented that in the past they could supplement their agricultural sources of foodstuffs with fish and other marine products from the coast in Kampot, to which they live in close proximity. But times have changed, as one older male participant complained:

I can never recall catching fish to be a major problem. Two of us could drag a net up the river from its mouth at the coast and in a few minutes catch as much fish as we needed. Fish were so plentiful that we released the small ones back into the water. But now we can spend many hours and only catch small fish, the ones we used to throw back into the river. These days you need a boat with a big engine so you can fish far offshore. We cannot afford to do this.

The FGD participants wanted the Government to take action against commercial fisherfolk with bigger boats and nets who do not care whether their practices are unsustainable or not.

The Vietnamese are among those fishermen accused by ethnic Khmers of using unsustainable practices, such as dynamite, grenades, cyanide and electricity-stunning methods, to catch freshwater fish in the waterways of the Tonle Sap. The Khmer also accused the Vietnamese of shaping traditional fishing instruments and designing nets so that they could catch all species, not just the fish that are plentiful. The Khmer also claimed that if the Vietnamese only caught fish for household consumption, then they would not need to use the tools and techniques that they do.

In response, a Vietnamese participant observed:

If you observe the Khmer carefully you will see that they use the dynamite, grenades, etc. and are not frightened to challenge fisheries officers. If we try to challenge these officers we will be in trouble. We do have our own fishing tools, such as those used for catching eels, which are better than the traditional fishing tools used by the Khmer, but the Khmer also use these fishing tools as well. It is true that we

sell as much of our fish as we can but this is only to pay for basic necessities such as rice.

Such an explanation does not satisfy many Khmers who believe it is now harder than ever to catch freshwater fish in any great quantity. However, for the Vietnamese to shoulder all the blame is quite another issue. It is possible that the poor, irrespective of their ethnic background, find satisfying immediate basic needs is a greater priority than issues associated with environmental sustainability.

Disenfranchisement of Land Use Rights and Access to Natural Resources

Indigenous land rights issues are very important to upland ethnic minorities but there is a very strong perception among all ethnic minority groups who participated in this PPA that the Government either does not care for such issues or does not understand them. In Rattanakiri, FGD participants were able to relate in some detail the problems that another major ethnic minority in Rattanakiri, the Tumpuon, has been experiencing at the hands of high-ranking military officials. According to one of the ethnic minority participants:

A big military man fooled some Tumpuon people into "selling" him a large area of land. This is strictly forbidden among the Tumpuon, as it is among us, but this big military man forced all the villagers to place their thumbprints on a document none of them could understand, and he gave them all gifts. Now the people have to fight him in Phnom Penh, and I do not think they can win.

There are increasingly many instances where the Government may have ignored traditional land rights in the awarding of forest concessions to both local and nonCambodian concessionaires. In Stung Treng, a Lao participant complained about the loss of land to logging companies:

A few years ago a foreign logging company started logging in the forest where we hunt for wild animals, chop down trees for our own use or to earn some money and where we gather other things for our own use. Immediately soldiers with guns were sent to tell us that we could not chop trees down in this area, and that if we did they would shoot us. To frighten us they fired their guns into the air and

disappeared. From time to time these soldiers come through the village, searching underneath our houses for small logs and demanding food and drink.

This is an extreme case but the fear and uncertainty this has created is very stressful for ethnic minority groups who are unable to seek legal redress. In another PPA a Lao participant argued:

If these logging companies provided us with local employment opportunities, either by working in the forest or providing us with saw milling equipment and training to make wooden products that we could sell then that might be alright.... Yet there is no evidence that these companies want to do this.

Such a response implies that some ethnic minority groups are prepared to meet logging companies halfway on this question of logging in areas of “*eminent domain*,” but it should not be assumed that all ethnic minority groups subscribe to that position. The Tumpuon participants apparently do not, as one man argued:

The land we occupy is not for logging companies to chop down trees or other commercial activities to take place. This land is sacred land, this is where the spirits, both good and bad, dwell and to disturb this land will create disharmony in our communities and might lead to the same situation that the Jarai are in, where the outside force can destroy your community.

Poverty is a major problem for upland ethnic minority groups like the Tumpuon, but they are clearly astute enough to realize that commercial logging activities are not going to reduce their poverty and understand how their traditional lifestyle might be lost forever. It needs to be impressed upon the Government and private sector that traditional concepts of land among the upland ethnic minorities are fundamentally different to those of

Figure 7: This is the “normal” condition of a good interdistrict road in the upland provinces of Cambodia (Mondol Kiri).



lowland groups. This is a critical issue given the fact that there are likely to be significant agricultural development prospects in the upland areas.

Even where the Government has good intentions in relation to protecting the local environment, there are some problems. In Mondol Kiri, some of the Phnong participants expressed concern over new regulations that would restrict what activities they could undertake in forested areas. According to one villager:

A government official came to the village and posted a notice in Khmer that we could not read so we had to ask the Khmers living here to explain what was in the notice. They told us we could not hunt certain kinds of wild animals that we like to eat when we can catch them, could not chop down trees of less than a certain size or clear land for our agricultural activities.... We don't know whether this is correct or not, but a district policeman told us that if we paid him something he would ensure that we could continue doing what we always have done.

In some respects the problems the Phnong face with official regulations and how to circumscribe them are widespread throughout Cambodian society. What makes the situation unique for ethnic minority groups such as the Phnong is that they cannot even understand the language in which the regulations are written.

In the lowlands, environmental legislation enacted by the Government poses different issues because it involves different natural resources. The most obvious natural resource in the lowland of interest to the Government is freshwater fisheries; areas in close proximity to the Tonle Sap lake receive considerable attention from Department of Fisheries inspectors. Vietnamese community members from Kandal participating in this assessment expressed concern over the activities of local fisheries inspectors. A common complaint was:

Even when we catch fish for our own consumption, these officials will often pull us over and look at our catch. If they see a fish they like they will take it from us. It is no use complaining, as they will arrest us.... Most of these officials do not care about legal regulations but only what they can get for themselves.

