



# **Evaluation of the OHCHR Cambodia Country Programme**

## **Evaluation Report**

***July 2, 2024***

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*An external Consultant has prepared this report. The views expressed herein are those of the Consultant and therefore do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of OHCHR.*

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ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
CCA	Common Country Assessment
CDPO	Cambodia Disabled Persons Organisation
CHRC	Cambodian Human Rights Committee
CEACR	Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (ILO)
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
CO	Country Office
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSO	Civil society organisation
ESCR	Economic, social and cultural rights
EU	European Union
EUD	Delegation of the European Union
FOTCD	Field Operations and Technical Cooperation Division
HR	Human rights
HRBA	Human rights-based approach
HRC	Human Rights Council
HRD	Human Rights Defender
HQ	Headquarters
IE SOGI	Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Issues
ILO	International Labour Organization
IUNV	International United Nations Volunteer
LANGO	Law on Association and Non-governmental Organizations
LGBT	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender
LNOB	Leaving No One Behind
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MOSAVY	Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth
MOJ	Ministry of Justice
MOWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NCAT	National Committee Against Torture
NDSP	National Disability Strategy and Policy
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NHRI	National human rights institution

OECD DAC Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Development Assistance Committee

OHCHR Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

OIOS Office of Internal Oversight Services

OMP OHCHR Management Plan

OPD Organisation of Persons with Disabilities

PIO Public Information Officer

PPMES Policy, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Service

PSEA Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

PRPD Joint UN Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

RB Regular Budget

RBM Results-based management

RC Resident Coordinator

RGC Royal Government of Cambodia

RO Regional Office

SDG Sustainable Development Goal

SEARO OHCHR South East Asia Regional Office

SEK Swedish Krona

SGBV Sexual and gender-based violence

Sida Swedish International Development and Cooperation Agency

SR Special Rapporteur

TOC Theory of change

TOR Terms of Reference

UN United Nations

UNCT United Nations Country Team

UNDAF United Nations Development Assistance Framework

UNDP United Nations Development Programme

UNEG United Nations Evaluation Group

UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

UNSDCF United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework

UNTAC United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia

UNV United Nations Volunteer

UPR Universal Periodic Review

WHRDs Women Human Rights Defenders

XB Extra budgetary

## Executive Summary

### Background

Established in 1993 following the Paris Peace Accords, which mandated the UN to continue its human rights work in the country following the completion of the role of the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), OHCHR's presence in Cambodia is guided by successive UN resolutions, particularly A/RES/48/141 and is underpinned by biennial MOUs with the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC). The current MOU until December 2024 commits RGC and OHCHR to “cooperate in the implementation of a Technical Cooperation Programme in the field of Human Rights designed to strengthen further the capacity of both governmental and non-governmental institutions to promote and protect human rights in Cambodia.”

Cambodia's long term 'Vision 2050' sets out the aspiration to become “a prosperous, but also, socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable” country. Cambodia's principal national development frameworks - the Pentagonal Strategy and the Cambodia (local) Sustainable Development Goals (CSDGs) - set out priorities and steps in this direction, with the aim of becoming an Upper Middle Income Country by 2030. Upholding the country's ratified international human rights instruments (eight out of nine core treaties) is central to ensuring such progress is equitable and the benefits are widely shared. Against the backdrop of an intergenerational power shift in the country, the main human rights challenges in Cambodia include constrained civic-political space, limited accountability for human rights violations, and socio-economic rights and other impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic,<sup>1</sup> which have deepened inequality which particularly impacts women, persons with disabilities, indigenous people, and LGBT individuals, among others.

Following a significant internal change management process, the Cambodia Country Office has successfully repositioned itself to address the current priorities of Cambodia's human rights situation, guided by the recommendations of the 2020 Country Programme evaluation, which was enormously helpful in charting a way forward for the Country Office. The Cambodia Country Programme focuses on four thematic areas: strengthening human rights mechanisms, enhancing participation and protecting civic space, development for human rights, and strengthening the rule of law and accountability for human rights violations. Contribution to the funding of the Country Programme is provided by the Delegation of the European Union (EUR 991,686, with OHCHR contribution of EUR 52,337) and the Swedish International Development Agency (SEK 36 million).<sup>2</sup>

This evaluation was carried out between December 2023 and June 2024 by an independent external evaluator. The period evaluated is December 2020 to September 2023 for the EU-funded project, and from 2021 to 2024 for the Sida-supported core work. The key components of the methodology included: (i) desk review; (ii) secondary data analysis; (iii) field mission; (iv) interviews (11 females, 21 males); (v) focus group discussions (2 females, 2 males); (vi) short survey (19 respondents); (vii) short case studies; and (viii) direct observations. The evaluation has used a mixed-method approach through a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis to inform findings, with triangulation where possible. The evaluation has used a human rights-based approach, linking the analysis to the relevant international human rights standards, as well as principles of accountability, participation, non-discrimination and equality. Gender, disability and other inclusion considerations were integrated into the evaluation, which was conducted in line with “Standards for Evaluation in the UN System”, United Nations Evaluation Group, 2016.

The evaluation TOR set the following objectives: (i) To identify areas of strength and weakness in the planning and achievement of results – including in the area of gender equality and human rights integration; (ii) To produce useful lessons learned and good practices that illustrate successful and unsuccessful strategies in the achievement of results; and (iii) To produce clear and actionable recommendations identifying concrete actions and responsibilities for OHCHR to undertake towards these ends. In addition, the TOR requested analysis of the implementation of the recommendations

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<sup>1</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic laid bare the fault lines of an unsustainable growth model.

<sup>2</sup> With additional funding from DFAT.

made by the 2020 Evaluation of the OHCHR Cambodia Country Programme.

## Main Findings

The evaluation found that the OHCHR Country Programme for Cambodia 2020-2024 is **highly relevant** to the human rights situation in Cambodia, the mandate of OHCHR, its comparative advantage, its Office Management Plan 2018-2023, the SDGs and the needs of both duty bearers and rights-holders. The Country Programme is **highly compatible** with other interventions in Cambodia, aligning with national plans, programmes and priorities of local stakeholders, and that the individual donors, the EU and Sida added value in achieving the expected results by enabling OHCHR Cambodia's on-going technical cooperation programme through extra-budgetary funding for achievement of results. The Country Office expanded partnerships with other UNCT members integrating complementary human rights standards into shared thematic priorities, such as the CEACR (international labour standards supervisory mechanism) recommendations to Cambodia on freedom of association. EU and Sida support has been instrumental in supporting OHCHR in its mandate to build the institutional and technical capacity of both its RGC counterparts to implement at national level its human rights obligations under ratified international human rights treaties, as well as that of the well-established national network of human rights CSOs, including those supporting LNOB groups, to hold human rights duty bearers to account. The evaluation noted the effectiveness of the Country Office's communication strategy, and the practice of leveraging UN stakeholders to deliver sensitive human rights messages.

This evaluation assessed **effectiveness** as **satisfactory**, finding that overall implementation at the consolidated programme pillar level is generally on track, despite some challenges due to factors including the political climate and human rights situation, as well as COVID-19 related restrictions, which impacted OHCHR's work and its engagement with relevant government authorities. Positive results included increased attention to prevention, including a focus on economic, social and cultural rights, in particular human rights economy and human rights related to land. Internal factors have also influenced the effectiveness of programme implemented to date, including insufficient attention to the need to continue strengthening the application of results-based management approaches.

The evaluation has made an overall assessment regarding **efficiency** of **satisfactory**. Following a significant change management process, there is an improved match between the Office overall skill base and strategic requirements of the Cambodian human rights context, with increased efficiency in use of human and financial resources pursuant to the reduction in size of the Office from 54 to 23 staff, and the closure of the Battambang office. This evaluation makes the observation that it is challenging to meet the demands of stakeholders with more limited capacity, in particular in respect of the XB-funded fundraising, communications and human rights economist positions. Structural changes have improved Office cohesion and performance in core areas such as monitoring, analysis, reporting, communications and public outreach. However, there is room for further improvement on the efficient and effective functioning and use of the Human Rights Violations Database, including in terms of gender equality.<sup>3</sup>

The evaluation assessed **impact orientation** as **satisfactory**. Assessing the impact of the work of OHCHR can be challenging, given its essentially long-term normative nature. In this context, considering the making of "significant contribution to broader, long-term and sustainable enjoyment of rights" in Cambodia is a complex task, with many factors to be taken into account both politically and legally. However, while achieving impact remains very much work in progress in the current country context, the evaluation finds that work undertaken under the Country Programme to date has both demonstrated impact in some key areas, such as incorporation of a majority of human rights standards (Paris Principles) into the law on establishment of an independent NHRI, and laid important foundations for longer-term impact, such as mainstreaming gender and human rights into the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2024-28 (UNSDCF). OHCHR Cambodia successfully reassessed its strategic directions for engagement from a first principles perspective<sup>4</sup> in

<sup>3</sup> Stakeholders have noted that this would need METS intervention and not field based. This needs a programme amendment to the built in system.

<sup>4</sup> The basic and most important reasons for doing something.



the changed conditions as a basis for a revised theory of change and associated strategies for longer term more systemic change. However, questions remain about the impact of OHCHR's capacity building efforts, with the evaluation survey of trainees yielding a very small sample.

This evaluation assessed **sustainability** as **satisfactory** with evidence found of good foundations for sustainability. The Country Office adjusted its structure and programmes to be more financially sustainable and increase capacity to deliver services. Certain foundations for sustainability of human rights progress are in place, including ratified international human rights treaties; strengthened participation in international human rights mechanisms; national legislation adopted (which durably embeds international human rights standards in Cambodia's national legal framework) or in draft form in certain key areas; regulatory frameworks in areas such as criminal justice; and a well-established human rights civil society constituency. The commitment and ability of local stakeholders to continue working on the issues addressed by the programme is variable on the part of some RGC counterparts. The Country Programme has built national ownership by moving forward the longstanding agenda to establish a national human rights institution in Cambodia in accordance with the Paris Principles. Moreover, the first UNSDCF in Cambodia is now in place (2024-2028), with OHCHR having contributed significantly to the integration of the human rights based approach in this document, including in relation to Pillar 4 "Social Transformation", which covers civic space, rule of law and gender.<sup>5</sup> These actions have laid the foundations for the sustainability of the human rights agenda in Cambodia as a nationally owned issue.

Gender mainstreaming and gender-specific engagements under the Country Programme were assessed as **very satisfactory**. Disability mainstreaming was assessed as **variable**, and disability targeted engagements were assessed as **satisfactory**. Human rights integration was assessed as **very satisfactory**. The Gender Accreditation Programme has been instrumental in the improvement of gender integration across all areas of work. Visible improvements include workforce planning and actions taken towards gender parity, management publicly championing women's rights and gender equality and increased funding on women's rights and gender, with the budget exceeding the recommended benchmark for gender related activities. The office's communication work is laudable, including strong campaigns that are both inspiring and captivating. The Country Programme's targeted disability interventions through the UN Joint PRPD Programme provided sound technical inputs to the draft disability law, and targeted persons with psycho-social disabilities living in rural areas shackled in their homes, which is good practice in addressing intersectional discrimination and reaching the furthest behind first. However, there is room for improvement in disability mainstreaming, which was not consistent or systematic at all stages of the programme cycle outside of the targeted disability activities. The Country Programme adheres to the working principles of the human rights-based approach. On the one hand, it considers stakeholders who are rights holders with legal entitlements and who are in need of acquiring more knowledge and skills in order to claim their rights. On the other hand, the intervention also considers government authorities, who are duty bearers and also require strengthening their knowledge and capacity so that they can protect and promote human rights.

## Summary of Lessons

The following lessons from the experience of OHCHR in Cambodia since 2020 were identified by stakeholder consultations and document review for reference in future planning and implementation. These are presented in more developed form in Section 3.

**I. Towards establishment of a National Human Rights Institution in Cambodia in accordance with the Paris Principles.** Stakeholder feedback emphasized the following: (i) the hope that this engagement will help to lay a solid foundation for the establishment of an independent and effective NHRI, in line with the Paris Principles, leveraging Cambodia's stated commitment to such establishment; (ii) the importance of engaging national champions, such as the President of CHRC, to drive the agenda forward; (iii) the value of strengthened interaction between the OHCHR Regional

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<sup>5</sup> The engagement with donors was to include more human rights data information and analysis in the UNSDCF across all the chapters, not only the 'traditional' governance chapter.

Office and Country Office, where SEARO access to lessons and experience in the region were highly relevant; and (iv) the acceptability and quality of broad consultations in line with international human rights norms and standards, ensuring the participation of a variety of civil society actors responsible for human rights.

**2. Leveraging UN stakeholders to deliver sensitive human rights messages.** Stakeholder feedback was that deliberately delivering politically sensitive messages at sub-regional, regional or global level can be an effective strategy which can potentially help to protect Country Office relationships on the ground in Cambodia. For example, issuing a trafficking report at regional level is a sensitive approach that avoids singling out any one government and raises visibility at the regional level. Lessons that emerged included the importance of clarity about the respective roles, the need for stakeholders to be mindful of the potential impacts on the Country Office relationships in Cambodia, and the value of discussing potentially controversial cases with national stakeholders before reports are issued.

**3. Complementary mandates: OHCHR Cambodia Country Office and the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Cambodia.** Stakeholder feedback emphasized the following points. First, parts of the respective mandates of the Special Rapporteur and the Country Office are potentially overlapping and not sufficiently clear, and would benefit from guidance and clarification. Second, there is a lack of guidance regarding the nature of the relationship between the independent Special Rapporteur and the OHCHR Country Office, particularly in view of the perception of the government and the independence of the Special Rapporteur from the United Nations. The Special Procedures Operations Manual does not always specify whether OHCHR support to the Special Rapporteur should emanate from HQ or the field presence.<sup>6</sup> Third, this is not a situation that is particular to Cambodia. There are seven countries in the world that have a Special Rapporteur with a country mandate as well as a UN human rights field presence.<sup>7</sup> Stakeholders have suggested that it would be a timely juncture for OHCHR to establish a platform for discussion to clarify these issues.

### Summary of Good Practices

A number of good practices were identified to inform future programme planning and implementation, which can be leveraged for institutional learning and performance purposes.

- Expanding OHCHR partnerships with other UNCT members around shared thematic priorities
- Addressing the impacts of business activities on indigenous peoples' human rights related to land
- Strengthening mutually reinforcing linkages between human rights, economic development and the SDGs
- Leveraging the thematic mandates of the United Nations Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council to move the human rights protection agenda forward in Cambodia
- Leveraging OHCHR's comparative advantage as the custodian of international human rights law to support national legislative reform
- Deepening integration of human rights based approaches into the planning and work of the UNCT in Cambodia
- Targeted programming to reach persons with psychosocial disabilities
- Building on achievements and lessons under the Gender Accreditation Programme

### Recommendations

In this context, the evaluation has made the following ten recommendations in order to address the main gaps identified and to achieve better results.

Recommendation	Actions
<b>Strategic positioning</b>	

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/HRBodies/SP/Manual\\_Operations2008.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/HRBodies/SP/Manual_Operations2008.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Afghanistan, Cambodia, Central African Republic, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Somalia, Syria  
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/about-us/where-we-work>  
<https://spinternet.ohchr.org/ViewAllCountryMandates.aspx?lang=en>

<p>1. Strengthen the OHCHR Cambodia Country Programme <b>Theory of change</b></p>	<p>Strengthen the OHCHR Cambodia Country Programme <b>Theory of Change</b> in terms of the whole-of-office level to better balance and contextualize the more detailed section/unit level sections, being guided by the global OHCHR Theory of Change, and incorporating the OHCHR Cambodia Country Programme 2024-2028 pillars and activities. This should be contextualised to the national Cambodian context (including the changed political context under the new government), and – in line with the recommendation of the previous evaluation - draw on consultations with external stakeholders (RGC, CSOs, UNCT, donors), be aligned with the UNSDCF for Cambodia 2024-2028, build on strategies which have shown the greatest potential for systemic change, and incorporate the OHCHR ‘frontier issues’ as components of larger strategies. Such Theory of Change would need to be owned by OHCHR Cambodia, as well as by OHCHR SEARO. It would need to be subject to a progressive process of a greater regularization of the Cambodia programme as part of the wider regional programme, instead of continuing to stand alone as much as it does (even despite the recommendation of the previous evaluation in this regard).<sup>8</sup></p>
<p><b>Office management and resourcing</b></p>	
<p>2. Continue to strengthen <b>Results-Based Management</b> approaches in the daily work of the Country Programme</p>	<p>Building on the 2020 evaluation recommendation to strengthen <b>Results-Based Management</b> approaches, capacities and application within Country Office work plans and daily work, with support from OHCHR HQ, there remains opportunity for improvement, including with regard to end of year reporting and use of RBM to allow for year-to-year comparisons and tracking of progress over time using streamlined indicators. This would allow for a more rigorous tracking of change, challenges, success factors and lessons for wider application. Prioritise attention to utilisation of the Human Rights Violations Database, including to integrate gender into human rights monitoring, as well as needs assessment, and programme/activity monitoring.</p>
<p>3. Address efficiency and sustainability of <b>human and financial resources</b></p>	<p>In order to address efficiency and sustainability of <b>human and financial resources</b>, consider the following: (i) Consider ensuring funding for the Public Information Officer (PIO) at a level higher than IUNV (ideally a P3 post) to ensure the sustainability of the post and the retention of talent. (ii) In line with the priority to broaden OHCHR’s donor base among Member States and non-traditional actors, including by refining OHCHR’s approach to resource mobilization and reinforcing related skills and capacities, consider the addition of another DEXREL officer position in the SEARO office with dedicated support to Cambodia (among other countries),<sup>9</sup> to ensure that the Cambodia Country Office can diversify the donor base, capitalizing on the donor presence in Bangkok in a position to make funding decisions. Leverage the diversification of the Country Programme which has taken place pursuant to the new theory of change and has created opportunities for diversifying the donor base to those who target frontier issues such as digital space and emerging technologies (private sector), and people on the move, and spotlight populations such as persons with disabilities, and women. (iii) Consider regularisation of the human rights economist consultancy position to provide leverage for building new</p>

<sup>8</sup> Prioritize the development of a new national **theory of change** for the programme period from 2022 as a basis for strategic decision-making on priority areas for engagement and the development of the next five-country programme. This should inter alia (i) provide a clear bridge between the global OHCHR Theory of Change and the key strategic human rights challenges in the national context, including as a result of the COVID-19 crisis; (ii) be formulated in sync with the development of the new United Nations cooperation framework for Cambodia from 2024 in order to maximize integration and synergies; (iii) build on strategies which have shown the greatest potential for systemic change; (iv) incorporate the OHCHR ‘frontier issues’ as components of larger strategies; and (v) draw on consultations with external stakeholders (RGC, CSOs, UNCT, donors).

<sup>9</sup> It should be noted that the recommendation to have two DEXREL officers in Bangkok was made years ago but never implemented.

	relationships, promoting the human rights agenda in the economic sphere, and expanding the ESCR dimension substantively in an area that enjoys RGC support – given its prioritisation to the economic dimensions of the SDGs.
4. Maximise the full potential of Country Office <b>training activities</b> and scale up impact	Maximize the full potential of the Country Office <b>training activities</b> and scale up impact by: (i) Carrying out needs assessments of national counterparts (both RGC and civil society) regarding training needs; (ii) administering a training survey to previous RGC trainees; (iii) Developing a training strategy based on such needs and take measures to ensure that trainees’ agencies and organisations are committed to maximizing the use of newly acquired knowledge and skills to ensure strategic use of resources; (iv) Applying digital technology in a highly participatory way as an inclusive platform to improve training effectiveness, reduce costs, expand outreach to LNOB groups and provincial stakeholders, and diversify delivery methods. Leverage existing resources such as the human rights capacity building tools and best practices of SEARO, and the Methodology, Education and Training Section (METS) of OHCHR. (v) Taking steps to ensure the consolidation of such learning through follow up support; (vi) Putting in place a mechanism to address systematic and regular evaluation of the impact of the Country Programme’s capacity building activities, including training of RGC, UNCT members, and civil society stakeholders at the local level. Consider utilizing existing tools and approaches to strengthen OHCHR’s ability to assess the impact of its engagement in Cambodia. For example, the former civic space officer at OHCHR SEARO took the initiative to put in place her own bespoke follow up survey arrangement, developing a simple 6 month and 12 month impact feedback form for the women journalist training programme. This tool could be deployed in the current phase of EU-funded cooperation and provide valuable lessons and insights for future planning and implementation in Cambodia and elsewhere. Use the training impact evaluations to guide future capacity building interventions.
5. Integrate gender equality and disability into the Country Office <b>Communication Strategy</b>	In line with the recommendation of the Gender Accreditation Assessment, develop an internal and external <b>communication strategy and action plan</b> with specific objectives related to gender integration and how women's rights can be institutionalized in the communication efforts of the office. This approach fosters a shared vision and facilitates the seamless integration of women's rights and gender concerns across all communication initiatives. Draw upon the expertise of the Gender Integration team (WRGS). Similarly, develop specific objectives related to disability integration and how the rights of persons with disabilities can be mainstreamed in the OHCHR Cambodia communications activities. Seek support from the Disability Focal Point at HQ, as well as from the UNDIS Technical Guidance.
6. Formulate an <b>Organisational Development Plan</b> taking into account evaluation and Gender Accreditation recommendations	Formulate an <b>Organizational Development Plan</b> which takes account of all evaluation recommendations and sets out measures, milestones and timeframes to ensure that the Country Office is fit for purpose in the context of the new theory of change and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. Consider incorporating Gender Accreditation recommendations into this plan. Consider utilizing a tracking system for the follow up to evaluation recommendations, ensuring that the recommendations are effectively integrated into the work plans of the relevant teams for implementation. <sup>10</sup> Request managers to submit new updates to FOTCD every six months.
<b>Programme and thematic prioritisation</b>	

<sup>10</sup> One interlocutor has suggested making this part of the Country Programme so that follow up can be done through PMS.

