

Annex

Inputs for the Report On “Gender Justice and Freedom of Opinion and Expression”

I. Overview of Freedom of Opinion and Expression in Cambodia

Firmly respect for the freedom of opinion and expression is a key principle of democratic society in which the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) has fully recognized and paid high attention to through setting clear policies as defined in the Rectangular Strategy of the RGC.

In addition, the RGC has signed and ratified a number of international conventions and covenants including the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (“CEDAW”) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (“CRC”). Article 31 of The Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia (“Constitution”) incorporates those covenants and conventions into Cambodia’s national laws.

In particular, although the world is facing the spread of COVID-19, which has seriously affected socio-economic development, the RGC is committed to promoting women’s freedom of opinion and expression which is recognized as necessary inputs for women’s empowerment toward advancing economic digital and economic diversification in Cambodia.

II. Legal Provisions Regarding Freedom of Opinion and Expression in Cambodia

In order to properly implement the above policies, a number of legal provisions have been developed in order to ensure full protections of the rights and freedoms for all citizens, including freedom of opinion and expression. All legal provisions are entitled to equal protections for women and men without discrimination.

Obviously, Article 31 of the Constitution provided that “*The Kingdom of Cambodia shall recognize, and respect human rights as stipulated in the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the covenants and conventions related to human rights, women’s and child’s rights.*”

Every Khmer citizen shall be equal before the law, enjoying the same rights, freedom and fulfilling the same obligations regardless of race, color, sex, language, religious belief, political tendency, birth origin, social status, wealth or other status. The exercise of personal rights and freedom by any individual shall not adversely affect the rights and freedom of others. The exercise of such rights and freedom shall be in accordance with the law”.

Article 41 of the Constitution stipulated that “*Khmer citizens shall have freedom of expression, press, publication and assembly. No one shall exercise this right to infringe upon the rights of others, to affect the good traditions of the society, to violate public law and order and national security*”.

Article 45 of the same Constitution provided that “*All forms of discrimination against women shall be abolished*”.

Identically, Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (“UDHR”) and Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (“ICCPR”) also provide for the universal right to freedom of opinion and expression to everyone, guaranteeing that “*This right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice.*” Article 13 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (“CRC”) recognizes the rights to freedom of expression for children, subject to protecting the best interests of the child.

In addition, the rights and freedoms of citizens, including the “The right to freedom of opinion and expression” have been guaranteed by Cambodia’s national laws such as: **substantive law, special law and other legal framework.**

At the same time, within the context of COVID-19 pandemic, the RGC has passed several laws and legal provisions to curb the spread of coronavirus of COVID-19 disease as well as to cope with negative effects caused by COVID-19 on the economic activity.

The RGC has paid attention to legal and judicial reform and continued passing additional laws and legal provisions to aim at strengthening the right to freedom and legal benefits for citizens.

III. Measures and Mechanism Regarding Protection of Freedom of Opinion and Expression and Women’s Empowerment in Cambodia

As mentioned earlier, human right situation regarding freedom of opinion and expression and women’s empowerment has been promoted in Cambodia.

Evidently, the Political Platform of the RGC of the 6th Legislature of the National Assembly aims at improving education, vocational skills, competence, entrepreneurship, creativity, ensuring legal rights and enhancing public health which have brought significant levels of strengths on **women’s empowerment.**

With this regard, the RGC has been focusing on some activities to be prioritized as bellow:

- ✓ **The quality of education, science, and technology sectors**

The strategic goals of the RGC is to develop a “**quality, equitable and inclusive education system**” by focusing on science and technology, labor market orientation, and education to support the national socio-economic development. Within new context of universal challenges caused by COVID-19 pandemic, Cambodia has integrated STEM¹ into the curriculum and main textbooks, creation of good study environment and new generation schools to strengthen educational quality through the entire educational system where students and learners also include women and girls.

✓ **Technical Training**

Technical Training has been conducted in two dimensions:


- Human resources within the educational system
- And human resources outside the education system or within the labor market.

With the above goal, the RGC has made some major achievements such as the implementation of the National Policy Framework on Technical and Vocational Training 2017-2025 and established of the model centers for technical training in many places and the national day of technical and vocational training.

✓ **Strengthening law enforcement and legal provisions regarding women**

The RGC, through establishing **the Cambodian National Council for Women** (“CNCW”) and **the Gender Committees of the Ministries and Institutions**, has determined regular follow-up law implementation with regard to women’s issues in order to seek positive points and challenges encountered by women. In addition, the RGC has established “**Samdech Techo Sen Volunteer Lawyers Group**” to provide lawyers to poor and vulnerable women who cannot access to legal representation. Court cases involving women and girls have also been urged to be expedited through the campaign launched by the Ministry of Justice of Cambodia to resolve the congestion of criminal cases at the municipal and provincial courts.

✓ **Enhancement of public health service and nutrition**

The RGC has paid closed attention to enhancing public health and nutrition for all citizens to support sustainable human resource development, economic growth, and social development toward promoting the quality, effectiveness, and equity of health services. In particular, during the spread of COVID-19 virus, the RGC has provided COVID-19 vaccines to citizens as powerful tool in its ongoing efforts to be achieved successfully and safely as planned. This reflects high responsibility of the RGC to promote good health and welfare for people living in Cambodia. Moreover, the National Covid-19 Vaccination Committee, the Sub-Committee for COVID-19 Vaccination, the Inter-Ministerial Committee to Combat COVID-19 etc. have been established continuously. Also, 

¹ Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics

Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, has been calling on the people to properly implement “*the 3 dos and the 3 don'ts Measure*”.

- The 3 dos are to wear a mask, wash hands regularly, and maintain physical distancing of 1.5 metres.
- The 3 don'ts are to avoid confined and enclosed spaces, avoid crowded spaces, and avoid touching each other.

✓ **Strengthening of gender equality and social protection**

The RGC's strategic goal is to strengthen gender equity and social protection to enhance social-economic situation and strengthen women's role in the society who are the backbone of the economy and society. On this basis, the RGC has created mechanism such as:

- The Cambodian National Council for Women (“CNCW”)
- Gender Committees of the Ministries and Institutions.

In order to mainstream gender equity into policy framework, national laws and national development plan, aiming at effectiveness of law enforcement, reducing gender gaps in public and private sectors, reducing domestic violence and sexual abuse against women and children, uplifting social morality, women dignity, and Cambodian family, and empowering women.

IV. Conclusion:

Overall, **freedom of opinion and expression for women and women's empowerment** are highly regarded by the RGC's efforts to promote in all situations and circumstances through developing clear political platform, guaranteeing the rights and freedom as provided by laws and other regulations. Measures and mechanisms are also putting in place to ensure effectiveness of law implementation to protect women's rights as well as to promote women's empowerment recognized as necessary part of country's sustainable development. 