It appears from the PPA that the poor perceive the Government's natural resources management as against their well-being. It seems clear that there was little community-based consultation when the natural resource policies were being developed. And if there were any consultations, they did not include many of the poorest communities.

Physical Infrastructure

In the lowland areas, ethnic minorities have stated they want much the same forms of physical infrastructure as the dominant Khmer ethnic majority. However, the situation is quite complex in the upland provinces. Most of the ethnic minorities would like better all-weather roads and some assistance toward the control of flash flooding and the management of scarce water resources during the dry season. There is also interest in projects that would supply electricity.

It is the provision of all-weather roads that presents the poor of the upland provinces with an interesting dilemma, which was expressed in the following points made by a Prov participant during an FGD in Rattanakiri:

Trying to travel to the provincial capital of Banlung during the wet season is a 4-6-day roundtrip. If it is dry enough, a motorcycle can make the journey quickly otherwise it has to be by ox-cart, especially if you are taking someone who is sick to Banlung. It is also expensive to bring goods into the village and send to the market things that we want to sell. With an all-weather road we could also send our children to school if they want to study. So for these reasons we should have an all-weather road....But such a road will also bring logging trucks, which will just plunder the forests, and when they are finished the roads will be destroyed.

Logging companies using such roads to access forest concessions, and in the process destroying these roads, will do little to reduce local poverty. On balance, ethnic minority groups would like to see all-weather roads constructed through their communities, but they would also like to have some control over the traffic on them, or rather, some control over their native domain.

FGD participants in Mondol Kiri took the PPA team to a river crossing and described the advantages of having a bridge that would link them to other villages on the border with Viet Nam, and even to Viet Nam. They argued that with a bridge, the cost of providing goods and services to their village would be lower. Despite the remoteness of many ethnic minority groups from Phnom Penh, they are able to compare and contrast what happens across the border in Viet Nam, and in that respect many stated they are better informed than poor Cambodians living in lowland villages.

In Preah Vihear province, the Kuy who participated in the PPA argued, not unlike poor people living in lowland villages, that they always had too much water during the wet season and not enough during the dry season. But

unlike the lowland poor, the Kuy do not focus on elaborate irrigation schemes. They envision diversion weirs to channel water into their fields during the wet season and storage ponds during the dry season. The Kuy villagers claimed that if assistance were provided for construction materials, technical support and some food to cover periods when they could not forage during the dry season, they would provide their labor. There was also some recognition that the community would need to organize itself to operate and maintain a small-scale upland irrigation system. In this respect, ethnic minority groups are better placed to adopt a participatory approach to operation and maintenance activities than many lowland Khmer communities.

Health and Education

Few children living in the villages where PPAs were conducted have received the tetanus toxoid inoculation or have been immunized against diphtheria, typhoid and measles. Where this had occurred was because parents had taken children to neighboring Viet Nam for medical treatment and were immunized while they were there. There has been no immunization program directed at young children in the PPA sites by either the Government or NGOs. Some people understand the value of immunization but high rates of infant mortality were more frequently explained away as the actions of malevolent spirits. Any immunization program directed at ethnic minorities has to utilize culturally appropriate forms of symbolism to effectively reach out to these groups. During the PPA, few of the ethnic minority participants were convinced by the “secular” explanations offered to them by PPA team members extolling the virtues of an immunization program for children.

Most PPA participants do not expect the Government to provide public health facilities in their communities. Ethnic minority groups have relied on traditional midwives to assist in the delivery of babies and traditional healers to deal with unexplained illnesses. As most of these ethnic minority groups take a holistic approach to illness, they accept that the fate of those who are sick rests in the hands of these traditional healers. However, for accidents such as gunshot wounds, there is a recognition that traditional healers are not of much assistance. In such instances, lack of access to a public health clinic or hospital is considered a serious issue.

Education is equally problematic. Bilingual education is not offered in government-run schools in the upland provinces. There is little resistance by ethnic minorities to learning the Khmer language, except as

identified in Chapter 6, but all participants in this PPA insisted that their own cultural traditions should also be included in the school curriculum. There appears to be some recognition that a bicultural member of an ethnic minority group is less likely to be poor than someone who is not bicultural. This issue, of course, would need to be more thoroughly investigated.

In the lowlands, the Cham are not very strident about this cultural issue as they believe the mosque and home is the place where the religious components of their cultural identity should be promoted. There was no demand in any of the PPA for Islamic schools to be established at the village level, although some FGD participants were aware that some Khmer-Islam people on the outskirts of Phnom Penh are making such demands. The Vietnamese consider that a bilingual Vietnamese is less likely to be poor than a monolingual Vietnamese.

Ethnic minorities in the upland provinces would like vocational training in motorcycle and generator repair, operation and maintenance of sawmill equipment, battery maintenance, animal husbandry, food preservation, craft manufacture using traditional forest products,

tailoring, and, in one instance, aquaculture. They would also like information on available sources of credit and training in how to utilize credit and information on markets. In addition, they would also like training in how to prepare community-based project proposals. As was noted earlier, there are some different priorities between men and women that need to be recognized, something that would not be difficult to facilitate in the context of subsequent participatory needs assessments.

Interestingly, the ethnic Vietnamese did not request that the Government or some nongovernment provider support vocational education and technical training at the village level. The ethnic Vietnamese thought that if one wanted to learn about motorcycle repairs, preserving fish or improving woodworking skills, it was best to acquire competency in these fields by learning through experience. Vietnamese participants claim they understand how to utilize credit effectively; their problem is finding access to available credit. The Cham, on the other hand, are similar to the Khmer and upland ethnic minority groups in that they would prefer some forms of vocational education and technical training of relevance to them.