7. Continue <b>programme prioritisation</b> on economic rights	In terms of <b>programme prioritization</b> , <sup>11</sup> continue to prioritise protection and prevention, including support to establishment of an independent NHRI, law reform in line with international human rights standards, and attention to economic social and cultural rights, keeping a spotlight on access to social protection and human rights economy, among other issues.
8. <b>Mainstream disability inclusion</b> into all phases of the Country Programme cycle	In line with the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy, <b>mainstream disability inclusion</b> into the Country Programme design, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation. A twin-track approach is required to mainstream disability inclusion. The twin-track approach combines mainstream programmes and projects that are inclusive of persons with disabilities as well as programmes and projects that are targeted towards persons with disabilities. It is an essential element of any strategy that seeks to mainstream disability inclusion successfully. Mainstreaming should also follow a human rights-based approach to disability inclusion. This should include participation and consultation of Organisations of Persons with Disabilities.
<b>UN as One on human rights</b>	
9. Ensure the integration of the human rights-based approach in the next Common Country Analysis and <b>UNSDCF</b>	In the preparation of the next <b>Common Country Analysis and UNSDCF</b> (due in 2028), ensure that OHCHR invests in influencing the UNSDCF and integration of the human rights based approach as a core priority in the five year and annual work planning, synchronised with the UNSDCF cycle. Ensure that the recommendations, findings and guidance of human rights mechanisms are increasingly incorporated into both these documents, including UPR, treaty bodies, and special procedures, in order to promote coherence and efficiency, while recognizing RGC's needs for assistance as reflected in the recommendations.
10. Establish a <b>multi country platform</b> for discussion to clarify common issues around the simultaneous functioning of the Special Rapporteurs with a country mandate and a UN human rights field presence	Consider establishing a platform for discussion to clarify the following issues: (i) the respective mandates of the <b>Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Cambodia</b> and the OHCHR Cambodia Country Office and whether there are potentially overlapping parts of these mandates; (ii) guidance regarding the nature of the relationship between the independent Special Rapporteur and the OHCHR Country Office, particularly in view of the perception of the government and the independence of the Special Rapporteur from the United Nations; (iii) consider a multi-country platform to consider common issues amongst the seven countries in the world that have a Special Rapporteur with a country mandate as well as a UN human rights field presence. <sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Be guided by the HRBA, human rights mechanism recommendations, LNOB/RFBF lens and attention to areas where other UN agencies are not intervening.

<sup>12</sup> Afghanistan, Cambodia, Central African Republic, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Somalia, Syria  
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/about-us/where-we-work>  
<https://spinternet.ohchr.org/ViewAllCountryMandates.aspx?lang=en>

## I. Introduction

### I.1 Programme background

Established in October 1993, the OHCHR Country Office in Cambodia is the agency's longest standing such operation. Its presence derives from the 1991 Paris Peace Accords which mandated the United Nations to continue its human rights work in the country following the completion of the role of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC). The unique ongoing presence and mandate of the Office is guided by successive United Nations resolutions, particularly A/RES/48/141, and is underpinned by biennial Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) with the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC).<sup>13</sup> The current MOU until 31 December 2024 commits RGC and OHCHR to "cooperate in the implementation of a Technical Cooperation Programme in the field of Human Rights" [...] that is "designed to strengthen further the capacity of both governmental and non-governmental institutions to promote and protect human rights in Cambodia."<sup>14</sup>

In line with the four main pillars of the OHCHR Management Plan 2024-2028, the Country Office is focusing on the following thematic areas: 1) strengthening human rights mechanisms, 2) enhancing participation and protecting civic space, 3) development for human rights, and 4) strengthening the rule of law and accountability for human rights violations. Non-discrimination is mainstreamed into each of these pillars. In particular, the Country Office works on (i) Supporting legal and institutional reforms, which aim at protecting the exercise of human rights, consistent with the international human rights obligations of Cambodia; (ii) Monitoring the implementation of laws and the actions of state institutions responsible for respecting and upholding rights, reporting problematic areas to the Government and other relevant actors for corrective action, and looking jointly for solutions; (iii) Supporting the Government's cooperation with the UN human rights mechanisms, and promoting the ratification of international human rights treaties; (iv) Supporting the capacity of civil society actors (human rights Non-Governmental Organizations-(NGOs), women's rights organizations, media, trade unions, and others) to monitor and advocate for human rights, and protecting their activities through fostering a climate of mutual respect, dialogue, and cooperation with the Government.

Human rights anchor the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The 2030 Agenda explicitly states that it is grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights treaties. The SDGs are closely linked to political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights. They cover areas such as health, education, decent work, food, water and equality, as well as personal security, access to justice and fundamental freedoms. Many of the SDGs refer explicitly to human rights, such as ending all forms of discrimination, protecting sexual and reproductive health rights and labour rights, prohibiting torture and protecting fundamental freedoms (Goals 5, 8, 10 and 16). In addition, human rights principles, such as non-discrimination and equality, participation and accountability, cut across the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, providing guidance on their implementation in the context of the underlying SDG principle to "leave no one behind." Many of the recommendations the country has received in connection with Treaty body reports, the UPR and the reports and communications of special procedures mandate holders relate directly to the targets of the 2030 Agenda.<sup>15</sup>

Cambodia's long term 'Vision 2050' sets out the aspiration to become "a prosperous, but also, socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable" country. Cambodia's principal national development frameworks - the Pentagonal Strategy and Cambodia (local) Sustainable Development Goals - set out priorities and steps in this direction (including institutional reforms and strengthening, enhancement and strengthening of accountability and integrity in public administration, and enhancement and

<sup>13</sup> Clarke, D. & Ferreira, A. (2020), Evaluation of the Cambodia Country Programme 2017-2020.

<sup>14</sup> Memorandum of Understanding between the Royal Government of Cambodia and OHCHR for the Implementation of a Technical Cooperation Programme on Human Rights 2023-2024. A biennial Human Rights Council resolution provides the Secretary-General to report on OHCHR role and achievements in assisting the Government and people of Cambodia in the promotion and protection of human rights under items 2 and 10 of the Council. This resolution provides for the extension of SR mandate and the submission of the SG report. The resolution does not extend the OHCHR mandate.

<sup>15</sup> Clarke, D. & Ferreira, A. (2020), Evaluation of the Cambodia Country Programme 2017-2020.

strengthening of the effectiveness of laws and justice systems),<sup>16</sup> with the aim of becoming an Upper Middle Income Country by 2030. Upholding the country's international human rights commitments is central to ensuring such progress is equitable and the benefits are widely shared.<sup>17</sup>

The RGC has ratified eight of the nine core international human rights treaties, and was peer reviewed by the Universal Periodic Review Working Group Session 46 in May 2024. During the period evaluated, treaty bodies considered the human rights record of Cambodia under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,<sup>18</sup> and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.<sup>19</sup> The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights welcomed the progress made by Cambodia in the promotion and protection of economic, social and cultural rights, particularly by (i) expanding its social security system, through the adoption of the Law on Social Security Schemes and the National Social Protection Policy Framework 2016–2025, (ii) reducing the poverty rates, (iii) reducing the levels of malnutrition, hunger and food insecurity, (iv) elaborating a draft law to establish a national human rights institution (pending review in the Council of Ministers since September 2023) (v) expanding access to health-care services; and (vi) improved access to preschool and primary education.<sup>20</sup> In his reports to the Human Rights Council in 2021, 2022, and 2023, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia sets out principal human rights concerns, highlighting constrained civic-political space, limited accountability for human rights violations, the implementation gap of the recommendations of the international human rights mechanisms, discrimination and stigma faced by women, persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and LGBT, and the economic and social rights impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic response. The Special Rapporteur noted that prior to the pandemic Cambodia enjoyed a growth rate of 7% annually, and that Cambodia has now been upgraded to lower middle income status, with progress made on the socio economic front. He noted a further key challenge for implementation is the intergenerational power shift in the country, which is interwoven with the political and electoral processes.<sup>21</sup>

The Delegation of the European Union to Cambodia (EUD) funded OHCHR Cambodia EUR 991,686 to implement activities of the Country Programme under a project “Human rights-based prevention to sustain development” (December 2020-September 2023). OHCHR contributed EUR 52,337 towards the project, bringing the total to EUR 1,044,023. The Swedish International Development Agency (Sida) supports the overall core work of OHCHR Cambodia through financing the project “Human rights-based prevention to sustain development and peace 2021-2024” in the amount of SEF 36 million/USD\$4,228,311.

## 1.2 Evaluation background

The funding agreements with the EUD and Sida require that OHCHR will conduct an independent evaluation of the project/programme in accordance with OHCHR Evaluation Policy and following the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) norms and standards.

The evaluation TOR set the following objectives: (i) To identify areas of strength and weakness in the planning and achievement of results – including in the area of gender equality and human rights integration; (ii) To produce useful lessons learned and good practices that illustrate successful and unsuccessful strategies in the achievement of results; and (iii) To produce clear and actionable recommendations identifying concrete actions and responsibilities for OHCHR to undertake towards these ends. In addition, the TOR requests analysis of the implementation of the recommendations

<sup>16</sup> Pentagonal Strategy – Phase I for Growth, Employment, Equity, Efficiency, and Sustainability: Building the Foundation towards Realising the Cambodia Vision 2050.

<sup>17</sup> Clarke, D. & Ferreira, A. (2020), Evaluation of the Cambodia Country Programme 2017-2020.

<sup>18</sup> Human Rights Committee (2022), Concluding observations on the third periodic report of Cambodia, CCPR/C/KHM/CO/3.

<sup>19</sup> Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (2023), Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Cambodia, E/C.12/KHM/CO/2.

<sup>20</sup> Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (2023), Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Cambodia, E/C.12/KHM/CO/2.

<sup>21</sup> Human Rights Council (2023), Situation of human rights in Cambodia Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia, Vitit Muntarbhorn, A/HRC/54/75; Human Rights Council (2022), Situation of human rights in Cambodia Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia, Vitit Muntarbhorn, A/HRC/51/66; Human Rights Council (2021), Situation of human rights in Cambodia Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia, Vitit Muntarbhorn, A/HRC/48/79.

made by the 2020 Evaluation of the OHCHR Cambodia Country Programme.

The evaluation approach used the five OECD DAC evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability, as well as gender, human rights and disability inclusion. The evaluation takes a summative approach, looking at the results achieved or not achieved, and a formative approach, with a view to informing OHCHR Cambodia Country Office and other field presences' work in future, increasing OHCHR's accountability and learning in accordance with the OHCHR Evaluation Policy.

This evaluation was conducted between January and June 2024 by an independent external consultant. The scope of the evaluation is from December 2020 to 2024.

The target audience includes OHCHR Cambodia Country Office; OHCHR Headquarters (Field Operations and Technical Cooperation Division; Donor and External Relations Section; Policy, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Service; Human Rights Council, Treaties and Mechanisms Division; Finance and Budget Section); OHCHR SEARO; Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC); civil society; UNCT in Cambodia; and development partners, including the EU and Sida.

### 1.3. Methodology

The key components of the methodology included: (i) desk review; (ii) secondary data analysis; (iii) field mission; (iv) interviews; (v) focus group discussions; (vi) short questionnaires; (vii) short case studies; and (viii) direct observations. The inception phase consisted of a documentation review (Annex 3: list of documents reviewed), scoping interviews with staff from OHCHR Geneva and submission of an inception report. The field phase took place in Phnom Penh during February-March 2024 interviewing OHCHR CO staff, donors, UNCT stakeholders, RGC counterparts, and holding focus group discussions with civil society actors, including women and persons with disabilities (Annex 2: list of stakeholders interviewed). Several interviews required translation, which was provided by an independent in-country interpreter commissioned by the CO. Follow up interviews took place remotely. A survey was conducted of 19/604 OHCHR training participants over the period evaluated (survey sent to 30 NGOs) (Annex 3: data collection tools).

The evaluation has used a mixed-method approach through a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis to inform findings. The mix of data sources was used to obtain a diversity of perspectives, ensure data accuracy and overcome data limits. The evaluation has used triangulation where possible, which facilitates validation of data through cross verification from more than two sources. The evaluation has used a human rights-based approach, linking the analysis to the relevant international human rights standards, as well as principles of accountability, participation, non-discrimination and equality.

Gender, disability and other inclusion considerations were integrated into all aspects of the evaluation from the review of desk material to the inclusion of specific questions under all core lines of enquiry with stakeholders. Consultations were conducted with representatives of gender and disability CSOs (including the OPD national disability umbrella body), as well as with the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Disability Action Council (DAC) of the RGC, in addition to the Cambodian Human Rights Committee, Ministry of Justice and the National Committee Against Torture. Where appropriate, attention was given in consultations to the practical impact of the Offices' participation in the OHCHR Gender Accreditation Programme on programme design and delivery, partnerships, results and internal office culture and processes.

The evaluation was carried out in line with the norms, standards and ethical safeguards as elaborated upon in the document "Standards for Evaluation in the UN System", United Nations Evaluation Group, 2016.

## 2. Main Findings



The findings below follow the evaluation criteria set out in the TOR and the evaluation questions (EQ) set out in the inception report. Good practices, lessons learned, and analysis of the implementation of the recommendations of the 2020 evaluation of the Cambodia Country Programme are incorporated throughout.

## 2.1 Relevance

*Relevance – the extent to which the programme is relevant to the situation in the country/region, the mandate of OHCHR, its comparative advantage, the Sustainable Development Goals and the needs of stakeholders (both duty bearers and right-holders)*

**Overview:** The evaluation found that the OHCHR Country Programme for Cambodia 2020-2024 is **highly relevant** to the human rights situation in Cambodia, the mandate of OHCHR, its comparative advantage, its Office Management Plans 2018-2023, the SDGs and the needs of both duty bearers and rights-holders.

*EQ: How relevant to the country/regional human rights situation, the needs of the stakeholders (rights holders and duty bearers), the Office’s mandate, OHCHR’s Management Plan 2018 – 2021 and the extension from 2022 – 2023, and the Sustainable Development Goals has the programme been in the period evaluated?*

The OHCHR Cambodia Country Programme is highly relevant to Cambodia’s human rights situation, as illustrated by Cambodia’s human rights obligations emanating from ratification of eight out of nine core international human rights treaties. It is relevant to the needs of rights holders and duty bearers, since it seeks to strengthen the institutional capacities of duty bearers to meet their obligations and of rights holders to claim, access, protect and exercise their rights.<sup>22</sup> It is relevant to the Office’s mandate, which is to promote and protect the effective enjoyment by all of all civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights; to provide advisory services and technical assistance at the request of RGC; and to engage in a dialogue with Governments in the implementation of this mandate.<sup>23</sup> The Country Programme is relevant to the Office Management plans for 2018-2021 and the extension from 2022-2023, which centre around five strategic priorities: human rights mechanisms; participation and protection of civic space; economic, social and cultural rights; equality and non-discrimination; and rule of law and accountability for human rights violations. These are well aligned with OHCHR’s global Office Management Plan pillars 4, 3, 1, 2, and 6 respectively.<sup>24</sup> The programme also contributes towards the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with emphasis on SDG 10 (Reduce inequality within and among countries), 16 (Peace and Justice Strong Institutions) and 17 (Partnerships to achieve goals, SDG 10). SDG 1 (End poverty in all its forms everywhere), 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls) and 17 (Partnerships to achieve goals) are also covered.<sup>25</sup>

## 2.2 Coherence

*Coherence - the compatibility of the Cambodia Country Programme and other interventions in the country/region, sector or organization – including by assessing the added value of individual donors in achieving the expected results, especially the EU and Sida*

Overall, the evaluation found that the Cambodia Country Programme is **highly compatible** with other interventions in Cambodia, aligning with national plans, programmes and priorities of local stakeholders, and that the individual donors, the EU and Sida added value in achieving the expected results by enabling OHCHR Cambodia’s on-going technical cooperation programme through extra-budgetary funding for achievement of results. The Country Office expanded partnerships with other UNCT members integrating complementary human rights standards into shared thematic priorities, such as the CEACR (international labour standards supervisory mechanism) recommendations to

<sup>22</sup> UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for Cambodia 2024-2028.

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/about-us> A/RES/48/141

<sup>24</sup> [https://www2.ohchr.org/english/OMP\\_22\\_23/documents/The-promise-of-human-rights.pdf](https://www2.ohchr.org/english/OMP_22_23/documents/The-promise-of-human-rights.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> Terms of reference for the assignment.

Cambodia on freedom of association. EU and Sida support has been instrumental in supporting OHCHR in its mandate to build the institutional and technical capacity of both its RGC counterparts to implement at national level its human rights obligations under ratified international human rights treaties, as well as that of the well-established national network of human rights CSOs, including those supporting LNOB groups, to hold human rights duty bearers to account. The evaluation noted the effectiveness of the Country Office's communication strategy, and the practice of leveraging UN stakeholders to deliver sensitive human rights messages.

*EQ. How does the programme align with and support national/regional plans, programmes and priorities of local stakeholders, partners, donors in particular the EU and Sida or other UN agencies on those issues that should be considered as human rights priorities, taking into account OHCHR's comparative advantages?*

The Cambodia Country Programme aligns with national plans, programmes and priorities of local stakeholders. The Country Programme aligns with Cambodia's Pentagonal Strategy, particularly its priorities around institutional reforms and strengthening, enhancement and strengthening of accountability and integrity in public administration, and enhancement and strengthening of the effectiveness of laws and justice systems.<sup>26</sup> It also aligns with the Memorandum of Understanding between the Royal Government of Cambodia and OHCHR for the Implementation of a Technical Cooperation Programme on Human Rights 2023-2024 which emphasises promotion and protection of human rights, technical support for reform programmes, international treaty obligations, and establishment of a national human rights institution (NHRI).<sup>27</sup> This takes into account OHCHR's comparative advantages, including its longstanding field presence in Cambodia, linked to its historic mandate and accumulation of knowledge and experience of local conditions and dynamics.

The Country Programme aligns with the priorities of the EU, which include good governance in public and financial management, and human rights is cross cutting for all EU priorities, including addressing political pluralism, electoral support, civil society, right to information, freedom of association, and gender equality. Moreover, it aligns with the priorities of Sida, which include strengthening human rights, democracy and a rule of law that treats all citizens equally before the law and complies with laws and regulations. Sida's development cooperation supports civil society organisations.<sup>28</sup> It aligns with regional priorities of Sida, as outlined in the Strategy for Sweden's regional development cooperation with Asia and the Pacific Region 2022-2026, which include human rights, democracy, the rule of law, accountability, reduced corruption, and increased gender equality in Cambodia.<sup>29</sup> In the increasingly resource constrained environment of the United Nations Regular Budget, where Member States dues compete with other priorities, the EU and Sida added value has been to enable OHCHR Cambodia's on-going technical cooperation programme through extra-budgetary funding for achievement of results.