THE PLIGHT OF URBAN SOCIOECONOMIC GROUPS

Most Marginalized Groups

While this PPA has primarily focused on the rural poor, it also has to be recognized that more than 10 percent of urban Cambodians are classified as living in poverty. The PPA conducted FGDs among 15 different socioeconomic groups in Phnom Penh ranging from sex workers to garbage collectors, cyclo-drivers to garment workers, and monks to street children. The one noticeable characteristic of the urban poor, apart from those who had regular employment, is the need to meet their subsistence needs on a daily basis. They truly live a hand-to-mouth existence, as they cannot rely on others to support them.

The poorest urban socioeconomic groups are the garbage collectors and street children. In many respects the garbage collectors and the street children are difficult to distinguish, except the garbage collectors are generally older. What street children said about their lives is important, if despairing:

Our mothers abandoned most of us when we were very young. We did not always run away from our families, as some people like to tell you we did. But here we are on the street.

Sometimes it looks as though life on the streets is exciting, but this is after we have sniffed glue, drank the leftovers from liquor bottles, provided sexual services for old men and been chased around by the police....

Unless someone helps us we cannot go to school, and anyway, do the teachers at school know what life is like on the streets for the poor?

Our main aim is to live from one day to the next, not caring whether we live or die. The main thing is to have some excitement if possible.

These street children would like to have enough food to eat each day. Having to scavenge through rubbish bins for leftovers is not very satisfactory, although unlike very poor children in rural areas, these street children do not actually go hungry. They would like to have a secure home to live in, or at least physical shelters where they could safely sleep at night and store what few personal possessions they have acquired. Street children would also like the police to stop verbally and physically abusing them. They think that most police officers do not have much sympathy for street children. Many would also like to avoid having to provide sexual services to men, though a minority of them looks upon this as easy money. The idea that providing such services might lead to STDs, including HIV/AIDS, does not appear to unduly worry most of the street children, although the girls would rather not get pregnant. All street children would like to have access to public health services provided by personnel who are nonjudgmental. Like the police and teachers, public health workers are viewed by street children as neither very sympathetic nor empathetic.

Street children would also like to learn to read and write but find they are excluded by teachers from schools. Teachers are biased against street children, the participants claimed. And they feel humiliated trying to explain to teachers their individual circumstances. They would also like to be trained in vocational skills, such as motor mechanics, hairdressing, carpentry, tailoring, restaurant work and even the use of computers. They recognize that without support from some organizations they cannot afford to be trained. These children are not confident that

the Government will do anything positive for them, and given their experiences with the police, teachers and health workers, this is hardly surprising.

The work of garbage collectors is dirty and dangerous, and they receive low returns. And yet, they are marginally better off than street children given they do not generally provide sexual services in return for daily meals. They are, however, often exposed to dangerous toxic wastes at Phnom Penh's poorly planned garbage dumps. Some of the garbage workers remarked that they often get dizzy, but the medicine they buy makes them feel worse. The garbage workers are not provided with protective clothing to handle waste, particularly boots, gloves and masks, nor are they educated about hazardous materials and other risks they incur.

Their greatest need, urged the garbage workers, is being paid a decent wage and having some job security. In the PPA, few of the garbage workers had any idea of the implications of being unionized, and even though they liked the idea, they are frightened they would lose their current livelihood. Working in garbage does not lift the poor out of poverty but in the short term it provides food security. The Government should ensure that minimum environmental health standards be enforced, including the design of environmentally sound landfills and reliable techniques to dispose of toxic waste.

Female Garment Workers, Sex Workers and Cyclo-Drivers

Female garment workers explained they left the countryside in search of employment because there were no opportunities to earn income at the village level. Their families did not have enough land to support another adult person. While these same garment workers acknowledged the money they receive each month is better than nothing, they also spoke frankly about the consequences:

We had to leave our villages because there was no work. But this was very sad, as we could not maintain contact that easily with our families. Being young women from the countryside, we knew nothing of the big city and were easily fooled by some bad people, including young men who took advantage of our love for them to rob us of our honor....We also have to work long hours and dare not complain if we are feeling faint and sick, especially during that time of the month for women; we know this is our duty.

The young women said they sometimes work up to 12 hours per day to earn enough money to cover their living expenses in Phnom Penh and have a little left over for entertainment and sending home to the village.

The young garment workers who agreed to participate in this PPA also stated that working conditions in the garment factories were not very good. They were often exposed to dangerous fumes, electrical wires, machines without safety covers and abusive supervisors. These women were aware that unions were trying to improve their working conditions and also their pay rates and other benefits. The problem for them is that they fear the unions will lose them their jobs because their supervisors are constantly telling them that the company has the support of the Government and that if the workers demand too much, the company will close its factory in Cambodia and invest elsewhere. As bad as the working conditions may appear to be for young women from the rural areas, this work is often the best they can obtain. If there had to be a trade-off between better working conditions and higher wages, these young garment workers would choose higher wages.

During discussions with these young women, they were asked whether they realized that garment factories chose to operate in Cambodia because of low wages and the tariff-free export quotas companies could access in developed countries. The young women knew about the low wages but not about the political economy of international trade quotas, which of course is hardly surprising. Yet one young woman quickly responded:

If these jobs will not exist for a long time, this will be a problem for all of us. But if we are aware of this fact then we should use our time in the factory to acquire as many skills as we can. The trouble is that the employers don't want to teach us too much....But still we can learn more than in the village.

These young women agreed that they would like to know more about additional employment opportunities that may be developed because of new investment opportunities opening up. They would also like to have an opportunity to have additional vocational education but realize that if it is not on-the-job, given the long working hours, it would be impossible to take advantage of such opportunities.

Sex workers who agreed to participate in the PPA made the point that they became sex workers because this was a better option than remaining in the village as very poor women. According to one woman in her late 20s:

I am a sex worker to feed my family. There is nothing else I can do otherwise my family will suffer. I am suffering from AIDS and might die before my family can look after itself. This is a terrible situation to be in, but I can do nothing about it....I think this must be the lot of the poor.

Clearly not all the poor who are working in Phnom Penh are in the same terrible position as this woman. But with the growth in HIV/AIDS there are likely to be many more of these stories. Back in this woman's village, no one had any knowledge of HIV/AIDS, or if they did, they did not admit it to the PPA team. The real consequences of HIV/AIDS was illustrated by a young sex worker who intended to return to her village to marry:

I do not have AIDS but many of my clients don't want to use a condom, and if I insist upon them doing so they don't want to be my client any more. So I end up only having clients who do not tip me very well. The temptation is there not to be so insistent, but I also think of what would happen if I went back to the village with AIDS, like some of the women I know.

With the current HIV/AIDS epidemic and its disproportionate impact on poor women from the rural areas, it is difficult to decide whether paid sex work is a panacea for poverty of individual households in the rural areas. These sex workers know that AIDS has no known medical cure but resort to the argument that they have no other choices available to them. They would be interested in some form of vocational education, including tailoring, nonsex work in the hospitality industry, the use of computers and financial management. They would also be interested in training associated with agricultural technologies and food processing that would be useful back in their villages.

These sex workers would also like prostitution to be decriminalized so that police and brothel owners could not collude to make life difficult for them. They want the Government to continue promoting the use of condoms. With these two measures, it is argued that the working conditions of sex workers would improve, although one of the sex workers believed that clients would then seek out freelance sex workers with whom they would not have to use safe-sex methods.

Other young women also work in vulnerable occupations in Cambodia, particularly Phnom Penh, where they are employed as the promotional hostesses to market a range of products, most notably those associated with alcohol and tobacco. A 19-year-old woman from a village in Svay Rieng, working as a "beer girl" in a popular restaurant on the outskirts of Phnom Penh, highlighted her vulnerability:

My family did not want me to go and work in Phnom Penh, but because I am considered attractive they realized it would be easier for me to make money more than my other sisters. When I was recruited to promote beer I was told I would get a monthly salary, housing and food. This was partly correct but I was also told I needed to sell a lot of beer and that the company expected me to sell more beer than girls from other companies. The problem is that some of the other girls chose, or were forced, to sleep with some clients, and I found I could not sell much beer unless I did the same. My boss did not tell me I had to, but it was clear that unless I sold more beer I would lose my job.

The PPA did not fully investigate the socioeconomic background of young women working as promotional hostesses, but few of them came from nonpoor backgrounds. There were instances where young women had become pregnant and then were abandoned by their baby's father, or were separated from their spouse. The promotional hostesses liked the tips they received from their customers, but did not like that their income depended upon the amount of beer, wine or whiskey they sold. They would rather be paid a flat wage by the company. They have been told by the companies they work for that their wages will be paid only on a commission basis.

In between transplanting and harvesting rice, a number of cyclo-drivers converge upon Phnom Penh in the hope of earning some money by transporting people around the city. Unfortunately for many of them, business is not very good, and they barely make enough to cover their daily expenses. A group of cyclo-drivers from Prey Vieng told the PPA team:

It is difficult to make money in Phnom Penh, as we have to compete with moto-drivers that charge their passengers less than we do and can carry more in one day than we do.

To make KR2,000 to KR3,000 each day in Phnom Penh is very difficult. Ideally we would like to send some of our earnings back to the village, but this is getting really difficult as we have barely enough money on a daily basis ourselves to live on.

At certain times of the year there are clearly more cyclo-drivers in Phnom Penh than are needed. Cyclo-drivers would like the Government to promote the use of cyclos, particularly among tourists and to this end would liked to be trained in basic English, French, Japanese and Chinese. These men would also like to be provided with clean clothes, basic tools and access to credit so they could purchase their own cyclos. Cyclo-drivers would also like



Figure 8: FGD with monks from rural Cambodia in Phnom Penh.

access to low cost dormitories or housing shelters because currently they, or at least those participating in the PPA, slept on the streets at nighttime, either in their cyclos or in hammocks.

Monks

A PPA was facilitated among a group of monks, all of whom come from very poor families throughout Cambodia. They are well aware of the social and economic dimensions of poverty back in their own villages and in Phnom Penh. For instance, they argued:

People are not poor because they are not good Buddhists.

The rich in Cambodia always seem to think the poor are poor because they have not accumulated

enough merit. We know this is not true but even many of the poor believe it so we have to change the way they think.

Anyone who argues we monks are not poor has to understand why we became clergy in the first place.

The monks rejected most of the arguments concerning karmic causation and explained that poverty has its origins in the secular power structures of society rather than the sacred world of supernatural spirits. The monks straddle the rural and urban divide and have the potential to understand the specific nature of poverty as it affects different groups in Cambodia. Joining the monkhood offers a prestigious path out of poverty that is not available to young women.

These young monks recognized that unless concrete steps are taken to reduce poverty in the countryside, the spiritual condition of many poor people will deteriorate. They argued that while Buddhism is undergoing a renaissance in the rural areas, the poorest communities cannot afford to support a congregation of Buddhist monks. And it is in these communities that Buddhism is needed because it can provide meaning to peoples' lives. This argument is not designed to use Buddhism as an "opiate" but rather to understand the cultural dimensions of poverty. While not all of Cambodia's poor are Buddhists (the upland ethnic minorities and the Chams and Vietnamese believe in other ideas), the argument has a veracity that transcends poor Buddhists in Cambodia.

CONCLUSION

This concluding chapter summarizes the needs of the poor in the different regions of Cambodia and identifies potential policy recommendations based on a synthesis and analysis of the findings. The results provide a menu of concerns and associated solutions that the Government, civil society and the donor community may want to further explore and examine.

Needs Identified During the PPA

In the previous part of this report, concerns of the poor who participated in this PPA were highlighted; PPA participants offered explanations as to the causes of poverty, the effects on the poor and the relationship between different aspects of poverty. The major needs of the poor are summarized in Table 4.

As this was the first ever countrywide PPA conducted, it should be viewed as an iterative process that is Government-, as well as other stakeholder-owned. The key to its effectiveness is continued engagement with civil society, donors and the poor in defining, refining and implementing policies and programs that give a voice to those affected—the poor themselves.