### **Good practice 1: expanding OHCHR partnerships with other UNCT members around shared thematic priorities**

**2020 evaluation recommendation:** Expand its own **direct partnerships with other UNCT members**, around shared priorities, with a focus on the integration of human rights into the thematic/sectoral area concerned

**Background:** OHCHR has engaged in bilateral work with the International Labour Organisation in Cambodia, including collaborating in the areas of forced labour, freedom of association, peaceful demonstrations, and peaceful strikes. In addition, OHCHR works with UNESCO on freedom of expression, safety of journalists, and

<sup>26</sup> Pentagonal Strategy – Phase I for Growth, Employment, Equity, Efficiency, and Sustainability: Building the Foundation towards Realising the Cambodia Vision 2050.

<sup>27</sup> Memorandum of Understanding between the Royal Government of Cambodia and OHCHR for the Implementation of a Technical Cooperation Programme on Human Rights 2023-2024.

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.sida.se/en/sidas-international-work/countries-and-regions/cambodia>

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.government.se/international-development-cooperation-strategies/2022/05/strategy-for-swedens-regional-development-cooperation-with-asia-and-the-pacific-region-in-20222026/>

disability rights. Furthermore, OHCHR was a participating UN organization in the UN Joint Programme funded by the Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, together with UNESCO and UNDP with technical support from ILO.

**Lessons and success factors:** Stakeholder feedback highlighted the following: (i) the respective agencies share complementary mandates (e.g. OHCHR on human rights, ILO on labour rights; OHCHR on freedom of expression, UNESCO on communication and information); (ii) “good collaboration” with ILO promoting freedom of association, joint advocacy on the release of the President of the Labour Rights Supported Union of Khmer Employees of Nagaworld, leveraging the CEACR (international labour standards supervisory mechanism) recommendations to Cambodia on freedom of association; (iii) “meaningful partnership” with UNESCO promoting freedom of expression, press freedom and freedom of information, OHCHR monitoring and protecting the safety of journalists, UNESCO providing reliable information to citizens through implementation of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity; (iv) joint UN programming through the “Accelerating Disability Rights in Cambodia” project (OHCHR on law reform, access to justice and engagement with human rights mechanisms, UNESCO on access to information, UNDP with ILO technical support on employment); and (v) integration of complementary human rights standards into relevant thematic areas, such as fundamental international labour standards on freedom of association, core international human rights treaty on disability (CRPD), UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel.

*EQ: What have been the roles of local stakeholders (including local women’s organizations), partners, donors in particular the EU and Sida or other UN agencies in the achievement of results? What has been the strategy and methodology used to work together (including the distinct added value especially of EU and Sida support), communicate and disseminate results among them?*

OHCHR’s principal partner, the RGC, in its role as duty bearer has been to implement at national level its human rights obligations under ratified international human rights treaties. Civil society’s role is to hold human rights duty bearers to account. EU and Sida support has been instrumental in supporting OHCHR in its mandate to work with RGC and the well-established national network of human rights CSOs, including those supporting LNOB groups, to build their respective institutional and technical capacities to fulfil these roles. The role of UNCT members has been to partner with OHCHR in complementary thematic areas, leveraging their respective mandates to deepen such support (see Good Practice I). The strategy used to work together has been to capitalise on OHCHR’s convening and facilitation role for government/CSO and CSO/CSO dialogue and consultations on human rights matters, drawing on its unique human rights mandate, role and expertise, with international standing as an impartial normative agency, and longstanding country presence and related national expertise. Chief among such matters has been the development of national legislation, policies, strategies and plans, as well as engagement with international human rights mechanisms and the development of strategic tools and assets such as the criminal justice system database. EU and Sida support has instrumentalised OHCHR’s technical advisory expertise and role in this regard, ensuring that national laws, policies and databases comport with international human rights standards to ensure accountability and transparency, and ensuring appropriate participation and consultation with rights holders. OHCHR as an integral part of the global system of human rights mechanisms has facilitated and supported RGC and CSO engagement to engage in constructive dialogue in thematic areas, including bringing to the table CSO representatives of LNOB groups such as LGBT, women, persons with disabilities, indigenous persons, ethnic minorities, and people on the move, to name a few. Recognising that there are inequalities within such groups, OHCHR has endeavoured to reach the furthest behind first, for example by targeting persons with psycho-social disabilities living in rural areas, to ensure their inclusion in such processes. The Country Office has fulfilled its protection role for human rights CSOs, providing a safe space for CSO/CSO interaction, as well as its evidence-based monitoring, investigative and reporting role, as the basis of policy engagement and holding human rights duty bearers to account.

## Lesson learned I - Complementary mandates: OHCHR Cambodia Country Office and the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Cambodia

**Background:** The Special Representative of the Secretary General on the situation of human rights in Cambodia was established in 1993 by Commission on Human Rights resolution 1993/6<sup>30</sup> with a mandate to maintain contact with the Government and the people of Cambodia, to guide and coordinate the UN human rights presence in Cambodia, to assist the Government in the promotion and protection of human rights, and to report to the General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights on advisory services in the field of human rights.<sup>31</sup> In 2007, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia was formally established by Human Rights Council resolution 9/15, with a mandate to carry out the former functions of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on the situation of human rights in Cambodia.<sup>32</sup> The UN General Assembly established The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in December 1993 through its [resolution 48/141](#). Its mandate includes *inter alia* to: promote and protect the effective enjoyment by all of all civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights; to provide advisory services and technical assistance at the request of the State concerned; and to engage in a dialogue with Governments in the implementation of his/her mandate.<sup>33</sup> The Memorandum of Understanding between the Royal Government of Cambodia and the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for the Implementation of a Technical Cooperation Programme on Human Rights states that OHCHR projects are to be carried out through (a) advisory services and technical assistance, (b) training, (c) documentation and information, and (d) support to civil society, the Cambodia Human Rights Committee and other government institutions.<sup>34</sup>

**Actions taken:** The Special Rapporteur's status as an independent expert makes him or her distinct from the OHCHR Country Office, which is headed by the Representative of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and is formally part of the United Nations Secretariat. Nevertheless, the two institutions share complementary mandates.<sup>35</sup> The Country Office provides logistical support to the missions of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia.<sup>36</sup> OHCHR Headquarters provides secretariat support to the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia.<sup>37</sup>

The Secretary General reports to the Human Rights Council annually on the Role and achievements of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in assisting the Government and people of Cambodia in the promotion and protection of human rights. Likewise, the Special Rapporteur reports to the Human Rights Council annually on the situation of human right in Cambodia.

**Lessons and success factors:** Stakeholder feedback emphasized the following points. First, parts of the respective mandates of the Special Rapporteur and the Country Office are potentially overlapping and not sufficiently clear, and would benefit from guidance and clarification. Second, there is a lack of guidance regarding the nature of the relationship between the independent Special Rapporteur and the OHCHR Country Office, particularly in view of the perception of the government and the independence of the Special Rapporteur from the United Nations. The Special Procedures Operations Manual does not always specify whether OHCHR support to the Special Rapporteur should emanate from HQ or the field presence.<sup>38</sup> Third, this is not a situation that is particular to Cambodia. There are seven countries in the world that have a Special Rapporteur with a country mandate as well as a UN human rights field presence.<sup>39</sup> Stakeholders have suggested that it would be a timely juncture for OHCHR to establish a platform for discussion to clarify these issues.

<sup>30</sup> Commission on Human Rights resolution 1993/6, E-CN\_4-RES-1993-6

<sup>31</sup> Commission on Human Rights resolution 1993/6, E-CN\_4-RES-1993-6, para 6.

<sup>32</sup> Human Rights Council resolution 9/15.

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/about-us/A/RES/48/141>

<sup>34</sup> Memorandum of Understanding between the Royal Government of Cambodia and the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for the Implementation of a Technical Cooperation Programme on Human Rights 2023-2024.

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-cambodia>

<sup>36</sup> OHCHR (2023), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Cambodia Country Office, Report of Activities.

<sup>37</sup> OHCHR (2023), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Cambodia Country Office, Report of Activities. Yet stakeholders advised that Desk Officers serving the two mandates are often served by one staff member, which confuses the matter further. Pursuant to a biannual resolution of the Human Rights Council, the Secretary General reports to the Human Rights Council annually on the Role and achievements of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in assisting the Government and people of Cambodia in the promotion and protection of human rights. Under the same resolution, the Special Rapporteur is extended for a two-year mandate and requested to report to the Human Rights Council annually on the situation of human right in Cambodia. The resolution creates also contributes to further confusion on lack of distinction on the two mandates since it combines: 1- extension of the SR mandate, and 2- extension of the OHCHR report but not the mandate of OHCHR as the mandate is extended via the MOU.

<sup>38</sup> [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/HRBodies/SP/Manual\\_Operations2008.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/HRBodies/SP/Manual_Operations2008.pdf)

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/about-us/where-we-work>

Regarding the dissemination of results among local stakeholders, partners, donors and other UN agencies, there is a Communications Strategy 2022, which details how key human rights messages linking Office contributions are disseminated.<sup>40</sup> Also relevant is the UNCT UN Communications Group strategy.

As well as reaching out to the wider public, the public communications function of the Office is an important component of its interaction with national and internal counterparts,<sup>41</sup> ensuring OHCHR Cambodia's overall key messages are accurately and fairly represented in the media to ensure understanding across stakeholders.<sup>42</sup> Whilst maintaining integrity, the communication function showcases genuine technical cooperation with RGC.<sup>43</sup> Another important function of the communications function is the creation and maintenance of public information archive as a matter of record. This is important in the context of shrinking civic space and a challenging enabling environment for the right to participation, freedom of expression, and undue restrictions on press freedom.<sup>44</sup>

The office's communication work is commendable, including strong campaigns that are both inspiring and captivating.<sup>45</sup> Through use of social media, the commitment of OHCHR Cambodia towards human rights in a range of thematic areas in which it is engaged is effectively showcased to the public. This includes disability rights, gender equality and women's rights, and LGBT rights, among others. The Gender Accreditation Assessment 2024 noted the Office's exceptional campaigns on platforms such as Facebook and X, which have further solidified the office's commitment to gender equality, with notable initiatives including International Women's Day campaigns, the campaign on the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence, and participation in the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia events.<sup>46</sup>

The presence of a dedicated communication specialist in the office (the Public Information Officer) has undeniably proven to be instrumental in the office's success.<sup>47</sup> The communications unit plays a key

<https://spinternet.ohchr.org/ViewAllCountryMandates.aspx?lang=en>

Country	Special Rapporteur	UN human rights field presence
Afghanistan	Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan	Human rights component in UN peace mission in Afghanistan
Cambodia	Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia	OHCHR Cambodia Country Office
Central African Republic	Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Central African Republic	Human rights component of UN peace mission
Occupied Palestinian Territory	Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967	Country or Standalone Office in the State of Palestine
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea	One field based structure in Seoul that covers DPRK
Somalia	Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Somalia	Human rights component of UN peace mission
Syria	Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic	OHCHR Syrian Arab Republic Country Office (based in Beirut)

<sup>40</sup> OHCHR (2022), UN Human Rights Cambodia, Communications Strategy.

<sup>41</sup> OHCHR (2020), Evaluation of OHCHR Cambodia Country Programme.

<sup>42</sup> OHCHR (2022), UN Human Rights Cambodia, Communications Strategy.

<sup>43</sup> OHCHR (2022), UN Human Rights Cambodia, Communications Strategy.

<sup>44</sup> Examples include freedom of expression: e.g. public comments and social media posts that were critical of the Government; reports from journalists and media personnel of harassment, self censorship and persistent fears of prosecution; arrests of journalists carrying out routine journalism work that is protected by the right to freedom of expression; instances in which media licences for websites or radio stations were revoked in circumstances that raise concern for the right to freedom of expression; the sub-decree on a national Internet gateway which threatens the rights to privacy, freedom of expression and access to information; the undue restrictions on the freedom of expression of human rights defenders; the need to create an enabling environment for the right to participation, including freedom of expression and an open civic space in the context of the election cycle. Human Rights Council (2021), Report of the Secretary General on the Role and achievements of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in assisting the Government and people of Cambodia in the promotion and protection of human rights. A/HRC/48/49. Human Rights Council (2022), Report of the Secretary General on the Role and achievements of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in assisting the Government and people of Cambodia in the promotion and protection of human rights. A/HRC/51/63. Human Rights Council (2023), Report of the Secretary General on the Role and achievements of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in assisting the Government and people of Cambodia in the promotion and protection of human rights. A/HRC/55/72.

<sup>45</sup> OHCHR (2024), Gender Accreditation Assessment.

<sup>46</sup> OHCHR (2024), Gender Accreditation Assessment.

<sup>47</sup> OHCHR (2024), Gender Accreditation Assessment.

role in engaging closely with the thematic units on their priorities and needs and adding another important impetus to the visibility of human rights within Cambodia.<sup>48</sup> The increased visibility of key human rights messages is illustrated by the Office’s Facebook page, which has jumped from 35,000 followers in early 2020 to 61,000 followers in 2024. The draft communication strategy presents a valuable opportunity to institutionalize gender<sup>49</sup> (see Good Practice 8) and disability integration in communication practices.

Regarding other UN agencies, OHCHR participates in the UN Communications Group, which provides opportunities to collaborate in joint communications messages with its UNCT partners, aligning messaging and ensuring coherence of strategic communications approaches on topics related to human rights.<sup>50</sup>

## Lesson learned 2: Leveraging UN stakeholders to deliver sensitive human rights messages

**Background:** OHCHR Cambodia operates in a politically sensitive environment where human rights are constrained. According to the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2024-2028, while Cambodia has ratified 13 international instruments, gaps between accepted principles and their implementation mean that the country is unable to effectively protect and promote human rights.<sup>51</sup>

**Results to date:** The Country Office has developed a good working relationship with the Royal Government of Cambodia based on constructive dialogue. OHCHR Cambodia has leveraged a variety of stakeholders to deliver sensitive human rights messages in an effort to maintain this constructive relationship with the government. For instance, the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva delivered five statements covering Cambodia in 2023. One example included [outlining concerns in over 40 countries](#) in 2023, stating that the government continues to suppress political opposition, human rights defenders and independent media. At regional level, in 2023 the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights Regional Office for South-East Asia published a [trafficking report](#) covering a range of South-East Asian countries involved in online scam operations.

**Lessons and success factors:** Stakeholder feedback was that deliberately delivering politically sensitive messages at sub-regional, regional or global level can be an effective strategy which can potentially help to protect Country Office relationships on the ground in Cambodia. For example, issuing a trafficking report at regional level is a sensitive approach that avoids singling out any one government and raises visibility at the regional level. Lessons that emerged included the importance of clarity about the respective roles, the need for stakeholders to be mindful of the potential impacts on the Country Office relationships in Cambodia, and the value of discussing potentially controversial cases with national stakeholders before reports are issued.

Regarding donors, the communications function aims to show donors and potential donors how money is being spent, through showcasing what human rights look like in action. Moreover, it launches campaigns to promote key identified messages in alignment with donors.<sup>52</sup> OHCHR’s principal international donors (the EU and Sida) indicated that they value OHCHR as a key partner and crucial actor within Cambodia and saw scope for more regular communication and information sharing with the international community, including likeminded donors, leveraging OHCHR’s position as a credible and reliable source of reasoned and impartial information.

## 2.3 Effectiveness

*Effectiveness – the degree to which planned results and targets have been achieved, at outcome and output levels*

**Overview:** This evaluation assesses effectiveness as **satisfactory**. The evaluation found that overall implementation at the consolidated programme pillar level is generally on track, despite some

<sup>48</sup> OHCHR (2020), Evaluation of OHCHR Cambodia Country Programme.

<sup>49</sup> OHCHR (2024), Gender Accreditation Assessment.

<sup>50</sup> OHCHR (2022), UN Human Rights Cambodia, Communications Strategy.

<sup>51</sup> United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for Cambodia 2024-2028.

<sup>52</sup> OHCHR (2022), UN Human Rights Cambodia, Communications Strategy.

challenges due to factors including the political climate and human rights situation, as well as COVID-19 related restrictions, which impacted OHCHR's work and its engagement with relevant government authorities. Positive results included increased attention to prevention, including a focus on economic, social and cultural rights, in particular human rights economy and human rights related to land. Internal factors have also influenced the effectiveness of programme implemented to date, including insufficient attention to the need to continue strengthening the application of results-based management approaches.

*EQ. Where positive results of the programme were found, what were the enabling factors and processes?*

OHCHR's monitoring system uses four ranks of progress (no progress, some progress and good progress, fully achieved), regarding results and outputs. The End of Year Report for 2022 tracks progress over results broken down according to four of OHCHR six global pillars (Accountability, Participation, Development and Mechanisms which are prioritized in the Country Programme). It records "good progress" in 68%, "some progress" in 26% and one output was canceled.<sup>53</sup> The End of Year Report for 2023 is a narrative report without use of this similar log-frame which makes it difficult to assess comparative progress in achievement of results. Instead, this evaluation has examined the Mid Year Report for 2023 for results, which tracks progress over results in five of the six global pillars (Accountability, Participation, Non-discrimination, Development and Mechanisms, and observed "Good progress" for 91 percent of cases and "Some progress" in 9 percent, with one output canceled and one activity canceled and six activities not implemented.<sup>54</sup> Overall, progress in implementing the OHCHR Country Programme is assessed to be generally on track under each of the pillars, despite the challenges related to changing political will and delays surrounding some activities with RGC counterparts.

**2020 evaluation recommendation: Continue to strengthen Results-Based Management (RBM) approaches, capacities and application within Country Office work plans and daily work, with support from OHCHR HQ. Include the concepts and formulation of theories of change; needs assessment; identification and assessment of risks and assumptions; and programme/activity monitoring, evaluation and learning. Prioritize attention to strengthening the impact of training activities in this context.**

**Strengthen strategic prioritization of human rights monitoring to (i) enhance depth and consistency over time in key areas; (ii) enable a more rigorous tracking of change, challenges, success factors and lessons for wider application; and (iii) strengthen the ability of the Office to reflect local priorities in formulation of results and indicators in work planning.**

The Independent Evaluation of the Implementation of the Results-Based Management at OHCHR (2019) noted that RBM is not yet fully recognised for its contribution to learning and generation of knowledge. The evaluation function is still very modest. And although OHCHR is a data driven organisation, only very recently have initiatives been taken to strengthen information management and knowledge management, including ways to improve the exchange of knowledge and experience across the organisation and incorporate these in the programming cycle.<sup>55</sup>

The Cambodia Country Office staff RBM capacity was increased through obtaining the RBM certificate from HQ's module, in advance of provision of RBM virtual training by PPMES. Other training has taken place on monitoring and use of the database by METS. Notwithstanding, there remains opportunity for improvement, including with regard to end of year reporting and use of RBM to allow for year-to-year comparisons and tracking of progress over time using streamlined indicators. This would allow for a more rigorous tracking of change, challenges, success factors and lessons for wider application.

<sup>53</sup> A standing inclusive consultation process for all relevant stakeholders was planned to discuss the impact and opportunities of rapidly growing economy in Preah Sihanouk province. The study related to Sihanoukville was cancelled in view of serious human rights concerns related to trafficking in persons crimes reported. [\[16\]](#)

<sup>54</sup> OHCHR (2023), OHCHR Cambodia Country Office: Mid Year Report 2023

<sup>55</sup> OHCHR (2019), Independent Evaluation of the Implementation of Results-Based Management at the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Final Evaluation Report.

In terms of positive results, evaluation feedback emphasised the increased attention to prevention among the core strategies employed by the Office, as recommended by the 2020 evaluation, in recognition of the intensified challenges to human rights and long-term development objectives which have become evident in Cambodia since 2017, including as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2022, the Country Office finalised an Office Management Plan aligned with the theory of change (see Section 2.5) emphasising this priority. This included pillars on progressive realisation of economic, social and cultural rights, and strengthening rule of law and accountability for human rights violations. The strengthened focus on prevention and associated reporting and analysis aims gave the international community a better understanding of the human rights situation in Cambodia. OHCHR took up its responsibility by strengthening its coordination role among the stakeholders and bringing human rights issues to the table. Strategic partnerships have been strengthened and leveraged to increase effectiveness in shared thematic priorities (See Good Practice 1).<sup>56</sup> Multiple stakeholders spoke of the importance of the work around human rights related to land in Cambodia.

### Good practice 2: Addressing the impacts of business activities on indigenous peoples' human rights related to land

**Background:** The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in its Concluding observations issued in 2023 was concerned by reports regarding the negative impacts that business activities and large development projects, including in the Special Economic Zones, have on the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, in particular on access to land, the right to an adequate standard of living, labour rights and the right to health. The Committee was concerned that, while it is mandatory to carry out environmental impact assessments before realizing investments and implementing development projects, such assessments may not be carried out in an independent manner and in consultation with the relevant affected communities or groups.<sup>57</sup>

**Results:** OHCHR followed up on issues related to secure the equitable access to, use of and control over land by individuals and communities, especially indigenous peoples. State authorities have reportedly resorted to bringing criminal charges against members of communities in a vulnerable situation, or have refrained from issuing land titles as a form of intimidation. OHCHR received information of attempts to evict vulnerable communities, including Indigenous communities, from their lands without meaningful consultation, or transparent and fair agreements on resettlement, or compensation. In some situations, land petitions by representatives of Indigenous communities to the State authorities have been kept pending. In other instances, Indigenous communities have not been issued with collective land titles for lands or portions of their lands that have been allocated as economic concessions to private companies without prior consultation and compensation, thus denying the Indigenous communities affected access to their lands and enjoyment of their rights.<sup>58</sup> OHCHR published a Study on the Human Rights Situation of Communities Living in Resettlement Sites in Cambodia and Draft Resettlement Guidelines, which covered relocation of indigenous peoples.<sup>59</sup> OHCHR supported indigenous people to make submissions to Special Procedures related to alleged human rights violations of land and housing rights (see good practice 4).

The Government continued its efforts to consult Indigenous peoples' experts to review the draft amendments to the law on natural protected areas of 2008 and the law on forestry of 2002. OHCHR supported the United Nations Country Team to submit an analysis of the amendment to the law on natural protected areas promulgated by the Government as part of its efforts to support the ongoing legislative review to ensure compliance with international human rights obligations, including the protection of the rights of indigenous

<sup>56</sup> OHCHR (2024), Interim Narrative Report to the European Union: "Human Rights Based Prevention to Sustain Development".

<sup>57</sup> Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (2023), Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Cambodia, E/C.12/KHM/CO/2.

<sup>58</sup> Human Rights Council (2023), Report of the Secretary General on the Role and achievements of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in assisting the Government and people of Cambodia in the promotion and protection of human rights. A/HRC/55/72.

<sup>59</sup> OHCHR (2022), Study on the Human Rights Situation of Communities Living in Resettlement Sites in Cambodia and Draft Resettlement Guidelines.



peoples and recognition of their land tenure systems, in particular their collective ownership of lands, territories and resources.<sup>60</sup>

**Lessons and success factors:** The Secretary General's report to the Human Rights Council 2023 recommended the adoption of an adequate legal framework that provides effective recognition of and protection for the rights of Indigenous peoples to possess, use, develop and control their lands, territories and resources, and ensure that Indigenous peoples are not dispossessed, displaced or relocated from their ancestral land and territories, including their access to natural resources.<sup>61</sup> The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights recommended to carry out systematically consultations and independent human rights and environmental impact assessments in the context of business activities and development projects, as well as to provide in a transparent and comprehensive manner information concerning Special Economic Zones, including assessments of their impacts on land, local communities, workers' rights and the environment, as well as tax and investment benefits that they receive and the effectiveness of remedies that they provide in the case of rights violations.<sup>62</sup> The Committee's General Comment 24 on Business and Human Rights recommends that States parties respect the principle of free, prior and informed consent of indigenous people in relation to matters that could affect their lands, and ensure that the impacts of business activities on indigenous peoples' access to land are incorporated into human rights impact assessments.<sup>63</sup> Stakeholders emphasised the continued importance of keeping the spotlight on human rights related to land in the context of foreign business activities and large development projects, and reaching the furthest behind first, including indigenous people on their ancestral lands and rural farmers.

Interlocutors also praised the strengthening of mutually reinforcing linkages between human rights, economic development and the SDGs, and their links to national development objectives in the Pentagonal Strategy. Human rights anchor the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs. Many of the recommendations the country has received in connection with treaty body reports, the UPR and the reports and communications of special procedures mandate holders relate directly to the targets of the 2030 Agenda.<sup>64</sup>

### Good practice 3: Strengthening mutually reinforcing linkages between human rights, economic development and the SDGs

**2020 evaluation recommendation:** Commission **strategic research** on a “back to first principles” basis of the human rights key trends and dynamics in Cambodia to underpin the development and updates of the theory of change. Such research should incorporate a political economy analytical approach and feed into both OHCHR's own internal strategic planning processes and the formulation of the next Common Country Assessment (CCA) of the UNCT. Such research should be further updated as a key reference for OHCHR and UNCT planning and prioritization on a regular basis.

**2020 evaluation recommendation:** Prioritize the strengthening of mutually reinforcing linkages between **human rights, economic development and the SDGs** in the Cambodian context, including both through active engagement with the UNCT and as a core component of OHCHR's strategy for engagement with the RGC.

**Background:** Cambodia ratified the Covenant on Economic, Cultural and Social Rights in 1992 and as such undertook to take steps, especially economic and technical, to the maximum of its available resources, with a view to achieving progressively the full realisation of ESCR rights. In 2023, the Committee on Economic, Cultural and Social Rights recommended that Cambodia ensure the progressive realisation of economic, social and cultural rights by substantially increasing the level of public social expenditure, especially in the areas of social security, health care and education, with a view to reducing inequalities in the enjoyment of these rights. It also recommended that Cambodia elaborate and implement its national budget in a transparent and participatory

<sup>60</sup> Human Rights Council (2023), Report of the Secretary General on the Role and achievements of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in assisting the Government and people of Cambodia in the promotion and protection of human rights. A/HRC/55/72.

<sup>61</sup> Human Rights Council (2023), Report of the Secretary General on the Role and achievements of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in assisting the Government and people of Cambodia in the promotion and protection of human rights. A/HRC/55/72.

<sup>62</sup> Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (2023), Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Cambodia, E/C.12/KHM/CO/2.

<sup>63</sup> Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (2017), General Comment No. 24 on State obligations under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in the context of business activities.

<sup>64</sup> Clarke, D. & Ferreira, A. (2020), Evaluation of the Cambodia Country Programme 2017-2020.

manner.<sup>65</sup> The UNSDCF for Cambodia 2024-2028 identifies the main development priorities that aim to address the social needs of the population and support economic transformation and formalisation towards LDC graduation, noting that further work is required to lay the foundations for a human rights based economy.<sup>66</sup> A human rights economy seeks to redress root causes and structural barriers to equality, justice, and sustainability by prioritising investment in economic, social and cultural rights.<sup>67</sup>

**Results:** In this context, OHCHR Cambodia has focused on proactively and explicitly leveraging the human rights dimensions of the SDGs, including attention to the economic development/human rights intersections and their links to national development objectives in the Pentagonal Strategy, and the pledge submitted by Cambodia to the Human Rights 75 Secretariat to develop the social protection system based on the spirit of “leaving no Cambodian citizen behind”.<sup>68</sup> An important step has been the recruitment in 2021 of an economist to support the stronger integration of human rights and economic development imperatives, funded by HQ surge capacity in the initial phase. Results have included supporting strategic research and analytical work in terms of a) the impact of indebtedness; b) the impact of detention on economic and social rights of women; c) the right to social security for informal workers,<sup>69</sup> and d) realising human rights through budget analysis and allocation of resources for social spending. This has expanded OHCHR engagement with RGC counterparts in new areas (e.g. Ministry of Finance), and has strengthened mutually reinforcing linkages between obligations under international human rights law, budget policies, economic development and the SDGs in the Cambodian context.

**Lessons and success factors:** Stakeholder feedback noted the following: (i) the COVID-19 crisis has further exposed the fragile nature of the sustainability of the current economic growth model, highlighting deep economic and social inequalities and inadequate health and social protection systems; (ii) the work of the economist has given the CO much better focus in laying the foundations for a human rights based economy; (iii) this work is important for strengthening UNCT engagement with human rights across all aspects of its work under the UNSDCF, including the integration of human rights, economic development and the SDGs in practical ways, especially in working closely with the RGC at all levels; (iv) the prominence given to this work by the High Commissioner for Human Rights;<sup>70</sup> (v) whilst OHCHR recognizes and respects the lead mandates and roles of other agencies within the UN system in areas including sustainable economic development, OHCHR has a vital role in this context to effectively exercise its human rights mandate and expertise in support of other UNCT members to ensure human rights are explicitly at the core of all work under the UNSDCF, in line with UN Development System commitments to HRBA; (vi) the value of the Country Office shifting to a focus on structural issues, including poverty, inequality and discrimination, and access to rights within these; (vii) RGC’s openness to engagement in human rights in the economic sphere; (viii) the importance of human rights budgeting for accountability regarding impact of budgetary allocations on LNOB groups; and (ix) the leadership priority accorded to this innovative and pioneering work, the fact that this is the only CO in the world with an embedded economist, and the HQ and SEARO requests for CO backstopping support to this work in the wider Asia region.

Stakeholder feedback also underlined the importance of maintaining the Office’s protection function, with one interlocutor stating that “protection remains one of the biggest issues; the deterrence of [the Office] being there is crucial”. The protection aspects of the OHCHR Cambodia Country Programme have been prioritized in the new Theory of Change, in line with the 2020 evaluation recommendation to do so. Interviewees noted OHCHR’s comparative advantage in its protection role for human rights CSOs, and provided positive examples of providing protection for human rights defenders (including women and environmental human rights defenders) and journalists. Other positive results in this regard included OHCHR’s assistance in retaining the degree of space possible for CSO and HRD activity possible through protection measures. These included putting a spotlight on violations of economic, social and cultural rights, as well as civil and political rights; and at times providing a physical presence to deter violations after a Do No Harm assessment.

<sup>65</sup> Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (2023), Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Cambodia, E/C.12/KHM/CO/2.

<sup>66</sup> UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for Cambodia 2024-2028.

<sup>67</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2023/02/turk-calls-human-rights-economy>

<sup>68</sup> [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/udhr/publishingimages/75udhr/Cambodia\\_EN.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/udhr/publishingimages/75udhr/Cambodia_EN.pdf)

<sup>69</sup> Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (2023), Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Cambodia, E/C.12/KHM/CO/2.

<sup>70</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2023/02/turk-calls-human-rights-economy>

#### Good practice 4: Leveraging the thematic mandates of the United Nations Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council to move the human rights protection agenda forward in Cambodia

**Background and actions taken:** The Country Office supported the engagement of human rights defenders (HRDs) and CSOs with international human rights mechanisms, including the thematic mandates of the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council (SP). The SPs are independent human rights experts with mandates to report and advise on human rights from a thematic or country-specific perspective. With the support of OHCHR, special procedures: (i) undertake [country visits](#); (ii) act on individual cases of reported violations and concerns of a broader nature by sending [communications](#) to States and others; (iii) contribute to the development of international human rights standards, and (iv) engage in advocacy, raise public awareness, and provide advice for technical cooperation.

During the evaluation period, HRDs and CSOs sent submissions to SPs related to alleged human rights violations. The focus of these submissions was on economic, social and cultural rights (e.g. trafficking, indigenous people, human rights related to land and housing rights, ethnic minorities), civil and political rights (e.g. arbitrary arrest and detention, torture), or laws that are not in line with international human rights standards (e.g. Draft Law on the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Law on Preventive Measures Against COVID-19).<sup>71</sup> In addition, OHCHR developed the capacity of CSOs by delivering a training workshop on drafting communications. The CO provided technical and logistical support to the mission of the Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (IE SOGI) in 2023 to the Kingdom of Cambodia. It supported the translation and launch of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights in Khmer, where the Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty provided a keynote address.<sup>72</sup>

**Results to date:** As a result, [several communications](#) were submitted by SPs to the RGC. These included SPs issuing joint allegation letters or joint urgent appeals, as well as comments on pending or recently adopted legislation, regulations or policies. The IE SOGI issued an [end of mission statement, a press release](#) and a [report of the country visit](#), recommending RGC to implement the key accepted UPR recommendations: (a) legally recognise families of LGBT persons through recognition of the legal status of same-sex marriage, (b) enact laws and policies guaranteeing non-discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics; and (c) enact legislation allowing legal gender recognition for trans persons. The above activities directly contributed to achievement of the strategic priorities of OHCHR - strengthening international human rights mechanisms, and protection of civic space. Beyond the protection element, and regardless of whether such advocacy leads to a remedy, an important impact of this work is human rights documentation and memorialization, recording human rights history for posterity - both with the Special Procedures and the Royal Government of Cambodia.

**Lessons and success factors:** Key factors cited in evaluation feedback as being instrumental in OHCHR's role were its human rights expertise; its role as a buffer between human rights CSOs and the government; its role in facilitating local CSO awareness of and access to Special Procedures, which has opened opportunities for CSOs to have their cases heard internationally, and provides a long-term and user-friendly option for pursuing human rights concerns; its ability to work closely with CSOs in Khmer language; and the ability to draw on relevant experience of other countries. An important lesson is that engagement with the Special Procedures can be quick and efficient, as one may send an online form to Geneva and will get a timely response, creating leverage with the government without the need to exhaust domestic remedies (in contrast to the procedures required with individual complaints to the Treaty Bodies). In a sub-region where human rights are sensitive issues, and local entities may have political allegiances, the thematic Special Procedures create another avenue for accountability in cases of human rights protection for human rights defenders.

## 2.4 Efficiency

*Efficiency – the extent to which the programme has economically converted resources into results in the course of its term and how the recommendations of the previous country programme evaluation have helped with this efficiency*

**Overview:** This evaluation has made an overall assessment regarding efficiency of **satisfactory**. There is an improved match between the Office overall skill base and strategic requirements of the

<sup>71</sup> <https://cambodia.ohchr.org/en/un-human-rights-mechanisms/other-special-procedures>

<sup>72</sup> OHCHR (2023), The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights – Cambodia Country Office Report of Activities 2023.

Cambodian human rights context, with increased efficiency in use of human and financial resources pursuant to the reduction in size of the Office from 54 to 23 staff, and the closure of the Battambang office. This evaluation makes the observation that it is challenging to meet the demands of stakeholders with more limited capacity, in particular in respect of the XB-funded fundraising, communications and human rights economist positions. Structural changes have improved Office cohesion and performance in core areas such as monitoring, analysis, reporting, communications and public outreach. However, there is room for further improvement on the efficient and effective functioning and use of the Human Rights Violations Database, including in terms of gender equality.<sup>73</sup>

*EQ. How efficiently has the programme been in using the human, financial and intellectual resources at its disposal to achieve its targeted outcomes? To what degree do the results achieved justify the resources invested in them?*

Human resources were used efficiently to achieve the Country Programme outcomes. It strengthened the availability of relevant expertise to meet programme delivery demands through the use of staff funded by voluntary contributions (XB), investment in staff at P4 level, and the use of United Nations Volunteers (UNVs), and consultants. Moreover, the Country Programme availed itself of a variety of intellectual resources at its disposal, including those at country, regional and headquarters level. Technical support emanating from headquarters level has entailed thematic support, for example from the National Institutions and Regional Mechanisms Section, the Sustainable Development Section and the ESCR team, and the Women’s Human Rights and Gender Section. Additionally, the Country Programme has leveraged the intellectual resources of international human rights mechanisms, including the Treaty Bodies, the special procedures of the Human Rights Council (both thematic and country mandates), and the Universal Periodic Review. At regional level, the Country Programme has benefited from the intellectual resources of OHCHR SEARO, the Asia Pacific Forum of NHRIs and NHRIs in ASEAN countries (see Lesson Learned 3). At country level, the Country Programme has drawn upon the intellectual resources of the UN Country Team, including through the UN Joint Programme on “Accelerating Disability Rights in Cambodia” (see Section 2.7), and through strategic cooperation in complementary mandate areas with ILO and UNESCO (see good practice 1). Stakeholder feedback was that communication and coordination between OHCHR Headquarters, SEARO and the Country Office was efficient.

**2020 evaluation recommendations: (I) Regularise the appointment and tenure of the OHCHR Country Representative position in order to strengthen the continuity and stability of Office leadership. (II) Review and (if necessary) rebalance the relationship and distribution of staff resources between the OHCHR South-East Asia Regional Office in Bangkok and the Cambodia Country Office, with a view to (i) maximizing the value-added of the regional role vis-à-vis the impact of OHCHR’s Cambodia programme and (ii) reducing the current load for staff costs in the Cambodia Office budget (85%) over the next 3 years.**

The Country Programme has benefited from strengthened continuity and stability of Office leadership, thanks to the regularisation of the appointment and tenure of the OHCHR Representative position. Moreover, a significant restructuring has taken place to address the skills gaps and priorities identified in the 2020 evaluation. The Country Office reduced in size from 54 to 23 staff, reducing the staff costs of the Cambodia Office budget. Stakeholder feedback was that the overall in-house skill base is now more appropriate for the strategic directions being prioritised for the new Theory of Change, including with respect to the balance between the national professional posts under thematic programme units and general service positions.

However, evaluation feedback was that it is challenging to meet the demands of stakeholders with more limited capacity. In particular, the Public Information Officer (PIO) and Planning/Fundraising Officer (DEXREL) posts were downgraded from P3 to IUNV. The latter post was filled in late April 2024 and the PIO is filled by a highly capable and ambitious officer who has achieved good communications results for the Office (see for example

<sup>73</sup> Stakeholders have noted that this would need METS intervention and not field based. This needs a programme amendment to the built in system.

gender accreditation case study), but it is reportedly difficult to find someone with the necessary experience willing to do an IUNV contract. The DEXREL post was vacant until recently and the Office had been doing its own fundraising but this was reliant on the continued input of the Representative and the Deputy Representative, the latter of whom is on extended leave. The regional support to this function is limited due to its simultaneous coverage of multiple countries in the region, and this reportedly cannot be relied upon as a long-term solution for Cambodia in the absence of further capacity in such regional support. Multiple stakeholders recommended having dedicated staff allocated to this role – either at country or regional level, focusing on external relations, partnerships, fundraising, ensuring a multi donor base beyond RB, and regular donor and international community information sharing. Feedback was that the resource mobilisation is more efficient at regional level, given the presence of donors in Bangkok in a position to make funding decisions, as opposed to those same donors at country level. Stakeholders also recommended regularisation of the human rights economist consultancy position (including via Resolution), noting that this is XB funded (by Sida), which is unsustainable beyond 2024. This could provide leverage for building new relationships, promoting the human rights agenda in the economic sphere, expanding the ESCR dimension substantively in an area that enjoys RGC support – given its prioritisation to the economic dimensions of the SDGs – and could be supported by the Resident Coordinator. Please consider good practice case studies regarding strategic prioritisation of ESCR work and of human rights economy in particular for justification of continued funding for this post.

Evaluation feedback on the regional role vis-à-vis the impact of OHCHR's Cambodia programme was that cooperation was appropriate and of good quality. Thematic support was provided in climate change and the right to a healthy environment, individual protection cases, early warning and prevention, migration (see Lesson Learned 2), and the establishment of the NHRI (see Lesson Learned 3). One interlocutor characterised the relationship as “strategic use of limited resources”.

In terms of efficient use of financial resources, the Country Office reduced in size by 57%, operating on a much leaner staff budget in line with the 2020 evaluation recommendation to do so over the next three years. In addition, the Country Office closed the Battambang sub-regional office after unsuccessful fundraising attempts made its retention unsustainable. The Gender Accreditation Assessment noted that the gender budget had risen from 5.5% of the total budget in 2020 to 12% in 2024, congratulating the Country Office on exceeding the recommended benchmark for gender related activities. The Country Office is preparing for the anticipated decline in Sida/XB funding, which will come to an end in late 2024, following the decision of the Government of Sweden to withdraw its in-country support for Cambodia. The EU has already committed to a continuation of XB funding to the OHCHR Cambodia Country Programme. Please see Sustainability section for further discussion of financial sustainability.

**2020 evaluation recommendation: Retain the Battambang Office for the period of the next country programme period in order to facilitate OHCHR's ongoing engagement with government, judicial, CSO and other relevant actors in the five provinces currently being served.**

In mid-2021, FOTCD decided to close the Battambang sub-regional office. FOTCD and DEXREL sought financial support from various donors to retain the regional presence. Despite these efforts, the Country Office received no immediate indication of additional financial support that could help retain the office in Battambang with an upgrade of the head-of-office post.