Potential Policy Recommendations for Follow-up Activities

As part of the PPA process, a synthesis of potential policy recommendation has been compiled based upon the findings emanating from discussions with the PPA participants (rural and urban areas) and their communities (rural areas only). Based on the existing information emanating from the PPA that could warrant further examination:

- Food insecurity is a major issue for the very poor. The Government is correct to advocate food-for-work programs as large numbers of the very poor in all regions support such programs. However, the Government has to ensure that not only are the poorest communes in Cambodia targeted but more importantly, the poorest villages within these

Table 3: The Needs of the Poor Ranked in Order of Frequency Cited

Need	Mekong Plain	Tonle Sap	Coastal	NE Mountain
Food security				
Draft animals	1	1	1	1
Food-for-work	2	2	1	2
Resettlement	3	3	3	4
Farm implements	4	4	2	3
Cheap rice credit	5	6	4	5
Mine clearance	7	5	-	-
Safety net	6	-	-	5
Rice rations	-	-	-	5
Social Infrastructure				
Health care	1	2	1	1
Wells	2	1	2	2
Education	3	3	3	3
Latrines	4	3	4	4
Mosquito nets	5	4	5	3
School texts	-	5	-	4
Physical Infrastructure				
Irrigation	1	2	2	1
Farm-to-market				
Roads	2	1	1	2
Reclaim land	3	3	3	3
Ponds	4	4	-	5
Electricity	5	-	-	4
Livelihood Issues				
TVET	1	1	1	1
Job creation	3	3	2	4
Market support	4	2	3	2
Lower fuel prices	2	4	3	4
Promote investment	5	4	-	3
Agricultural Needs				
Cheap agricultural inputs	1	2	2	2
New technologies	2	1	1	1
HYV rice	3	4	-	3
Pumps	5	3	-	4
Pesticides	4	5	-	5
Tractors	6	6	3	5
Animal health	6	7	-	-
Rice mills	7	-	-	6
Agro-forestry	-	-	-	6
Threshing machines	7	-	-	-
Good Governance				
Demarcation of				
Fishing grounds	1	1	2	1
Teacher transparency	2	-	1	-
Lower fishing taxes	3	-	-	-
Fewer arrests	3	-	-	-

HYV=high yielding variety; TVET=technical and vocational education and training.

communes. This is not possible currently with the available databases it has, but the Government can support efforts by the WFP, through its poverty mapping under the United Nations Development Programme to ensure that poor villages in these communes are highlighted in the poverty maps. The Government should also ensure that agreed-upon poverty indicators provide the basis for the poverty mapping. NGOs are likely to have an important role to play in assisting both poor communities and the Government in this process.

- The stated need by the poor to purchase rice or exchange labor and other services in return for rice has to also examine what varieties of rice farmers should be growing in Cambodia. Farmers with surpluses are clearly more likely to be interested in supplying the export market, whether it be through neighboring Thailand or Viet Nam, than making rice available at an affordable price for the very poor. The Government should consider importing cheaper varieties of rice, which the poor can afford to purchase. These varieties should be of acceptable taste and nutritional value, and the cultural preferences of upland ethnic minority groups for varieties other than those of the majority of lowland people is an important consideration. Such a policy does not compromise food security. It could be more effective than trying to prevent farmers from exporting rice across the porous borders.
- The Government has already stated that it wants to address land issues in Cambodia, but to benefit the poor the specific land issues identified by the poor need to be considered. The land problems are not simply of ownership, although this is important, but also one of secure access to it. It is necessary for the Government to reconsider the effects of land redistribution in the late 1980s on the poor and of land that was allocated to border returnees and internally displaced persons in the 1990s. Urban housing should also be included in this land policy. Additionally, the land rights of upland ethnic minorities need to be clearly formulated, taking into account indigenous concepts of land.
- Affordable public health care for the very poor is essential. Illness in households often leads to poverty because the poor have a very limited ability to pay for health care. Illness can even reduce households that are not poor into poverty, as this PPA was able to corroborate. While the Ministry of Health is

attempting to restructure the public health system so that the poor can benefit, an emphasis should continue to be on preventive health care. Well-trained public health workers prepared to live and work in poor communities are in great demand. It may be necessary for the Government to offer inducements for professionally trained public health workers to live and work among the poor, but the Government should actively recruit and train from among the poor, utilizing a pro-poor affirmative action policy if necessary. This is especially important in the upland provinces where non-Khmer culturally sensitive health delivery services are important. Some important programs such as those associated with reproductive health, including HIV/AIDS programs, have barely reached the very poorest communities.

- As for public education, the Government needs to address both the quantity and quality of education for people living in poverty. More schools are required in locations that the poor can readily access, and the quality of teaching needs to be strengthened. The poor are not getting access to well-trained teachers, and teachers in the poorest rural areas often do not conduct scheduled classes, and/or demand supplementary fees from students who are already from very poor families. Other forms of education, including technical and vocational education and training, are also necessary as are adult literacy programs. It needs to be recognized that different groups have different priorities for training, for example, knowledge of improved rice varieties for most lowland groups, sawmilling for upland ethnic minorities, fish preservation for lowland ethnic minorities, computer training for street children and sex workers. The Government does not currently have a formal policy to promote adult learning but clearly there is a need, one that NGOs could play a leading role in promoting.
- The Government should continue to encourage small-scale irrigation systems that contribute to the enhancement of food security by providing dry season opportunities to cultivate rice and other agricultural crops. However, the Government also needs to recognize that operating and maintaining these small-scale systems will be more effective if greater forms of participatory management is encouraged. The Government agency responsible for water resources development needs to enhance a better understanding of the capacity dimensions of

its activities. Given the increasing preponderance of heavy flooding during the wet season, effective flood control systems should be developed, recognizing the difference between upland area concerns based on flash flooding and lowland area concerns based on gradual flooding as rains during the wet season intensify.