**2020 evaluation recommendation: Strengthen the consistency and utility of data collection, management and presentation in the Office by continuing to prioritize the embedding of the new Human Rights Violations Database into everyday processes, procedures, requirements and culture.**

The Country Office has improved its data collection, analysis and reporting by using evidence and integrating early warning and prevention analysis into its work. It has strengthened the efficient and effective functioning and use of the Human Rights Violations Database by creating templates and guides to streamline its work processes. For example, it developed a draft guide on the Opening and Management of HRDB cases and updated the

Guidelines for Advocacy on Protection Cases. It also developed templates for interviews, human rights fact-finding missions, protest and trial monitoring. There was also an effort to set up an HRBA-based dashboard to show a human rights picture across all relevant dimensions, beyond the case-by-case approach at the HRVC channels efforts in. In 2022 and 2023, it held training sessions on monitoring, including investigation techniques, corroboration, do no harm, and documentation.

However, the need for continued attention to the efficient and effective functioning and use of the Human Rights Violations Database within the Country Office is highlighted. For instance, the Gender Accreditation Assessment emphasized the Country Office's underutilization of the Human Rights Violations Database, which leads to challenges in gender integration into its human rights monitoring. It noted that strengthening gender capacities will be instrumental to move from a traditional approach on gender work focused on sexual and gender-based violence, and gender balance in activities, to a more comprehensive approach addressing various violations of women's rights and integrating gender across all human rights issues.<sup>74</sup>

*EQ. What is the status of the implementation of the recommendations of the Country Programme Evaluation conducted in 2018?*

The status of the implementation of the 2020 evaluation recommendations is presented in boxes in appropriate sections throughout this evaluation report. An outstanding recommendation and its implementation status are included here.

**2020 evaluation recommendation: Formulate an **Organizational Development Plan** (complementary to the Office's Organizational Effectiveness Outputs) which takes account of all recommendations and sets out measures, milestones and timeframes to ensure that the Country Office (Phnom Penh and Battambang) is fit for purpose in the context of the new theory of change and United Nations cooperation framework, supported by an office configuration, job roles, systems and skill- base which are well aligned to agency priorities.**

The Country Office developed an Organisational Development Plan which incorporates all of the recommendations of the 2020 evaluation, its management response, and sets out measures, milestones and timeframes to ensure that the Country Office is fit for purpose in the context of its new theory of change and UNSDCF. It has an updated Organigram which displays the updated office configuration and job roles in the prevention, protection, and support units.

## 2.5 Impact Orientation

*Impact orientation – the extent to which the strategic orientation of the programme points toward making a significant contribution to broader, long-term, sustainable changes on human rights issues*

**Overview:** The evaluation assesses impact orientation as **satisfactory**. Assessing the impact of the work of OHCHR can be challenging, given its essentially long-term normative nature. In this context, considering the making of “significant contribution to broader, long-term and sustainable enjoyment of rights” in Cambodia is a complex task, with many factors to be taken into account both politically and legally. However, while achieving impact remains very much work in progress in the current country context, the evaluation finds that work undertaken under the Country Programme to date has both demonstrated impact in some key areas, such as incorporation of a majority of human rights standards (Paris Principles) into the law on establishment of an independent NHRI, and laid important foundations for longer-term impact, such as mainstreaming gender into the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2024-28 (UNSDCF). In the period evaluated, OHCHR

<sup>74</sup> OHCHR (2024), OHCHR Cambodia Gender Assessment: Re-Accreditation January 2024, UN Human Rights Gender Accreditation Programme.

Cambodia successfully reassessed its strategic directions for engagement from a first principles perspective in the changed conditions as a basis for a revised theory of change and associated strategies for longer term more systemic change. However, questions remain about the impact of OHCHR's capacity building efforts, with the evaluation survey of trainees yielding a very small sample.

*EQ. To what extent is the programme making a significant contribution to broader and longer-term enjoyment of rights? How likely is it that it will eventually make this contribution, including in terms of reducing gender inequalities?*

Technical cooperation programmes and projects in human rights, such as those directed at supporting the work of executives, judiciaries, parliaments and national human rights institutions and enhancing their ability to implement and follow up recommendations from human rights mechanisms, are by their nature complex and long-term endeavours. They also require complementary actions, such as supporting rights holders to develop and improve their capacity to exercise rights, formulate claims, hold duty bearers accountable and seek redress.<sup>75</sup>

OHCHR Cambodia successfully reconsidered its strategic pathways for engagement based on the new country conditions as a basis for a revised theory of change and ways to make more impactful longer term and systemic change. It has prioritised increased attention to prevention and protection among the core strategies employed by the Office in recognition of the intensified challenges to human rights and long-term development objectives.

**2020 evaluation recommendation: Prioritize the development of a new national theory of change for the programme period from 2022 as a basis for strategic decision-making on priority areas for engagement and the development of the next five-country programme. This should inter alia (i) provide a clear bridge between the global OHCHR Theory of Change and the key strategic human rights challenges in the national context, including as a result of the COVID-19 crisis; (ii) be formulated in sync with the development of the new United Nations cooperation framework for Cambodia from 2024 in order to maximize integration and synergies; (iii) build on strategies which have shown the greatest potential for systemic change; (iv) incorporate the OHCHR 'frontier issues' as components of larger strategies; and (v) draw on consultations with external stakeholders (RGC, CSOs, UNCT, donors)**

**2020 evaluation recommendation: Prioritize increased attention to prevention among the core strategies employed by the Office in recognition of the intensified challenges to human rights and long-term development objectives which have become evident in Cambodia since 2017, including as a result of the COVID-19 crisis.**

### OHCHR Cambodia - Theory of change

OHCHR Cambodia developed a new Theory of Change in 2022 in response to the 2020 evaluation which recommended its development. Stakeholders have requested feedback as to the validity of the Theory of Change. The Theory of Change has limited usefulness for the purposes of this evaluation in that it could be stronger at the whole-of-office level to better balance and contextualise the more detailed section/unit level sections. The 2020 evaluation recommended developing a new national theory of change as a basis for strategic decision-making on priority areas for engagement providing a clear bridge between the global OHCHR Theory of Change and the key strategic human rights challenges in the national context, among other guidance.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>75</sup> OHCHR (2023), Improving technical cooperation and capacity-building in the field of human rights Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, A/HRC/53/63, 2023

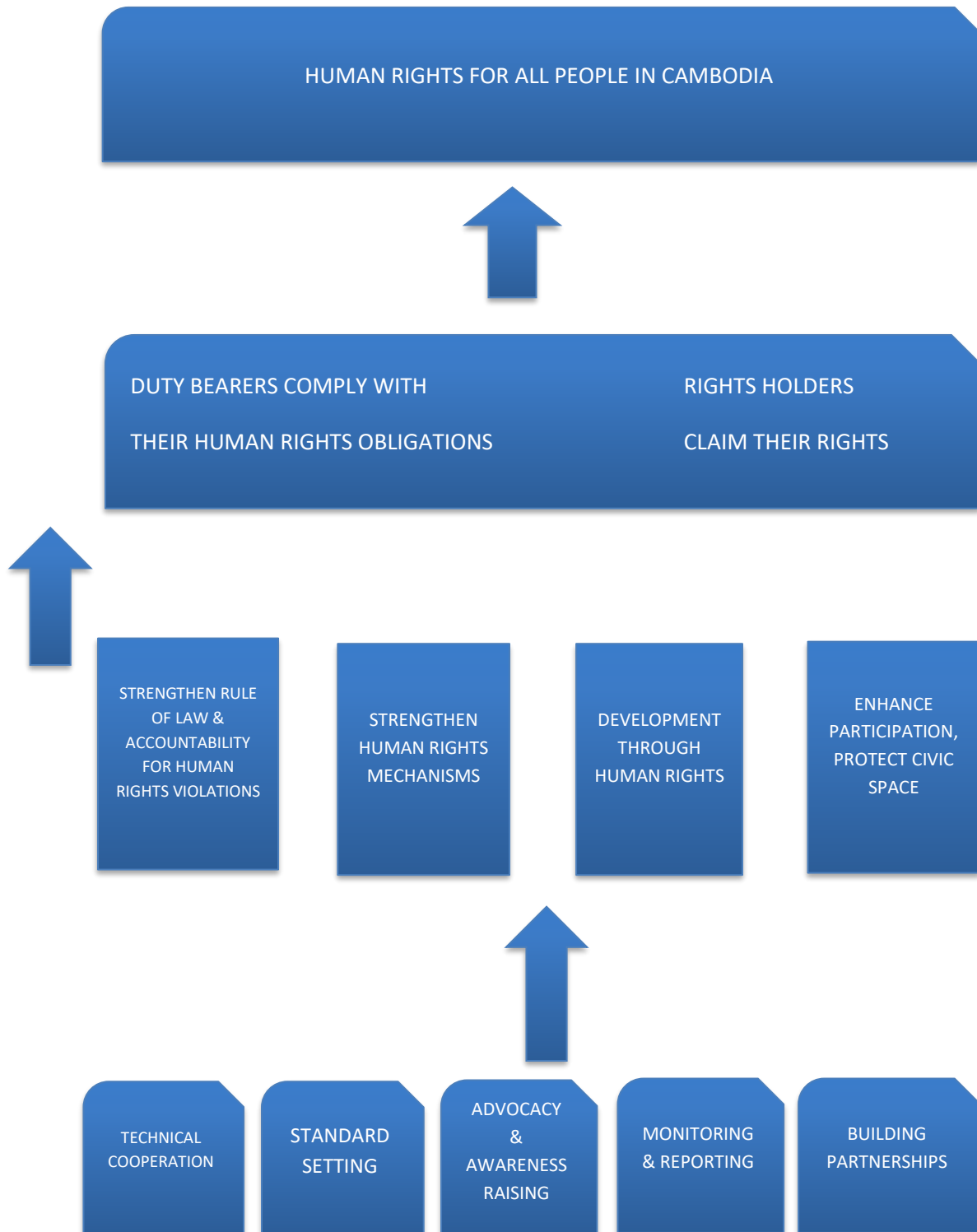
<sup>76</sup> Prioritize the development of a new national theory of change for the programme period from 2022 as a basis for strategic decision-making on priority areas for engagement and the development of the next five-country programme. This should inter alia (i) provide a clear bridge between the global OHCHR Theory of Change and the key strategic human rights challenges in the national context, including as a result of the COVID-19 crisis; (ii) be formulated in sync with the development of the new United Nations cooperation framework for Cambodia from 2024 in order to maximize integration and synergies; (iii) build on strategies which have shown the greatest potential for systemic change; (iv) incorporate the OHCHR 'frontier issues' as components of larger strategies; and (v) draw on consultations with external stakeholders (RGC, CSOs, UNCT, donors).

Stakeholder feedback was that the plan had been to undergo a comprehensive participatory internal staff process, combined with opportunities for meaningful input from key stakeholders. However, the higher-level whole-of-office aspects (reflecting the global TOC) have been left wanting, with the CO TOC focusing on delivery elements.

The evaluator has developed the following Theory of Change for consideration by OHCHR Cambodia for further development. This Theory of Change is guided by the global OHCHR Theory of Change and incorporates the OHCHR Cambodia Country Office Management Plan 2024-2028 pillars and activities (see chart below). However, this should be contextualised to the national Cambodian context (including the changed political context under the new government), and – in line with the recommendation of the previous evaluation - draw on consultations with external stakeholders (RGC, CSOs, UNCT, donors), be formulated in sync with the UNSDCF for Cambodia 2024-2028, build on strategies which have shown the greatest potential for systemic change, and incorporate the OHCHR ‘frontier issues’ as components of larger strategies. Moreover, such Theory of Change would need to be owned by OHCHR Cambodia, as well as by OHCHR SEARO. It would need to be subject to a progressive process of a greater regularization of the Cambodia programme as part of the wider regional programme, instead of continuing to stand alone as much as it does (even despite the recommendation of the previous evaluation in this regard).



*Proposed Theory of Change for further development by OHCHR Cambodia*



## What is the progress?

The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights welcomed the progress made by Cambodia in the promotion and protection of economic, social and cultural rights, particularly by (i) expanding its social security system, through the adoption of the Law on Social Security Schemes and the National Social Protection Policy Framework 2016–2025, (ii) reducing the poverty rates, (iii) reducing the levels of malnutrition, hunger and food insecurity, (iv) elaborating a draft law to establish a national human rights institution (pending review in the Council of Ministers since September 2023) (v) expanding access to health-care services; and (vi) improved access to preschool and primary education.<sup>77</sup>

## What are the problems?

Although the incidence of multidimensional poverty continues to decline, uneven alleviation of poverty coupled with limited economic opportunities, particularly for marginalised and ethnic groups and along geographic and gendered lines, are still apparent. These continue to prevent segments of the population from overcoming barriers associated with inter-generational poverty. While Cambodia has ratified 13 international instruments, gaps between accepted principles and their implementation mean that the country is unable to effectively protect and promote human rights. Further work is required to lay the foundations for a human rights-based economy. Notably, women and girls continue to face inequalities and discrimination, harmful gender norms, stereotypes, violence, and limited access to justice.<sup>78</sup>

### Strategic priorities with activity level

1. Strengthen human rights mechanisms
  - a. UPR, treaty bodies, special procedures
  - b. Proposed NHRI
  - c. CHRC
  - d. NCAT
2. Enhance participation and protecting civic space
  - a. Protecting civic space (journalists, HRDs)
  - b. Convening multi-stakeholder dialogue and advocating for inclusive engagement
  - c. Capacity building for civil society
3. Development through human rights
  - a. Human rights mainstreaming
  - b. Mainstreaming ESCR: laws and policies, national actors, UNCT
  - c. Building new partnerships for SDGs
  - d. Strategic research
  - e. Monitoring human rights violations for marginalised groups – women, persons with disabilities, indigenous persons, LGBT
    - a. Advocacy, communications
4. Strengthen the rule of law and accountability for human rights violations
  - a. Law and policy reform in line with international human rights law

<sup>77</sup> Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (2023), Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Cambodia, E/C.12/KHM/CO/2.

<sup>78</sup> UNSDCF Cambodia 2024-2028

- b. Monitoring and reporting human rights violations
- c. Technical assistance - Criminal justice system, NCAT, legal aid, DV
- d. CRPD implementation
- e. Awareness raising.

Another impact highlighted by stakeholders is the support provided to rights-holders to exercise their rights to enhanced participation and protection of civic space. In October 2021, the Human Rights Council expressed serious concerns about the deteriorating situation of civil and political rights in Cambodia and reiterated calls for the Government to expand political and civic space, in particular in the lead-up to the elections.<sup>79</sup> Evaluation stakeholders emphasized OHCHR's role in facilitating and maintaining constructive dialogue between RGC and rights-holders, empowering rights holders to input into policy and legislative development despite shrinking civic space, and to formulate claims, hold duty bearers accountable and seek redress. Interviewees noted the challenge of quantifying the success of a human rights programme in a deteriorating environment, whilst at the same time acknowledging that engaging in constructive conversations, including through increased engagement with international human rights mechanisms, and improved human rights monitoring and documentation, puts duty bearers on notice that their actions are under scrutiny. This provides a level of protection to civil society actors, including human rights defenders and NGOs, although this has been more challenging with political opponents.<sup>80</sup> It emphasizes the deterrent function that the Office's presence fulfills, with a number of interlocutors highlighting that it is essential to maintain OHCHR's presence in the country. In qualitative terms, there has been a positive impact on ameliorating conditions, reducing pressure on civil society, slowing the narrowing of civic space, leaving doors open for this to change in future by focusing on establishing trust with the new government through legitimizing their governance, and improving the acceptability and quality of legislative reforms. OHCHR has kept human rights integration on the agenda, which has led to some level of policy change and ensuring that human rights standards inform legislative framework amendments.

However, questions remain as to how effectively the Country Programme has built the necessary capacity of stakeholders at the local level. It was difficult to obtain robust evidence of sustained country level impact in terms of training due to data constraints and absence of regular evaluation.<sup>81</sup> It is also noted that tools and approaches exist to strengthen OHCHR's ability to assess the impact of its engagement in Cambodia. For example, the former civic space officer at OHCHR SEARO took the initiative to put in place her own bespoke follow up survey arrangement, developing a simple 6 month and 12 month impact feedback form for the women journalist training programme. This tool could be deployed in the next phase of EU-funded cooperation and provide valuable lessons and insights for future planning and implementation in Cambodia and elsewhere.

Key informant and focus group feedback was that capacity building efforts are contributing to positive personal and organisational change that will support the continuation of benefits (e.g. the awareness of and engagement with UN human rights mechanisms, including UPR, treaty bodies and special procedures among CSOs and HRDs). For example, OHCHR supported civil society representatives to attend the UPR Pre-session in Geneva in February 2024, providing CSOs an international platform through which to inform the permanent missions of recommending States about the human rights situation in Cambodia before the UPR session in late April 2024. CSO feedback in reflection reports is appreciative of increased visibility of disability rights, the inclusion of first hand information on the situation of women's rights and gender based violence, and a strategic entry point for lobbying RGC on LGBT issues. Another example is the National Committee Against Torture (NCAT), which is the national preventive mechanism under the Optional Protocol against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. In March 2022, OHCHR co-organized a workshop

<sup>79</sup> Human Rights Council resolution 48/23, para. 25.<sup>SEP</sup> Human Rights Council (2022), Report of the Secretary General on the Role and achievements of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in assisting the Government and people of Cambodia in the promotion and protection of human rights. A/HRC/51/63.

<sup>80</sup> Human Rights Council (2022), Report of the Secretary General on the Role and achievements of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in assisting the Government and people of Cambodia in the promotion and protection of human rights. A/HRC/51/63.

<sup>81</sup> The Country Office provided an internal training report for capacity building of justice actors and the UPR results monitoring for CSOs.

on the investigation of torture in cooperation with the National Committee and the Cambodian Human Rights Committee.<sup>82</sup> Feedback from the NCAT was that staff are now better equipped to do its investigation and inspection work, and have opened up their thinking around use of the human rights mechanisms. Other stakeholder feedback was that the NCAT capacity building took place in a country which has suffered from decades of abuse and has come a long way, with a low baseline regarding rule of law. Building a culture around human rights and rule of law takes time, nation-building programmes are slow, and will not happen overnight.

### Results of training survey

19 out of a potential 604 civil society trainees took part in an online survey (survey sent to 30 NGOs).<sup>83</sup> Out of the 17 civil society capacity building workshops conducted during 2022-2023, 74% of survey respondents attended workshops on international human rights mechanisms, with 89% stating that it was their first training with OHCHR. 30% of those who had a prior training said it was on the same topic. 63% said they were the sole representative from their agency

On the question of whether respondents had been asked about their training **needs**, 89% responded positively. Respondents liked the topics selected (26%) and the practical exercises (26%). **Impact** at the personal level was noted with 58% stated that the training has made a difference to their work by providing trainees with new skills or techniques.

Key areas highlighted for **improvement** were the need for more exercises (37%), further planning for follow up actions (26%), and more space and time to share experiences with others (26%).

As to whether accountability and oversight systems have been established to measure the long-term effects of the programme, one example is the support to the Ministry of Justice in relation to the criminal case database, a web-based application that provides tools for storing and tracking data related to criminal cases. The database aims to increase transparency and efficiency in court, avoid excessive pretrial detention and prevent delayed release after the completion of sentences. Overcrowding in prisons will also be addressed through systematic use of the criminal case database to identify prisoners who are eligible for sentence reduction or parole. The database has been progressively improved and installed in all courts of first instance, with all such courts connected to a central server of the Ministry of Justice and the appeal courts connected to the courts of first instance.<sup>84</sup> Stakeholder feedback was that this has increased the transparency of the criminal justice system and is an example of “good case management practice”.<sup>85</sup>

### Good practice 5: Leveraging OHCHR’s comparative advantage as the custodian of international human rights law to support national legislative reform

**Background:** OHCHR’s comparative advantages include its unique human rights mandate, role and expertise, with international standing as an impartial normative agency; its technical advisory expertise and role on development of national legislation and policies, as well as engagement with international human rights mechanisms; its facilitation and convening role to promote multi-stakeholder dialogue for government and CSOs in the development of legislation; and its role in provision of technical advice regarding international human rights law obligations and law reform.

<sup>82</sup> Human Rights Council (2022), Report of the Secretary General on the Role and achievements of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in assisting the Government and people of Cambodia in the promotion and protection of human rights. A/HRC/51/63.

<sup>83</sup> The survey response rate was very low. Moreover, it was not possible to survey 1156 RGC trainees in 22 training workshops due to logistical issues.

<sup>84</sup> Human Rights Council (2023), Report of the Secretary General on the Role and achievements of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in assisting the Government and people of Cambodia in the promotion and protection of human rights. A/HRC/54/72.

<sup>85</sup> However, the entire project, which started in 2015 might be at stake with the new change of responsibility of portfolios, moving the custodianship from the Ministry of justice to the Ministry of Technology following a cabinet decision to move e-tech issue to the latter ministry.

**Results:** From 2020-2024, OHCHR Cambodia has contributed to various legislative reforms, leaving its mark on both the rights content and the degree of clarity of the laws. These included technical analysis of compatibility of national legislation with Cambodia's international human rights law obligations with respect to the COVID law, the Draft Law on the Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Law on Maintenance of Public Order, the Law on Child Protection, the Law on Religion, Draft Law on the establishment of the National Committee Against Torture, Draft Law on Establishment and Functioning of a National Human Rights Institution, the Draft Law on Natural Protected Areas, Draft Law on Association and Non-Governmental Organisations (LANGO), and Guidance on Protecting the Succession Rights of Persons with Mental Disabilities.

**Lessons and success factors:** Evaluation feedback was that: (i) OHCHR continues to provide good technical advice in line with ratified international human rights treaties which provide the normative framework for legislative reform at the national level; (ii) national stakeholders including RGC expressed their appreciation for OHCHR's technical guidance; (iii) there were some instances where OHCHR advice was accepted and others where it was disregarded; (iv) the RGC has been slow to adopt, revise or repeal laws that would improve human rights;<sup>86</sup> (v) the importance of being judicious with effort versus impact; (vi) the value of revisiting past good practices, such as the development of implementation guides to bridge the gap between normative legislation and rights-holders' actual enjoyment of rights;<sup>87</sup> and (vii) the fragile nature of the rule of law in Cambodia.

In terms of making a significant contribution reducing gender inequality, the Gender Accreditation Assessment 2024 highlighted the significant role that OHCHR Cambodia has played in mainstreaming gender into the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2024-28 (UNSDCF). The re-accreditation also verified the impact of the Gender Accreditation programme in the planning process of OHCHR Cambodia compared with previous planning cycles. It highlighted several areas of the Country Programme with significant potential for positive impact, including the collaboration with gender experts from the region in the administration of justice field to offer technical support for the pilot training on gender stereotypes for the judiciary; and work on sexual and gender-based violence and women's human rights defenders.<sup>88</sup>

## 2.6 Sustainability

*Sustainability – the extent to which the net benefits of the programme continue, or are likely to continue*

**Overview:** This evaluation assesses sustainability as **satisfactory** with evidence found of good foundations for sustainability. The Country Office adjusted its structure and programmes to be more financially sustainable and increase capacity to deliver services. Certain foundations for sustainability of human rights progress are in place, including ratified international human rights treaties; strengthened participation in international human rights mechanisms; national legislation adopted (which durably embeds international human rights standards in Cambodia's national legal framework) or in draft form in certain key areas; regulatory frameworks in areas such as criminal justice; and a well-established human rights civil society constituency. The commitment and ability of local stakeholders to continue working on the issues addressed by the programme is variable on the part of some RGC counterparts. The Country Programme has built national ownership by moving forward the longstanding agenda to establish a national human rights institution in Cambodia in accordance with the Paris Principles. Moreover, the first UNSDCF in Cambodia is now in place (2024-2028), with OHCHR having contributed significantly to the integration of the human rights based approach in this document. These actions have laid the foundations for the sustainability of the human rights agenda in Cambodia as a nationally owned issue.

<sup>86</sup> United Nations in Cambodia (2023), Cambodia Common Country Analysis.

<sup>87</sup> OHCHR (2018), Evaluation of OHCHR's Support to Legislation in Conformity with International Standards: When imperfect laws have been passed, field presences have tried to improve their impact by developing implementation guidelines. OHCHR Cambodia, for example, has worked with the government and CSOs on producing guides, which can interpret unclear provisions in a more human rights favourable way and avoid ambiguous formulations to be left to the authorities' interpretation. These materials and the general practice of contributing to the legislative implementation process through implementation guides is a good practice that can bridge the gap between normative legislation and rights-holders' actual enjoyment of rights.

<sup>88</sup> OHCHR (2024), OHCHR Cambodia Gender Assessment: Re-Accreditation January 2024, UN Human Rights Gender Accreditation Programme.

*EQ. Are the results, achievements and benefits of the programme likely to be durable? Are the local stakeholders able and committed to continue working on the issues addressed by the programme? How effectively has the programme built national ownership and necessary capacity?*

The 2020 evaluation of the OHCHR country programme in Cambodia found that while the programme was highly relevant, changes should be made to ensure greater sustainability and impact. In line with the recommendations contained in that evaluation, the Country Office took steps to adjust its structure and programmes to be more financially sustainable and increase capacity to deliver services.<sup>89</sup> See Section 2.5 for revised theory of change, and Section 2.4 for explanation of increased financial efficiency due to significant reduction in staff costs, and the closing of the Battambang office. Feedback regarding financial sustainability centred around the increasingly resource constrained environment of the United Nations Regular Budget, where Member States dues compete with other priorities, and the need to offset this impact on OHCHR by relying heavily on XB funding. However, being dependent on the EU and Sida who have long term vision of democracy and human rights makes OHCHR vulnerable to changes that may happen with successive governments' changing priorities, as has been the case with the planned withdrawal of Sida funding from late 2024. It was emphasised that this would have a major impact on the ESC cluster, including the economist, P-2, NOA, as well as an additional five UNVs and three NOAs. Stakeholders emphasised the importance of having a diversity of donor funding, as well as the High Commissioner's plan to divest more resources to the field, including directors and donor and external relations officers. The DEXREL officer position was moved to the SEARO office some years ago, but as explained in Section 2.4, there is too much work for one officer and stakeholders recommended the addition of one more officer in Bangkok with dedicated support to Cambodia (among other countries), to ensure that the Cambodia Country Office can diversify the donor base, capitalising on the donor presence in Bangkok.<sup>90</sup> The diversification of the programme which has taken place pursuant to the new theory of change has created opportunities for diversifying the donor base to those who target frontier issues such as digital space and emerging technologies (private sector), and people on the move, and spotlight populations such as persons with disabilities, and women. It is a stated priority to broaden OHCHR's donor base among Member States and non-traditional actors, including by refining OHCHR's approach to resource mobilization and reinforcing related skills and capacities.<sup>91</sup>

Certain results, achievements and benefits of the Country Programme are likely to be durable. As noted by the 2020 evaluation of the Country Programme, at one level certain foundations for sustainability of human rights progress since 1993 are in place, albeit with a number of challenges as indicated below. These include ratified international human rights treaties; strengthened participation in international human rights mechanisms; national legislation adopted (which durably embeds international human rights standards in Cambodia's national legal framework) or in draft form in certain key areas; regulatory frameworks in areas such as criminal justice; and a well-established human rights civil society constituency, albeit under considerable stress currently.

In terms of the commitment and ability of local stakeholders to continue working on the issues addressed by the programme, assistance delivered to implement the recommendations of human rights mechanisms and actions to comply with ratified international human rights instruments could also be understood as a State's acceptance and recognition of areas where improvement is needed.<sup>92</sup> The MOU between RGC and OHCHR underlines RGC's acceptance in this regard. Moreover, when different State entities, including legislative authorities, the judiciary and national human rights institutions, request technical cooperation to address their needs, this could be seen as a way of building ownership for the whole-of-society response required to address complex human rights

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<sup>89</sup> Human Rights Council (2021), Report of the Secretary General, Role and achievements of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in assisting the Government and the people of Cambodia in the promotion and protection of human rights. A/HRC/48/49.

<sup>90</sup> It should be noted that the recommendation to have two DEXREL officers in Bangkok was made years ago but never implemented.

<sup>91</sup> OHCHR (2022), [Organisational Effectiveness Action Plans](#).

<sup>92</sup> Human Rights Council (2023), Improving technical cooperation and capacity-building in the field of human rights Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, A/HRC/53/63, 2023

challenges.<sup>93</sup> The Disability Action Council for example requested technical cooperation with law reform on the rights of persons with disabilities, development of the National Disability Strategy, and development of the initial State Party Report to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities during the period evaluated, and is committed to continuing this work in 2024 and beyond.<sup>94</sup> However, another perspective is offered on the commitment of local stakeholders to continue working on the issues addressed by the programme in Section 2.6.

The programme has built national ownership by moving forward the longstanding agenda to establish a national human rights institution in Cambodia in accordance with the Paris Principles. The ultimate aim is to ensure that States are ultimately responsible for the protection and promotion of human rights, including through a national institution that can promote and ensure the harmonisation of national legislation with the international human rights instruments to which a State is party, and their effective implementation. The objective includes building the capacity of a national human rights institution to be able to fulfil the functions that OHCHR currently does, but in a nationally led way, including to contribute to the reports to international human rights mechanisms, where necessary expressing an opinion on the subject, with due respect for their independence, as well as publicising human rights and efforts to combat all forms of discrimination by increasing public awareness.<sup>95</sup> Stakeholders noted the irony of the Office actively working towards irrelevancy, and having redundancy built into its programme, noting that the process does not result in instant gratification. However, they acknowledged the achievement of the Office in technically supporting the law reform process for establishment of the national human rights institution in Cambodia in accordance with the Paris Principles, which is now pending at the Council of Ministers (see Lesson Learned 3). This is in parallel to the awareness-raising that has taken place throughout such process, educating national stakeholders as to the elements of independence required by a national institution to abide by the international standards. This has laid the foundations for the sustainability of the human rights agenda in Cambodia as a nationally owned issue.

### Lesson Learned 3: Towards establishment of a National Human Rights Institution in Cambodia in accordance with the Paris Principles

**Background:** The Cambodia Human Rights Committee (CHRC), with assistance from OHCHR and other stakeholders, has engaged in a process of drafting the law on the establishment of the national human rights institution (NHRI). The process has been delayed since 2001, when a working group consisting of members of the Senate and the National Assembly, among others, organized a workshop on prospects for the establishment of an independent national human rights institution in Cambodia. The Government accepted recommendations made in 2010, 2014 and 2019 in the context of the Universal Periodic Review to set up a national human rights institution.<sup>96</sup> In November 2019, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination also recommended Cambodia to “accelerate the establishment of an independent national human rights institution in accordance with [...] the Paris Principles, in full consultation with civil society organizations and other relevant stakeholders”.<sup>97</sup> In 2019 and 2022, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the United Nations Human Rights Committee made similarly worded recommendations.<sup>98</sup>

**Results:** OHCHR provided support to the governmental CHRC in relation to the draft law on the establishment and functioning of a commission for human rights, in keeping with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles). In October 2021, OHCHR and CHRC jointly organized a virtual workshop including the Malaysian and Philippine NHRIs, the ASEAN

<sup>93</sup> Human Rights Council (2023), Improving technical cooperation and capacity-building in the field of human rights Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, A/HRC/53/63, 2023

<sup>94</sup> Annual Work Plan 2024, Cambodia Country Office Management Plan 2024-2028.

<sup>95</sup> [Principles relating to the Status of National Institutions](#) (The Paris Principles).

<sup>96</sup> Human Rights Council (2021), Report of the Secretary General, Role and achievements of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in assisting the Government and the people of Cambodia in the promotion and protection of human rights. A/HRC/48/49.

<sup>97</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Concluding observations on the combined fourteenth to seventeenth reports of Cambodia, 30 January 2020, CERD/C/KHM/CO/14-17.

<sup>98</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of Cambodia, 12 November 2019, CEDAW/C/KHM/CO/6 and Human Rights Committee, Concluding observations on the third periodic report of Cambodia, 30 March 2022, CCPR/C/KHM/CO/3.

Intergovernmental Commission for Human Rights and the Asia Pacific Forum of NHRIs, to share their experiences in establishing independent NHRIs. From November 2021 to April 2022, the CHRC led a process of six consultations with various thematic groups, including CSOs, trade unions, lawyers and academia, media, and NGOs for persons with disabilities or women and child rights selected through relevant line ministries, and two consultations at the sub-national level.<sup>99</sup> In July 2022, OHCHR held discussions with CHRC on the analysis of and comments on the second version of the draft law and co-organized a conference with CHRC and the Asia Pacific Forum of NHRIs in October 2022 for representatives of NHRIs from Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines to share best practices. The CHRC drafting committee fully integrated the comments provided on the draft law, better reflecting the Paris Principles,<sup>100</sup> although a subsequent draft removed the quota of women members, and immunity did not cover all staff members.<sup>101</sup> The final draft law was submitted to the Council of Ministers for consideration in the second half of 2023.

**Lessons and success factors:** Stakeholder feedback emphasized the following: (i) the hope that this engagement will help to lay a solid foundation for the establishment of an independent and effective NHRI, in line with the Paris Principles, leveraging Cambodia's stated commitment to such establishment; (ii) the importance of engaging national champions, such as the President of CHRC, to drive the agenda forward; (iii) the value of strengthened interaction between the OHCHR Regional Office and Country Office, where SEARO access to lessons and experience in the region were highly relevant; and (iv) the acceptability and quality of broad consultations in line with international human rights norms and standards, ensuring the participation of a variety of civil society actors responsible for human rights.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (formerly named United Nations Development Assistance Framework) is the most important instrument for planning and implementation of the UN development activities at country level. The Cooperation Framework—an agreement between the UN and the host government—determines and reflects the UN development system's contributions in the country and shapes the configuration of UN assets required inside and outside the country. The Cooperation Framework guides the entire UN country team programme cycle, driving planning, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of collective UN support for achieving the 2030 Agenda.<sup>102</sup> The first UNSDCF in Cambodia is now in place (2024-2028), with OHCHR having contributed significantly to the integration of the human rights based approach in this document, which has also laid the foundations for the sustainability of the human rights agenda in Cambodia as a nationally owned issue.

### Good practice 6: Deepening integration of human rights based approaches into the planning and work of the UNCT in Cambodia

**2020 evaluation recommendation:** Drawing on the above, cooperate with the Office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator to develop a strategy and plan for deepened integration of **Human Rights Based Approaches (HRBA) into the planning and work of the UNCT** across the whole spectrum of human rights, with a view to HRBA being integral from the beginning to all discussions on the United Nations / Cambodia cooperation framework which will replace the current UNDAF in 2024.

**Background:** The sustainability of transformations towards peaceful, prosperous, inclusive and resilient societies requires placing human rights at the centre of any initiative. Mainstreaming of human rights technical cooperation into United Nations work and programmes strengthens the actions undertaken by the UN system to support Member States and other stakeholders. The mainstreaming process demands an identification and understanding of the deep interconnections between human rights violations and the problems that afflict society, including poverty, inequality, widespread violence and crises.<sup>103</sup> The reform of the United Nations development system introduced the new generation of common country analyses as the basis for the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. This facilitated the incorporation of human rights

<sup>99</sup> OHCHR (2023), Briefing note on Establishment of NHRI in Cambodia.

<sup>100</sup> Human Rights Council (2023), Report of the Secretary General on the Role and achievements of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in assisting the Government and people of Cambodia in the promotion and protection of human rights. A/HRC/54/72.

<sup>101</sup> OHCHR (2023), Briefing note on Establishment of NHRI in Cambodia.

<sup>102</sup> <https://unsdg.un.org/2030-agenda/cooperation-framework>

<sup>103</sup> OHCHR (2023), Improving technical cooperation and capacity-building in the field of human rights Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, A/HRC/53/63.



into projects and programmes to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, including leaving no one behind, and also promoted better partnerships among OHCHR, the Development Coordination Office and other development partners. By 2022, human rights and leaving no one behind were integrated into 20 per cent and 40 per cent of country-level joint programmes, respectively.<sup>104</sup>

**Results:** In Cambodia, OHCHR contributed to the Common Country Analysis (CCA), which incorporated recommendations from the treaty bodies (e.g. CEDAW, HRC), and was informed by civil society submissions to the UPR, and reports of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia,<sup>105</sup> as well as OHCHR reports. Moreover, the CCA methodology incorporated LNOB as a framework for analysis, and consulted LNOB groups to identify root causes of their marginalisation. OHCHR also contributed to the UNSDCF for the period 2024-2028, which built on the CCA, was guided by the human rights-based approach to development, with a strong focus on participation and inclusion, as well identifying groups left behind in Cambodia (e.g. women, persons with disabilities, migrants, indigenous populations and ethnic minorities), and the root causes of discrimination against these groups to better address these issues. It also included specific measures for enhancing the capacity of civil society and people, in particular women and youth, to participate in decision making (Output 4.2). The Human Rights Group (co-chaired by OHCHR) provides support to the UNRC and UNCT, including in monitoring progress of the UNCT Human Rights Strategy (2021-2028) and its implementation via the UNSDCF.<sup>106</sup>

**Lessons and success factors:** Stakeholders noted the following points: (i) Recommendations of human rights mechanisms have been increasingly taken into account in the common country analysis for Cambodia, which promotes coherence and efficiency, while recognising RGC's needs for assistance as reflected in the recommendations; (ii) OHCHR's expertise in the human rights-based approach and normative mandate represent areas of strength for the UN in Cambodia; (iii) by focusing on the rights and obligations of citizens and duty bearers and linking these to Cambodia's international human rights obligations, OHCHR and the UNCT is supporting the RGC to act on the recommendations of these international human rights mechanisms and engages and mobilises the RGC and other stakeholders to implement these;<sup>107</sup> (iv) the Country Office is more engaged in a regular way with the UNCT (e.g. OHCHR co-chairs the Technical Working Group on Legal and Judicial Reform of the Ministry of Justice, is a member of the UNCT Theme Group on Gender and PSEA and the UN Youth Task Force, as well as co-leading the implementation of outcome 4 on Social Transformation of the UNSDCF 2024-2028. There is a quarterly consultation with ambassadors on human rights in the context of the SDGs.) (v) Further examples of OHCHR's human rights integration into the work of the UNCT is its work with fellow UNCT members on prisons, civic space, monitoring and prevention, migration, disability, freedom of association and freedom of expression.

## 2.7 Gender Equality, Disability Inclusion and Human Rights

*Gender equality and human rights (disability inclusion) integration— the degree to which a gender and human rights perspective has been integrated in the programme, and the degree to which the results obtained have contributed to gender equality and human rights principles of non-discrimination and empowerment, with emphasis on women's rights and disability inclusion*

**Overview:** Gender mainstreaming and gender-specific engagements under the Country Programme are assessed as **very satisfactory**. Disability mainstreaming is assessed as **variable**, and disability targeted engagements are assessed as **satisfactory**. Human rights integration is assessed as **very satisfactory**. The Gender Accreditation Programme has been instrumental in the improvement of gender integration across all areas of work. Visible improvements include workforce planning and actions taken towards gender parity, management publicly championing women's rights and gender equality and increased funding on women's rights and gender, with the budget exceeding the recommended benchmark for gender related activities. The office's communication work is laudable, including strong campaigns that are both inspiring and captivating. The Country Programme's targeted disability interventions through the UN Joint PRPD Programme provided sound technical inputs to the draft disability law, and targeted persons with psycho-social disabilities living in rural areas shackled

<sup>104</sup> OHCHR (2023), Improving technical cooperation and capacity-building in the field of human rights Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, A/HRC/53/63.

<sup>105</sup> United Nations in Cambodia (2023), Cambodia Common Country Analysis.

<sup>106</sup> UNSDCF Cambodia 2024-2028

<sup>107</sup> United Nations in Cambodia (2023), Cambodia Common Country Analysis.

in their homes, which is good practice in addressing intersectional discrimination and reaching the furthest behind first. However, there is room for improvement in disability mainstreaming, which was nearly absent at all stages of the programme cycle outside of the targeted disability activities. The Country Programme adheres to the working principles of the human rights-based approach. On the one hand, it considers stakeholders who are rights holders with legal entitlements and who are in need of acquiring more knowledge and skills in order to claim their rights. On the other hand, the intervention also considers government authorities, who are duty bearers and also require strengthening their knowledge and capacity so that they can protect and promote human rights.