- Potable drinking water is also a concern of the very poor. The Government should devise a participatory mapping program of existing sources of potable drinking water and determine to what extent the poor have been excluded or under-provided. The Ministry of Rural Development should note that the poor are prepared to contribute to the cost of building tube or pump wells if they can benefit but not toward the provision of ponds. The latter lend themselves to food-for-work programs. Cost norms agreed upon with the local communities should ensure the maximum benefits accrue for the least cost.
- The poor want micro-finance, whether it be to purchase draft animals, farm implements or other agricultural inputs and also to meet the high cost of health care, wedding ceremonies and even the purchase of food (mainly rice and other necessary condiments) and micro-business activities. In the upland provinces, appropriate credit systems have to take account of indigenous landownership principles and the dynamics of non-Khmer forms of social organization. Information on available sources of credit and how it can be utilized should also be more widely disseminated.
- The Government is committed to improving the inadequate physical infrastructure in Cambodia as it clearly recognizes that more than 30 years of internecine conflict destroyed much of the existing physical infrastructure. The Government also has to support infrastructural improvements that are more pro-poor than at present. The Government needs to more clearly understand beneficiary distribution and analysis in physical infrastructure projects and demonstrate some bias in favor of the poor if it is committed to reducing poverty.
- In natural resource management, the Government has made some impressive gains in the past few years, with the announcement that existing private fishing lots would be subject to monitoring and enforcement of regulations. This scrutiny also has to be applied to fishing lots that the Department of Fisheries (or some of its officials) and the private sector jointly own.

Fisheries officials have, in some instances, earned a bad reputation by poor treatment of subsistence-level fisherfolk, including both Cham and Vietnamese ethnic minority groups. Significant levels of illegal logging has ceased in Cambodia, but the poor are still being discriminated against, particularly in the upland areas, while logging companies often circumvent regulations. The Government should promote community ownership of natural resources and not regulations that restrict the traditional rights of local communities, especially in the upland provinces.

- Local authorities could be more accountable and transparent if directly elected by local communities. By promoting commune elections, the Government could ensure that local authorities are more accountable in reporting the needs of the local communities they serve rather than simply relaying news in times of emergencies. A new culture of demand-driven development needs to take place. Ideally, each commune should have access to a development fund that it would manage. As an incremental measure, the Government should provide people with the information they need on targeted programs and services. The Government needs to accept that local communities also have ideas on what is best for them—not just the local authorities or officials at either the provincial or national levels. For ethnic minorities, the Government needs to improve access to all kinds of information. Culturally appropriate communication strategies also have to be designed jointly by ethnic minority groups and the Government.
- The Government should consider the need to implement more effective gender-sensitive policies. The creation of the Ministry of Women and Veteran Affairs devoted to women's affairs is a step in the right direction. But this Ministry does not appear to have an active presence in areas where it is needed, that is, the very poorest communes in the countryside nor the resources to carry out critical programs. While the PPA did uncover some gender-specific concerns, other issues such as the importance of women's reproductive health and gender analysis of poor women in agriculture need more attention. The PPA did highlight, where relevant, the differing perspectives of men and women, especially in relation to the prioritization of needs.
- The Government should not overlook cultural development programs. It may be unrealistic to expect the Government to fund the construction of

pagodas or mosques for the poor, but it may be appropriate for the Ministry of Religion and Cults to maintain a revolving fund that it could use to disburse, on a cost-recovery basis, funds for such purposes to very poor communities. If this is impractical, then the Government should ensure that public land is available for such purposes and does not impose unnecessary administrative obstacles. The Government should also look closely into the cultural development needs of the poor living in the upland areas of Cambodia. This requires a closer understanding of the ethnic minorities' needs in those areas.

Concluding Remarks

The Government should view the PPA as an iterative process and recognize that a national PPA could be undertaken by the Government on a periodic basis — perhaps every five years as part of the socioeconomic survey or linking with the impressive efforts made to date

by the WFP. A core of experienced staff in the Ministry of Planning has been trained as part of this PPA in questionnaire design, field practices and compilation of information and data. This group of staff should be given the opportunity to train others at both the national and provincial level in order to institutionalize the process and provide a more holistic understanding of poverty and the impacts of Government policies on the poor.

The PPA has demonstrated that there are regional, gender, ethnic and urban-rural perceptions and realities of poverty. The real value of the PPA in the context of the Government's poverty reduction strategy is that it is capable of highlighting these differences. Because of the level at which they operate, NGOs are well placed to assist the Government in conducting PPAs that bring out these differences. The validation of PPAs do not rely on whether they are conducted in exactly the same manner but whether they utilize a family of methodologies and approaches that are participatory in nature. Participation per se in the context of the PPA involves joint ownership based ultimately on its being validated by local participants.

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APPENDIX 3

List of PPA Villages

Province	District	Commune	Village	Zone	Ethnic Group
Banteay Meanchey	Phnom Srok	Nam Tao	Rongvean	2	1
Banteay Meanchey	Phnom Srok	Nam Tao	Ko-ok Yeang	2	1
Banteay Meanchey	Phnom Srok	Nam Tao	Sleng	2	1
Banteay Meanchey	Svay Chek	Phkoam	Yeang	2	1
Banteay Meanchey	Svay Chek	Phkoam	Ta Duol	2	1
Banteay Meanchey	Svay Chek	Phkoam	Ta Kul	2	1
Battambang	Phnom Proek	Baraing Thleak	Tuol Chrey	2	1
Battambang	Phnom Proek	Baraing Thleak	Baraing Thleak	2	1
Battambang	Phnom Proek	Baraing Thleak	Chamkar Srov	2	1
Battambang	Kamrieng	Kamrieng	Kamrieng	2	1
Battambang	Kamrieng	Kamrieng	Svay Sor	2	1
Battambang	Kamrieng	Kamrieng	Srolao Tong	2	1
Kampong Cham	Batheay	Chbar Ampeuo	Tuol Chan	1	1
Kampong Cham	Batheay	Chbar Ampeuo	Stoeng Chhveng	1	1
Kampong Cham	Kang Meas	Prek Koy	Kong Chey	1	1
Kampong Cham	Kang Meas	Prek Koy	Kohe (Kreuy)	1	1
Kampong Cham	Kang Meas	Prek Koy	Mesor	1	1
Kampong Cham	Kang Meas	Reay Pay	Tuol Vihear	1	1
Kampong Cham	Kang Meas	Reay Pay	Reay Pay Kraom	1	1
Kampong Cham	Kang Meas	Reay Pay	Kok Krabey	1	1
Kampong Cham	Memot	Choam	Ngeav	1	1
Kampong Cham	Memot	Choam	Boeng Chrong	1	1
Kampong Cham	Memot	Choam	Choam Ampil	1	1
Kampong Cham	Memot	Choam	Pophloam	1	1
Kampong Cham	Memot	Choam	O/Sloeng Angkam	1	1
Kampong Cham	Memot	Kampoan	Prek Chhlong Bey (Rubber Plantation)	1	1
Kampong Cham	Memot	Koki	Salang Muoy (Rubber Plantation)	1	1
Kampong Cham	Punhear Krek	Kak	Ta Am	1	1
Kampong Cham	Punhear Krek	Kak	Thlok Trach	1	1
Kampong Cham	Punhear Krek	Kak	Kroch	1	1
Kampong Cham	Punhear Krek	Kak	Stoeng Toch	1	1
Kampong Cham	Punhear Krek	Kak	Dong Kdaong	1	1
Kampong Chhnang	Chulkiri	Prey Kri	Prey Kri Tbong	2	1
Kampong Chhnang	Chulkiri	Prey Kri	Prey Kri Cheung	2	1
Kampong Chhnang	Kampong Laeng	Chrono-ok	(Thmor) Kangkep	2	1
Kampong Chhnang	Kampong Laeng	Chrono-ok	Lech	2	1
Kampong Chhnang	Kampong Laeng	Chrono-ok	Kandal	2	1
Kampong Chhnang	Kampong Laeng	Chrono-ok	Thmor Rieng	2	1
Kampong Speu	Borset	Borset	Trapeang Chhouk	1	1
Kampong Speu	Borset	Borset	Thmat Leng	1	1
Kampong Speu	Borset	Borset	Ta Prach	1	1
Kampong Speu	Borset	Preah Khae	Khong Phoum	1	1
Kampong Speu	Borset	Preah Khae	Thnal Dach	1	1
Kampong Speu	Phnom Sruoch	Taing Samraong	Kraing Thom	1	1
Kampong Speu	Phnom Sruoch	Taing Samraong	Kraing Boeng	1	1

Province	District	Commune	Village	Zone	Ethnic Group
Kampong Speu	Phnom Sruoch	Taing Samraong	Taing Samraong	1	1
Kampong Speu	Phnom Sruoch	Taing Samraong	Khnonng Kraing	1	1
Kampong Speu	Phnom Sruoch	Kandal	Kandal	1	1
Kampong Thom	Prasat Balaing	Phan Nheum	Trapeang Khnong	2	1
Kampong Thom	Prasat Balaing	Phan Nheum	Sromor	2	1
Kampong Thom	Prasat Balaing	Phan Nheum	Prey Mri	2	1
Kampong Thom	Prasat Balaing	Phan Nheum	Smaonh	2	1
Kampong Thom	Stong	Chamnar Leu	Ko	2	1
Kampong Thom	Stong	Chamnar Leu	Andaung Trom	2	1
Kampong Thom	Stong	Chamnar Leu	Thlo-ok	2	1
Kampong Thom	Stong	Chamnar Leu	Ka-en	2	1
Kampot	Chhouk	Lbeuk	Srae Chrov	3	1
Kampot	Chhouk	Lbeuk	Tuol	3	1
Kampot	Chhouk	Lbeuk	Trapeang Kuy	3	1
Kampot	Kampong Trach	Damnak Kantuot	TbongTrapeang Chrey	3	1
Kampot	Kampong Trach	Svay Tong	Koh Chhveang	3	1
Kampot	Kampong Trach	Svay Tong	Slap Ta-aon	3	1
Kandal	Lovea Em	Areyksat	Tuol Tameas	1	1
Kandal	Lovea Em	Barong	Khnor Kar	1	1
Kandal	Lovea Em	Barong	Barong	1	1
Kandal	Lovea Em	Lovea Sor	Lovea Sor Kandal	1	1
Kandal	Muk Kampoul	Rokar Kong Muoy	Rokar Kong/Koh Snaeha	1	1
Kandal	Muk Kampoul	Sambour Meas	Chre Muoyroy	1	2
Kandal	Muk Kampoul	Sambour Meas	Ampil Toek	1	1
Kandal	Muk Kampoul	Sambour Meas	Kraol Ko	1	1
Kandal	Muk Kampoul	Svay Ampear	Thmey	1	1
Kandal	Muk Kampoul	Svay Ampear	Svay Ampear	1	1
Kandal	Sa-ang	Prasat	Prasat Muoy	1	1
Kandal	Sa-ang	Prasat	Prasat Pi	1	1
Koh Kong	Botum Sakor	Kandaol	Kandaol	3	1
Koh Kong	Botum Sakor	Kandaol	Prolean	3	1
Koh Kong	Srae Ambil	Chroy Svay	Chroy Svay Keut	3	1
Koh Kong	Srae Ambil	Chroy Svay	Nesat	3	1
Kratie	Chhlong	Pongro	Pongro Bey	4	1
Kratie	Chhlong	Pongro	Thnaot	4	2
Kratie	Sambo	Boeng Char	Damrae (Thmey)	4	1
Kratie	Sambo	Boeng Char	Kampong Roteh	4	1
Kratie	Snuol	Pi Thnou	Cheung Khle	4	2
Kratie	Snuol	Pi Thnou	Trapeang Srae Khnong	4	2
Kratie	Snuol	Pi Thnou	Chrap	4	2
Kratie	Snuol	???????	Kbal Thpong (Rubber plantation)	4	1
Monduliri	O Raing	Sen Monorom	Pou Hiem	4	2
Monduliri	O Raing	Sen Monorom	Andaung Kroloeng	4	2
Monduliri	Pichda	Srae Ampoum	All villages (mixed 1,2,3)	4	2
Phnom Penh	Dangkor	Kok Rokar	Prey Thom	1	1
Phnom Penh	Dangkor	Sak Sampeuo	Poh Rolum	1	1