*EQ. Did the programme plan and achieve results that contributed to gender equality and disability inclusion?*

The Country Programme planned and achieved results that contributed to disability inclusion. OHCHR was a participating UN organisation in the Joint UN Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (PRPD) project, “Accelerating Disability Rights in Cambodia” 2022-2024. As part of this, OHCHR provided (i) technical advice regarding the compliance of the proposed disability law with Cambodia’s obligations under CRPD, (ii) training workshops for provincial Disability Action Councils (DACs) on the rights based approach to disability and CRPD; (iii) training for justice sector actors on access to justice and the legal aid guidelines for persons with disabilities; (iv) grants to NGOs TPO and LAC to implement support to persons with psycho-social disabilities to access treatment and awareness raising for their families, and access to legal aid to persons with disabilities in conflict with the law, and (v) support to MOSAVY in drafting the State Party Report to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.<sup>108</sup>

### Good practice 7: Targeted programming to reach geographically and physically isolated persons with psychosocial disabilities

**Background:** Cambodia has a dearth of residential psychiatric care and institutions. Moreover, there is a lack of community support to assist families of persons with severe psycho-social impairments. Persons with real or perceived psychosocial disabilities can be arbitrarily detained (caged) or chained to beds in their homes.<sup>109</sup> Some families in rural villages in Cambodia keep their family members isolated from society, due to cultural and religious beliefs that persons with disabilities are suffering for misdeeds in a past life.<sup>110</sup> OHCHR was a participating UN organisation in the joint UN programme funded by the Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, “Accelerating Disability Rights in Cambodia”. OHCHR provided support, guidance and funding to NGO Transcultural Psychosocial Organisation to provide counselling and treatment for persons with psychosocial impairments and advocate for their rights to liberty and security of the person.

**Results:** Persons with psycho-social impairments in rural Cambodia were able to access treatment and care, become unchained, unshackled, and released from cages in their homes, exercise their right to liberty, and be free from cruel and inhuman treatment. Stigma and stereotypes about persons with psycho-social disabilities were reduced amongst family members, who had increased awareness about the potential ethical treatment and care available in the community.

<sup>108</sup> Project Document, Joint UN Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (PRPD) project, “Accelerating Disability Rights in Cambodia” 2022-2024

<sup>109</sup> Human Rights Watch (2020), Living In Chains: Shackling of People with Psychosocial Disabilities Worldwide. In the absence of mental health services, people with psychosocial disabilities can also be arbitrarily detained and chained in drug detention centers or prisons. Human Rights Watch research in 2013 in Cambodia found that people with real or perceived psychosocial disabilities are forcibly locked up and often chained in drug detention centers, or in sporadic crackdowns to “clean the streets” ahead of high-profile international meetings or visits by foreign dignitaries. In June 2020, the Ministry of Interior proposed a draft Public Order Law, which will further entrench discrimination against people with psychosocial disabilities as well as against other at-risk groups in society and add to existing deep concerns of the continuing practice of shackling in Cambodia. The bill, in its current draft, provides the authorities with unfettered powers to arbitrarily strip people with mental health conditions of their civil liberties. Article 25, among other problematic provisions, states that a “caregiver or a guardian of a person with a mental disorder shall not allow that person to walk freely in public places.” In a country where people with psychosocial disabilities are stigmatized and subjected to abuse, such broad discretion given to authorities to restrict the freedoms of movement and liberties of a person with mental health conditions will facilitate further abuse and entrenchment of the problem. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2020/10/06/living-chains/shackling-people-psychosocial-disabilities-worldwide>

<sup>110</sup> McCabe, C. (2024), Situation Analysis of TVET, Job Placement and Employment for Persons with Disabilities in Cambodia, ILO, UNDP, UN Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

**Lessons and success factors:** Leaving no one behind and reaching the furthest behind first are central principles in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for the SDGs, including empowering and promoting the social inclusion of all, irrespective of disability.<sup>111</sup> Persons with disabilities are not a homogenous group and persons with psychosocial disabilities are often the most marginalised and excluded amongst this group. OHCHR advocated for the rights-based approach to disability inclusion, in particular the right of persons with disabilities to free and informed consent to health care interventions, and provision of awareness raising amongst families of persons with psychosocial disabilities about the ethical standards of care required for their family members with disabilities, in particular that chaining and caging are not acceptable forms of treatment. This intervention sought to reach a group furthest behind, namely persons with psychosocial disabilities living in rural areas detained in their homes. OHCHR did so by engaging an NGO specialising in reaching this group, namely the Transcultural Psychosocial Organisation, a well-established NGO with offices throughout Cambodia and a long track record of provision of rights-based treatment and training. This is good practice because it implements the principle of non-discrimination for a group subject to intersectional, multiple and compounding discrimination, both on account of their identity as a person with a disability, as well as their geographical and physical isolation. This also emphasises the human-rights based approach to disability inclusion, guided by the legal standards in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which was ratified by Cambodia in 2012. It involves the participation of persons with psycho-social impairments in medical decisions related to their own health, the accountability of their families and health care providers for provision of ethical treatment and care, non-discrimination in the right to liberty and security of the person, and links to the international human rights law framework relevant for these issues.

However, the Country Programme did not mainstream disability inclusion at all stages of the programme cycle outside of its target disability intervention (UN Joint PRPD Project: Accelerating Disability Rights in Cambodia). This evaluation reviewed Annual Work Plans 2022-2024 and could find only a few examples mainstreaming disability inclusion from 2024 onwards after the conclusion of the UN Joint PRPD Project in early 2024.<sup>112</sup> Disability mainstreaming requires the development and implementation of a consistent and systematic approach to disability inclusion in all areas of operations and programming, internally and externally.<sup>113</sup> Moreover, the Office Management Plans (OMP) for 2022 and 2024 are light on disability mainstreaming outside of the targeted work, with this evaluation finding one example of mainstreaming in the ESCR pillar in the OMP 2022 and an example of mainstreaming disability inclusion in the development and accountability pillars in the OMP 2024. A twin-track approach is required to mainstream disability inclusion. The twin-track approach combines mainstream programmes and projects that are inclusive of persons with disabilities as well as programmes and projects that are targeted towards persons with disabilities.<sup>114</sup> Moreover, the Country Office Communication Strategy does not integrate disability inclusion, outside of a recommendation to use disability inclusive terminology.

In addition, the Country Programme planned results that contributed to gender equality. For example, the Office selected a Gender Result for the 2023 Annual Work Plan: “A3 Justice systems investigate and prosecute gender-related crimes more effectively”. Donor proposals include gender analysis. However, the Gender Accreditation Assessment concluded that evidence provided lacked a description of an institutionalized planning process in place at unit level and senior management level to ensure systematic gender integration. It recommended further institutionalisation and formalization of gender integration into programming and workplans, noting that embedding gender considerations into the planning process is essential for ensuring the sustainability of the programme in the coming years. It also recommended better integration of gender into the planning process in their annual end-of-year report or annual planning document, and integration of gender considerations into the new Country Programme and OMP 2024-2028.<sup>115</sup>

<sup>111</sup> Target 10.2, Sustainable Development Goal 10, Reduced inequalities.

<sup>112</sup> Annual Work Plan 2024 includes support to disability CSOs to submit communications to the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council and regular meetings with OPDs to support participation of persons with disabilities in the work of human rights mechanisms, including UPR. Annual Work Plans for 2022 and 2023 cover activities under UN Joint PRPD Programme.

<sup>113</sup> United Nations (2019), UN Disability Inclusion Strategy Technical Notes.

<sup>114</sup> United Nations (2019), UN Disability Inclusion Strategy Technical Notes.

<sup>115</sup> OHCHR (2024), OHCHR Cambodia Gender Assessment: Re-Accreditation January 2024, UN Human Rights Gender Accreditation Programme.

## Good practice 8: Building on achievements and lessons under the Gender Accreditation Programme

**Background:** In 2019, OHCHR piloted the [Gender Accreditation Programme](#) in OHCHR Cambodia, an initiative designed to strengthen gender integration within OHCHR's operations and substantive work.<sup>116</sup> To receive accreditation, participating offices need to meet standards in six performance areas: Management and accountability; Capacities; Organizational culture and workplace; Human Rights work; Partnerships; Knowledge and communication.<sup>117</sup> The programme translates OHCHR's commitments to gender equality into concrete actions and provides on-the-job, sustained support to country offices over a period of 18 months, based on a work-plan for improvement jointly developed with the gender focal team in the office and with the support of staff from the Women's Human Rights and Gender Section.<sup>118</sup> The implementation of the OHCHR Gender Accreditation Programme is one of the High Commissioner's pledges as an [International Gender Champion](#).<sup>119</sup>

**Results to date:** In 2019, OHCHR Cambodia achieved level 1 accreditation, successfully meeting 21 out of 40 markers and demonstrating an overall compliance rate of 52.5%. In 2024, OHCHR Cambodia achieved level 2 accreditation, improving its performance with a score of 72% (29/40 markers). Progress was significant in the field of 'management and accountability' where the office met 86% of the markers (up from 33% in 2020), and 'knowledge and communication', where the office met 100% (up from 50% in 2020).<sup>120</sup>

**Lessons and success factors:** The Gender Accreditation Programme has been instrumental in the improvement of gender integration across all areas of work. Visible improvements include workforce planning and actions taken towards gender parity, management publicly championing women's rights and gender equality and increased funding on women's rights and gender. The budget exceeds the recommended benchmark for gender related activities, which is a commendable achievement. The office's communication work is laudable, including strong campaigns that are both inspiring and captivating. Through use of social media, the commitment of OHCHR Cambodia towards gender equality and women's rights is effectively showcased to the public. The draft communication strategy presents a valuable opportunity to institutionalize gender integration in communication practices. This will ensure that gender considerations are consistently reflected, even when they are not the primary focus of the content.<sup>121</sup> Key factors cited in evaluation feedback as being influential in OHCHR Cambodia's role included leadership prioritization of gender equality, new staff with better substantive knowledge and improved quality of gender analysis, a dedicated communications officer systematically integrating gender into all communications products, leveraging the CEDAW Concluding observations and the consequent RGC request to open up a new workstream on gender stereotypes in the judiciary, engagement with civil society and human rights mechanisms on women's rights and LGBT issues, mainstreaming gender into thematic reports on indigenous issues and freedom of expression.

With respect to achieving results that contributed to gender equality, the Gender Accreditation Assessment noted that the Secretary-General's reports include sections on LGBT rights and gender equality, but evidence of significant contributions to gender equality and women's rights remains insufficient according to OMP results. However, it noted that the office has contributed significantly to public advocacy to strengthen respect for and implementation of gender equality and women's rights through its public campaigns. It also noted the active social media presence with strong, creative messages on gender equality and women's rights (Facebook and X). Other achievements included supporting human rights mechanisms and the implementation of recommendations concerning gender (UPR, treaty bodies, special procedures thematic mandates); delivering a pilot-training on gender stereotypes in the judiciary; new work streams on advocating for the rights of women in detention and supporting women journalists; advice on surrogacy; and support to the amendments to the

<sup>116</sup> OHCHR (2024), OHCHR Cambodia Gender Assessment: Re-Accreditation January 2024, UN Human Rights Gender Accreditation Programme.

<sup>117</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/women/ohchr-gender-accreditation-programme>

<sup>118</sup> OHCHR (2024), OHCHR Cambodia Gender Assessment: Re-Accreditation January 2024, UN Human Rights Gender Accreditation Programme.

<sup>119</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/women/ohchr-gender-accreditation-programme>

<sup>120</sup> OHCHR (2024), OHCHR Cambodia Gender Assessment: Re-Accreditation January 2024, UN Human Rights Gender Accreditation Programme.

<sup>121</sup> OHCHR (2024), OHCHR Cambodia Gender Assessment: Re-Accreditation January 2024, UN Human Rights Gender Accreditation Programme.

national law on violence against women.<sup>122</sup>

*EQ. Were women and persons with disabilities consulted during the planning and implementation of the programme?*

With respect to the Country Office's targeted disability work, OHCHR was a participating UN organisation in the joint UN programme funded by the Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (PRPD), "Accelerating Disability Rights in Cambodia". The project proposal document states that there was an extensive consultation process with Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) as well as NGOs working with and for persons with disabilities across Cambodia, which informed the situation analysis and setting of priorities for project goals. In addition, validation workshops were held with the umbrella OPD, Cambodia Disabled People's Organisation, OPDs, and Women with Disabilities Forums to validate the findings and endorse priorities for the proposal. During the implementation of the PRPD programme, OHCHR held monthly consultations with OPDs and persons with disabilities to seek their views and incorporate their inputs. Moreover, OHCHR ensured that OPDs were consulted regarding the drafting of the new disability law.

Regarding the Country Office's mainstreaming of consultation of persons with disabilities into the planning and implementation of its Country Programme, the 2022 Report of the Secretary General noted that comments from OPDs on the draft law on the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities were incorporated.<sup>123</sup> Moreover, evaluation feedback was the OHCHR engaged umbrella OPD, CDPO, in the UPR process, mainstreaming engagement of persons with disabilities with international human rights mechanisms as an avenue for enhanced accountability of the government with regard to the promotion of disability rights and the inclusion of persons with disabilities in general policies. However, despite OHCHR's expanded partnerships with OPDs, the evaluation found no other evidence of consultation of persons with disabilities regarding its wider programme of non-disability targeted work.

Regarding gender equality, the donor proposals do not explicitly refer to consultation of women during the planning of the projects. The Gender Accreditation Assessment recommended that OHCHR Cambodia consider consultations with external partners working on gender equality during planning. This collaborative approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of gender dynamics and leverages the expertise and insights of key stakeholders in the field to inform the development of effective strategies and interventions by the Office.<sup>124</sup>

Nevertheless, the donor proposals integrated a gender perspective and have several strong stand-alone activities on topics including addressing discrimination of LGBT persons; supporting civil society to strengthen capacities and open-up spaces for youth to participate; promote and protect human rights with a focus on young indigenous women; and training on human rights monitoring and safety for HRDs and journalists, with a specific focus on WHRDs. In addition, gender-sensitive language is used and data is disaggregated by sex/gender.<sup>125</sup>

In terms of consultation of women during the implementation of the Country Programme, collaboration was enhanced with LGBT organizations and Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs), underscoring a commitment to amplifying the voices and addressing the needs of these actors.<sup>126</sup> In particular, the Office made substantial strides in strengthening its collaboration with LGBT

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<sup>122</sup> OHCHR (2024), OHCHR Cambodia Gender Assessment: Re-Accreditation January 2024, UN Human Rights Gender Accreditation Programme.

<sup>123</sup> Human Rights Council (2022), Report of the Secretary General on the Role and achievements of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in assisting the Government and people of Cambodia in the promotion and protection of human rights, A/HRC/51/63.

<sup>124</sup> OHCHR (2024), OHCHR Cambodia Gender Assessment: Re-Accreditation January 2024, UN Human Rights Gender Accreditation Programme.

<sup>125</sup> OHCHR (2024), OHCHR Cambodia Gender Assessment: Re-Accreditation January 2024, UN Human Rights Gender Accreditation Programme.

<sup>126</sup> OHCHR (2024), OHCHR Cambodia Gender Assessment: Re-Accreditation January 2024, UN Human Rights Gender Accreditation Programme.

organizations, elevating it to a priority issue in its agenda. Its active support for these organizations' involvement in 75th events and the emphasis on this issue in its annual reports, underscores its commitment to advancing LGBT rights. This marked improvement addresses a previously identified area of weakness in the baseline Gender Accreditation Assessment.<sup>127</sup> Moreover, OHCHR ensured LGBT/gender thematic representation at the UPR national consultative workshop (December 2023); OHCHR supported LGBT and gender equality NGOs to attend and conduct their advocacy at the UPR Pre-session (February 2024).<sup>128</sup>

The Gender Accreditation Assessment recommended that OHCHR Cambodia continue to engage with young women human rights defenders for regular briefings to share insights into their human rights advocacy work. It also recommended to prioritize engagement with young women from various backgrounds in pivotal activities, particularly during the annual planning phase and drafting of the new country programme. Organizing consultations with young people, including young women, would greatly benefit the office in ensuring inclusivity and relevance in its initiatives.<sup>129</sup>

*EQ. Has the programme been monitoring data disaggregated by sex and disability?*

The Country Programme was systematic in provision of monitoring data disaggregated by sex in its internal reports, which is a strong improvement from the baseline Gender Accreditation Assessment. The visible efforts in public reporting reflect this advancement. The annual reports now feature a stand-alone section dedicated to LGBT person's rights and gender equality, indicating progress. The Gender Accreditation Evaluation found that an increased awareness and gender competence of staff, understanding of the identification of gender impact of human rights violations and applying this to their work tasks, such as disaggregation of data, and differentiated impact on conditions of detention.<sup>130</sup>

However, there are areas needing improvement, such as analysis as to why certain violations disproportionately affect one gender and the absence of gender-differentiated impact analysis. There has been some analysis on differentiated impact, but this is not conducted systematically. Despite these, the reports contain gender-sensitive recommendations, showcasing a commendable improvement from the baseline. One of its recommendations was to institutionalize and formalize gender integration into programming and workplans. It also recommended that information collected and monitored is systematically managed, stored and protected as confidential and sensitive information in order to guarantee its protection in the Human Rights Database.<sup>131</sup>

The Gender Accreditation Assessment recommended that OHCHR increase monitoring of women's rights and integration of a gender perspective into monitoring, and reflect this in public reporting and analysis. It also recommended increasing awareness and gender competence of staff, understanding of the importance of identification of gender impact of human rights violations and applying this to their work tasks (e.g. disaggregation of data, differentiated impact on conditions of detention). It stated that OHCHR needs to have a process in place and institutionalized at country level to ensure that the planning process (country programme, annual work plans, cost plans and end of year reports) systematically integrate gender analysis.<sup>132</sup>

In terms of disability, OHCHR - through the Joint UN PRPD Programme - monitored data disaggregated by disability in some instances. For example, grant partners TPO and LAC provided

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<sup>127</sup> OHCHR (2024), OHCHR Cambodia Gender Assessment: Re-Accreditation January 2024, UN Human Rights Gender Accreditation Programme.

<sup>128</sup> OHCHR (2024), OHCHR Cambodia Gender Assessment: Re-Accreditation January 2024, UN Human Rights Gender Accreditation Programme.

<sup>129</sup> OHCHR (2024), OHCHR Cambodia Gender Assessment: Re-Accreditation January 2024, UN Human Rights Gender Accreditation Programme.

<sup>130</sup> OHCHR (2024), OHCHR Cambodia Gender Assessment: Re-Accreditation January 2024, UN Human Rights Gender Accreditation Programme.

<sup>131</sup> OHCHR (2024), OHCHR Cambodia Gender Assessment: Re-Accreditation January 2024, UN Human Rights Gender Accreditation Programme.

<sup>132</sup> OHCHR (2024), OHCHR Cambodia Gender Assessment: Re-Accreditation January 2024, UN Human Rights Gender Accreditation Programme.

monitoring reports about the type of disability of their beneficiaries. However, the evaluation could find no evidence of monitoring data disaggregated by disability for the Country Office Programme outside of its targeted disability work.

**2020 evaluation recommendation: On the rights of persons with disabilities, include more explicit attention to data gathering and reporting as well as inclusion in project/activity indicators and targets.**

OHCHR was a participating UN organisation in the Joint UN Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (PRPD) project, “Accelerating Disability Rights in Cambodia”. As part of this, the rights of persons with disabilities were included in PRPD project and activity indicators and targets.

Regarding mainstreaming of disability inclusion in the planning of the Country Programme, there is some evidence of this in the EU and Sida project proposal documents, with references to persons with disabilities as vulnerable groups and to OPDs as partners. In respect of the implementation of the Country Programme, the reports of the Secretary General on the Role and Achievements of OHCHR in Cambodia refer to the targeted disability inclusion work of the Office, but the evaluation could only find two instances of reporting about disability mainstreaming in other Country Office interventions, namely the vulnerability of persons with disabilities to trafficking, including persons with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities, into Cambodia as a destination country; and expression of concern about provisions of a draft public order law that may lead to discrimination against persons with disabilities. However, there was some evidence of inclusion of the rights of persons with disabilities in Country Office Management Plans for 2022 (discrimination pillar) and 2024 (development pillar).

### 3. Conclusions and Recommendations

#### 3.1 Conclusions

Against the backdrop of an intergenerational power shift in the country, a significant internal change management process, shrinking civic space, and the implementation gap of the recommendations of the international human rights mechanisms, the Cambodia Country Office has successfully repositioned itself to address the current priorities of Cambodia’s human rights situation. The Country Office has very much internalized and implemented a majority of the recommendations of the 2020 Country Programme evaluation, which was enormously helpful in charting a way forward for the Country Office.