Province	District	Commune	Village	Zone	Ethnic Group
Phnom Penh	Dangkor	Sak Sampeuo	Khvet	1	1
Phnom Penh	Russey Keo	Prek Tasek	Prek Takung	1	1
Phnom Penh	Russey Keo	Prek Tasek	Prek Tasek	1	1
Preah Vihear	Kulen	Kulen Cheung	Phyuo Chrouk	4	1
Preah Vihear	Kulen	Phnom Penh	Srobai	4	1
Preah Vihear	Tbeng Meanchey	Preah Khleaing	Anlung Svay	4	2
Preah Vihear	Tbeng Meanchey	Preah Khleaing	Kraing Daung	4	2
Prey Veng	Baphnom	Cheung Phnom	Moat Prey	1	1
Prey Veng	Baphnom	Cheung Phnom	Phlov Roluos	1	1
Prey Veng	Baphnom	Cheung Phnom	Andaung	1	1
Prey Veng	Baphnom	Reek Chey	Ksach Sor	1	1
Prey Veng	Baphnom	Reek Chey	Reak Chey	1	1
Prey Veng	Kamchay Mear	Smaong Tbong	Kon Russey	1	1
Prey Veng	Kamchay Mear	Smaong Tbong	Chmar Lot	1	1
Prey Veng	Kamchay Mear	Smaong Tbong	Kumnum	1	1
Prey Veng	Kamchay Mear	Smaong Tbong	Prey Thom	1	1
Pursat	Kandieng	Srae Sdok	Kdey Chhvit	2	1
Pursat	Kandieng	Srae Sdok	Pring Khpuos	2	1
Pursat	Kandieng	Srae Sdok	Bakou	2	1
Pursat	Kandieng	Srae Sdok	Poh	2	1
Rattanakiri	Lumphat	Labaing Muoy	Kamphlenh	4	2
Rattanakiri	Lumphat	Batang	Pruok	4	2
Rattanakiri	Veunsai	Kok Lak	Lalai	4	2
Rattanakiri	Veunsai	Kok Lak	Rok	4	2
Siem Reap	Angkor Chum	Kool	Daun Meav	4	1
Siem Reap	Angkor Chum	Kool	Ta Kuoy	4	1
Siem Reap	Angkor Chum	Kool	Prey Ar	4	1
Siem Reap	Angkor Thom	Peak Snaeng	Peak Snaeng Thmey	4	1
Siem Reap	Angkor Thom	Peak Snaeng	Leap	4	1
Siem Reap	Angkor Thom	Peak Snaeng	Khting	4	1
Siem Reap	Kralanh	Sambuor	Anlung Sar	4	1
Siem Reap	Kralanh	Sambuor	Ov Mal	4	1
Sihanoukville	Prey Nup	Boeng Taprom	Boeng Chum	3	1

Province	District	Commune	Village	Zone	Ethnic Group
Sihanoukville	Prey Nup	Toek Thla	Prek Sangkae	3	1
Stoeng Treng	Sesan	Samkhuoy	Samkhuoy	4	2
Stoeng Treng	Sesan	Samkhuoy	Srae Ta Pam	4	2
Stoeng Treng	Siem Pang	Sekong	Ban Muong	4	2
Stoeng Treng	Siem Pang	Thmar Keo	Pha Baing or Preah Bain	4	2
Svay Rieng	Romeas Haek	Tros	Wat	1	1
Svay Rieng	Romeas Haek	Tros	Muny Proeksa	1	1
Svay Rieng	Romeas Haek	Tros	Mreak Teap	1	1
Svay Rieng	Romeas Haek	Tros	Tros	1	1
Svay Rieng	Romeas Haek	Tros	Serey Ao	1	1
Svay Rieng	Romeas Haek	Tros	Trapeang Banteay	1	1
Svay Rieng	Svay Teap	Monorom	O Tamo	1	1
Svay Rieng	Svay Teap	Monorom	Monorom	1	1
Takeo	Borey Chulsar	Chey Chok	Sangkae Chuor	1	1
Takeo	Borey Chulsar	Chey Chok	Chey Chok	1	1
Takeo	Borey Chulsar	Chey Chok	Banteay Sloek	1	1
Takeo	Borey Chulsar	Kampong Krasaing	Sangkum Meanchey	1	1
Takeo	Koh Andet	Krapom Chhouk	Peani	1	1
Takeo	Koh Andet	Pichsar	Ta Boh	1	1
Takeo	Koh Andet	Pichsar	Kok Khpous	1	1
Takeo	Koh Andet	Prey Yuthkar	Pong Andeuk	1	1
Oddar Meanchey	Chongkal	Pongro	Prey Nokor	2	1
Oddar Meanchey	Samraong	Bansayreak	Bansayreak	2	1
Oddar Meanchey	Samraong	Bos Sbov	Phlong (Cheung)	2	1
Oddar Meanchey	Samraong	(Kon) Kreal	O Smach	2	1
Oddar Meanchey			Chey Oddam Pong Toek	2	1
Oddar Meanchey			Ko-ol	2	1
Krong Kep	Damnak Chang-eu	Angkaol	Angkaol	3	1
Krong Kep	Kep	Prey Thom	Thmey	3	2
Pailin	Sala Krao	O Andaung	Boeng Trakuon	2	1

1 : Mekong Plain Region, 2 : Tonle Sap Region, 3 : Coastal Region, and 4 : North and Northeast Mountain Region.

1 : Khmer, and 2 : Other ethnicity.