In summary, this Evaluation of the OHCHR Country Programme for Cambodia 2020-2024 has made the following conclusions:

- **Relevance and coherence:** Highly relevant to Cambodia's human rights situation, highly compatible and aligned with national plans and donor priorities.
- **Effectiveness:** Implementation generally on track despite challenges like political climate and COVID-19, with positive results in prevention efforts and attention to human rights economy, human rights related to land rights, and communications.
- **Efficiency:** Improved match between skills and requirements, increased efficiency with reduced staff size, but challenges in meeting demands and optimizing resource use.
- **Impact Orientation:** Demonstrated impact in key areas like national legal incorporation of international human rights standards, laying foundations for longer-term impact, but questions remain about capacity-building efforts.
- **Sustainability:** Good foundations for sustainability, with adjustments for financial sustainability, national ownership (law on establishment of an independent NHRI largely implements Paris Principles), and integration of human rights in national frameworks and development plans (UNSDCF).
- **Gender and Disability Mainstreaming:** Very satisfactory gender mainstreaming and gender targeted interventions, variable disability mainstreaming, but satisfactory targeted interventions for persons with disabilities.

- **Human Rights Integration:** Very satisfactory adherence to human rights-based approach, considering both rights holders and duty bearers in interventions.

### 3.2 Recommendations

In this context, the evaluation has made the following ten recommendations in order to address the main gaps identified and to achieve better results.

Recommendations	Actions	Responsible
<b>Strategic positioning</b>		
1. Strengthen the OHCHR Cambodia Country Programme <b>Theory of change</b>	Strengthen the OHCHR Cambodia Country Programme <b>Theory of Change</b> in terms of the whole-of-office level to better balance and contextualize the more detailed section/unit level sections, being guided by the global OHCHR Theory of Change, and incorporating the OHCHR Cambodia Country Programme 2024-2028 pillars and activities. This should be contextualised to the national Cambodian context (including the changed political context under the new government), and – in line with the recommendation of the previous evaluation - draw on consultations with external stakeholders (RGC, CSOs, UNCT, donors), be aligned with the UNSDCF for Cambodia 2024-2028, build on strategies which have shown the greatest potential for systemic change, and incorporate the OHCHR ‘frontier issues’ as components of larger strategies. Such Theory of Change would need to be owned by OHCHR Cambodia, as well as by OHCHR SEARO. It would need to be subject to a progressive process of a greater regularization of the Cambodia programme as part of the wider regional programme, instead of continuing to stand alone as much as it does (even despite the recommendation of the previous evaluation in this regard).	Country Office with HQ and SEARO support
<b>Office management and resourcing</b>		
2. Continue to strengthen <b>Results-Based Management</b> approaches in the daily work of the Country Programme	Building on the 2020 evaluation recommendation to strengthen <b>Results-Based Management</b> approaches, capacities and application within Country Office work plans and daily work, with support from OHCHR HQ, there remains opportunity for improvement, including with regard to end of year reporting and use of RBM to allow for year-to-year comparisons and tracking of progress over time using streamlined indicators. This would allow for a more rigorous tracking of change, challenges, success factors and lessons for wider application. Prioritise attention to utilisation of the Human Rights Violations Database, including to integrate gender into human rights monitoring, as well as needs assessment, and programme/activity monitoring.	Country Office with HQ support
3. Address efficiency and sustainability of <b>human and financial resources</b>	In order to address efficiency and sustainability of <b>human and financial resources</b> , consider the following: (i) Consider ensuring funding for the Public Information Officer (PIO) at a level higher than IUNV (ideally a P3 post) to ensure the sustainability of the post and the retention of talent. (ii) In line with the priority to broaden	Country Office with HQ and SEARO support, Development



	<p>OHCHR's donor base among Member States and non-traditional actors, including by refining OHCHR's approach to resource mobilization and reinforcing related skills and capacities, consider the addition of another DEXREL officer position in the SEARO office with dedicated support to Cambodia (among other countries), to ensure that the Cambodia Country Office can diversify the donor base, capitalizing on the donor presence in Bangkok in a position to make funding decisions.<sup>133</sup> Leverage the diversification of the Country Programme which has taken place pursuant to the new theory of change and has created opportunities for diversifying the donor base to those who target frontier issues such as digital space and emerging technologies (private sector), and people on the move, and spotlight populations such as persons with disabilities, and women. (iii) Consider regularisation of the human rights economist consultancy position to provide leverage for building new relationships, promoting the human rights agenda in the economic sphere, and expanding the ESCR dimension substantively in an area that enjoys RGC support – given its prioritisation to the economic dimensions of the SDGs.</p>	<p>partners, private sector.</p>
<p>4. Maximise the full potential of Country Office <b>training activities</b> and scale up impact</p>	<p>Maximize the full potential of the Country Office <b>training activities</b> and scale up impact by: (i) Carrying out needs assessments of national counterparts (both RGC and civil society) regarding training needs; (ii) administering a training survey to previous RGC trainees; (iii) Developing a training strategy based on such needs and take measures to ensure that trainees' agencies and organisations are committed to maximizing the use of newly acquired knowledge and skills to ensure strategic use of resources; (iv) Applying digital technology in a highly participatory way as an inclusive platform to improve training effectiveness, reduce costs, expand outreach to LNOB groups and provincial stakeholders, and diversify delivery methods. Leverage existing resources such as the human rights capacity building tools and best practices of the SEARO, and the Methodology, Education and Training Section (METS) of OHCHR. (v) Taking steps to ensure the consolidation of such learning through follow up support; (vi) Putting in place a mechanism to address systematic and regular evaluation of the impact of the Country Programme's capacity building activities, including training of RGC, UNCT members, and civil society stakeholders at the local level. Consider utilizing existing tools and approaches to strengthen OHCHR's ability to assess the impact of its engagement in Cambodia. For example, the former civic space officer at OHCHR SEARO took the initiative to put in place her own bespoke follow up survey arrangement, developing a simple 6 month and 12 month impact feedback form for</p>	<p>Country Office with HQ support</p>

<sup>133</sup> It should be noted that the recommendation to have two DEXREL officers in Bangkok was made years ago but never implemented.

	the women journalist training programme. This tool could be deployed in the current phase of EU-funded cooperation and provide valuable lessons and insights for future planning and implementation in Cambodia and elsewhere. Use the training impact evaluations to guide future capacity building interventions.	
5. Integrate gender equality and disability inclusion into the Country Office <b>Communication Strategy</b>	In line with the recommendation of the Gender Accreditation Assessment, develop an internal and external <b>communication strategy and action plan</b> with specific objectives related to gender integration and how women's rights can be institutionalized in the communication efforts of the office. This approach fosters a shared vision and facilitates the seamless integration of women's rights and gender concerns across all communication initiatives. Draw upon the expertise of the Gender Integration team (WRGS). Similarly, develop specific objectives related to disability integration and how the rights of persons with disabilities can be mainstreamed in the OHCHR Cambodia communications activities. Seek support from the Disability Focal Point at HQ, as well as from the UNDIS Technical Guidance.	Country Office with HQ support
6. Formulate an Organisational Development Plan taking into account evaluation and Gender Accreditation recommendations	Formulate an <b>Organizational Development Plan</b> which takes account of all evaluation recommendations and sets out measures, milestones and timeframes to ensure that the Country Office is fit for purpose in the context of the new theory of change and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. Consider incorporating Gender Accreditation recommendations into this plan. Consider utilizing a tracking system for the follow up to evaluation recommendations, ensuring that the recommendations are effectively integrated into the work plans of the relevant teams for implementation. <sup>134</sup> Request managers to submit new updates to FOTCD every six months.	Country Office with HQ support
<b>Programme and thematic prioritisation</b>		
7. Continue programme prioritisation on economic rights	In terms of <b>programme prioritization</b> , continue to prioritise protection and prevention, including support to establishment of an independent NHRI, law reform in line with international human rights standards, and attention to economic social and cultural rights, keeping a spotlight on access to social protection and human rights economy, among other issues.	Country Office with HQ support
8. Mainstream disability inclusion into all phases of the Country Programme cycle	In line with the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy, mainstream disability inclusion into the Country Programme design, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation. A twin-track approach is required to mainstream disability inclusion. The twin-track approach combines mainstream programmes and projects that are inclusive of persons with disabilities as well as programmes and projects that are targeted towards persons with disabilities. It is an essential element of any strategy that seeks to mainstream disability	Country Office with HQ support, Organisations of Persons with Disabilities.

<sup>134</sup> One interlocutor has suggested making this part of the Country Programme so that follow up can be done through PMS.

	inclusion successfully. Mainstreaming should also follow a human rights-based approach to disability inclusion. This should include participation and consultation of Organisations of Persons with Disabilities.	
<b>UN as One on human rights</b>		
9. Ensure the integration of the human rights-based approach in the next Common Country Analysis and UNSDCF	In the preparation of the next <b>Common Country Analysis and UNSDCF</b> (due in 2028), ensure that OHCHR invests in influencing the UNSDCF and integration of the human rights based approach as a core priority in the five year and annual work planning, synchronised with the UNSDCF cycle. Ensure that the recommendations, findings and guidance of human rights mechanisms are increasingly incorporated into both these documents, including UPR, treaty bodies, and special procedures, in order to promote coherence and efficiency, while recognizing RGC's needs for assistance as reflected in the recommendations.	Country Office with SEARO support
10. Establish a <b>multi-country platform</b> for discussion to clarify common issues around simultaneous functioning of the Special Rapporteurs with a country mandate and a UN human rights field presence	Consider establishing a platform for discussion to clarify the following issues: (i) the respective mandates of the <b>Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Cambodia</b> and the OHCHR Cambodia Country Office and whether there are potentially overlapping parts of these mandates; (ii) guidance regarding the nature of the relationship between the independent Special Rapporteur and the OHCHR Country Office, particularly in view of the perception of the government and the independence of the Special Rapporteur from the United Nations; (iii) consider a multi-country platform to consider common issues amongst the seven countries in the world that have a Special Rapporteur with a country mandate as well as a UN human rights field presence. <sup>135</sup>	HQ (FOTCD, TESPRTD) with Country Office and UNCT/RCO support

<sup>135</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/about-us/where-we-work>  
<https://spinternet.ohchr.org/ViewAllCountryMandates.aspx?lang=en>

Country	Special Rapporteur	UN human rights field presence
Afghanistan	Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan	Human rights component in UN peace mission in Afghanistan
Cambodia	Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia	OHCHR Cambodia Country Office
Central African Republic	Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Central African Republic	Human rights component of UN peace mission
Occupied Palestinian Territory	Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967	Country or Standalone Office in the State of Palestine
Democratic Republic of Korea	Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea	One field based structure in Seoul that covers DPRK
Somalia	Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Somalia	Human rights component of UN peace mission
Syria	Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic	OHCHR Syrian Arab Republic Country Office (based in Beirut)

## Management Response to the evaluation findings

Management response		
<b>Evaluation of the OHCHR Cambodia Country Programme</b>		
<b>Recommendation 1:</b> Strengthen the OHCHR Cambodia Country Programme Theory of Change		
<b>Management position on recommendation:</b>		
<b>ACCEPTED</b> - Except recommendation 1.3 as it falls outside the prerogative of the Country Office in Cambodia.		
<b>Management comment:</b>		
<b>ONGOING</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Country Programme for 2024-2028 for the Country Office reflected fully on the Theory of Change, in particular, in relation to expanding the work on economic, social and cultural rights, and engaging in a more constructive manner with duty bearers and stakeholders.</li> <li>- Recommendation 1.3 has been omitted as it falls outside the prerogative of the Country Office in Cambodia.</li> </ul>		
Key Action	Responsibility	Timeframe for completion of the action
<b>I.1.</b> Strengthen the OHCHR Cambodia Country Programme <b>Theory of Change</b> in terms of the whole-of-office level to better balance and contextualize the more detailed section/unit level sections, being guided by the global OHCHR Theory of Change, and incorporating the OHCHR Cambodia Country Programme 2024-2028 pillars and activities.	Country Office Geneva HQ SEARO	Q4/2024
<b>I.2.</b> The Theory of Change should be contextualised to the national Cambodian context (including the changed political context under the new government), and – in line with the recommendation of the previous evaluation - draw on consultations with external stakeholders (Royal Government of Cambodia-RGC, CSOs, UNCT, donors), be aligned with the UNSDCF for Cambodia 2024-2028, build on strategies which have shown the greatest potential for systemic change, and incorporate the OHCHR ‘frontier issues’ as components of larger strategies. Such Theory of Change would need to be owned by OHCHR Cambodia, as well as by OHCHR SEARO.		Q4/2024
<b>Recommendation 2:</b> Continue to strengthen Results-Based Management approaches in the daily work of the Country Programme		
<b>Management position on recommendation:</b>		
<b>ACCEPTED</b> - With the caveat to insert under recommendation 2.2 [CONTINUE TO] prioritize attention to utilisation of the Human Rights Case Database as the Country Office scored among the highest users in Q3 of 2023 and Q1 and Q2 in 2024.		

**Management comment:**

**INITIATED** – RBM tools will be used to build a better strategy for monitoring and managing the implementation of the Country Office Country Programme for 2024-2028. The Country Office is liaising with relevant OHCHR colleagues to build a common understanding on the development and use of these tools.

**ONGOING** – The Country Office has made a better use of the Human Rights Case Database and scored among the highest users in 2023 and 2024.

Key Action	Responsibility	Timeframe
2.1. Building on the 2020 evaluation recommendation to strengthen Results-Based Management approaches, capacities and application within Country Office work plans and daily work, with support from OHCHR HQ, there remains opportunity for improvement, including with regard to end of year reporting and use of RBM to allow for year-to-year comparisons and tracking of progress over time using streamlined indicators. This would allow for a more rigorous tracking of change, challenges, success factors and lessons for wider application.	Country Office Geneva HQ (SPECS)	Q4/2025
2.2. Continue to prioritise attention to utilisation of the Human Rights Case Database, including to integrate gender into human rights monitoring, <sup>136</sup> as well as needs assessment, and programme/activity monitoring.	Country Office METS/Geneva HQ	Q4/2025

**Recommendation 3:** Address efficiency and sustainability of human and financial resources

**Management position on recommendation:**

**ACCEPTED** - With a slight change to suggest under 3.2 the following: a) the replacement of the title of DEXREL Officer with a **Programme Management Officer** for a wider scope of TOR, and b) replacement of Bangkok as the duty station of the **Programme Management Officer** with **Cambodia**, at least for an initial phase to ensure funding.

**Management comment:**

- **PBRB form to be submitted to the Operations Group for endorsement to start the recruitment processes for the three new positions: 3xP3.**
- We suggest a change in the title of DEXREL Officer and replace it with the **Programme Management Officer**.
- **Also, we suggest a change in the duty station of the Programme Management Officer -at least in the initial phase- to be moved to Cambodia – as discussed with the external evaluator. This post would be entirely covered by earmarked funds for Cambodia for staff based in Cambodia. If management decides on locating the Officer in Thailand, there would be a need to discuss the **option of partial funding by CO Cambodia** to cover the cost, knowing that the Officer would be covering many countries and not solely Cambodia.**

<sup>136</sup> OHCHR Cambodia Gender Assessment (January 2024): Human rights work – the country office has achieved **60% (6 out of 10)** of the markers under this area. In 2020, the assessment identified challenges linked to a lack of a systematic approach to integrate gender into the different areas of human rights work. In 2020, it was the area with the lowest score among the six areas of performance. While substantive progress has been made, particularly in data disaggregation and advocacy efforts, challenges persist in monitoring and visibility of gender analysis in thematic reports. There is room to make the gender analysis more visible, especially in thematic reports.

Key Action	Responsibility	Timeframe
<p><b>3.1.</b> Consider ensuring funding for the Public Information Officer (PIO) at a level higher than IUNV (ideally a P3 post) to ensure the sustainability of the post and the retention of talent.</p>	Country Office FOTCD/COMMSP SMS	Q4/2025
<p><b>3.2.</b> In line with the priority to broaden OHCHR’s donor base among Member States and non-traditional actors, including by refining OHCHR’s approach to resource mobilization and reinforcing related skills and capacities, <b>consider the addition of another Programme Management Officer /DEXREL officer position in the SEARO office with dedicated support to Cambodia</b> (among other countries), to ensure that the Cambodia Country Office can diversify the donor base, capitalizing on the donor presence in Bangkok in a position to make funding decisions.<sup>137</sup> Leverage the diversification of the Country Programme, which has taken place pursuant to the new theory of change and has created opportunities for diversifying the donor base to those who target frontier issues such as digital space and emerging technologies (private sector), and people on the move, and spotlight populations such as persons with disabilities, and women.</p>	Country Office/SEARO/ FOTCD/ DEXREL/ Operations Group/PSMS	Q4/2025
<p><b>3.3.</b> Consider regularisation of the human rights economist consultancy position to provide leverage for building new relationships, promoting the human rights agenda in the economic sphere, and expanding the ESCR dimension substantively in an area that enjoys RGC support – given its prioritisation to the economic dimensions of the SDGs.</p>	Country Office/ FOTCD/ Development and Economic and Social Rights Branch/ Operations Group/PSMS	Q4/2025
<p><b>Recommendation 4:</b> Maximise the full potential of Country Office training activities and scale up impact</p>		
<p><b>Management position on recommendation:</b></p> <p><b>ACCEPTED</b></p>		
<p><b>Management comment:</b></p> <p><b>ONGOING</b> – Surveys and assessments are conducted by the Country Office ahead of training courses dedicated to governmental or non-governmental entities. For 4.2, there is a challenge in conducting surveys for RGC officials since this needs to be carried out after approval of the relevant minister. <u>The Country Office is also faced with the challenge that such survey could not be conducted online as officials don’t use emails and rely solely on signal application as a mode of communication. The Country Office needs to find new models to conduct surveys, including during training courses, which would be the best way to address the recommendation 4.2.</u></p>		
Key Action	Responsibility	Timeframe

<sup>137</sup> It should be noted that the recommendation to have two DEXREL officers in Bangkok was made years ago but never implemented.

4.1. Carrying out needs assessments of national counterparts (both RGC and civil society) regarding training needs.	Country Office	Q4/2025	
4.2. Administering a training survey to previous RGC trainees.		Q4/2025	
4.3. Developing a training strategy based on such needs and take measures to ensure that trainees' agencies and organizations are committed to maximizing the use of newly acquired knowledge and skills to ensure strategic use of resources.		Q4/2025	
4.4. Applying digital technology in a highly participatory way as an inclusive platform to improve training effectiveness, reduce costs, expand outreach to LNOB groups and provincial stakeholders, and diversify delivery methods. Leverage existing resources such as the human rights capacity building tools and best practices of the SEARO, and the Methodology, Education and Training Section (METS) of OHCHR.		Country Office METS	Q4/2025
4.5. Taking steps to ensure the consolidation of such learning through follow up support.		SEARO	Q4/2025
4.6. Putting in place a mechanism to address systematic and regular evaluation of the impact of the Country Programme's capacity building activities, including training of RGC, UNCT members, and civil society stakeholders at the local level. Consider utilizing existing tools and approaches to strengthen OHCHR's ability to assess the impact of its engagement in Cambodia. Use the training impact evaluations to guide future capacity building interventions.			Q4/2025

**Recommendation 5:** Integrate gender equality and disability inclusion into the Country Office Communication Strategy

**Management position on recommendation:**

**ACCEPTED** – The current formulation in 5.1 is not accurate and contradicts the outcome of the Gender Assessment of January 2024 of the Country Office in Cambodia. We suggest reformulation to reflect a more accurate understanding of the current status through introducing edits in 5.1. that reflects the outcome of the Gender Assessment of January 2024, through [INSERTING “CONTINUE TO”] vs the notion of starting a gender focused communication strategy. See footnote 3.

**Management comment:**

**ONGOING**

- Suggest an edit to reflect as follows; [INSERT Continue to] develop... This approach [INSERT will continue to] foster...
- The Country Office has embarked on the implementation of the recommendation of the Gender Accreditation report, which includes both recommendations 5.1 and 5.2.
- The Country Office will reinforce further its communication strategy through the deployment of a professional staff member as a Public Information Officer.
- The Country Office has already deployed a disability inclusiveness advisor for seven months in 2024 to ensure a better reflection of relevant policies into the planning and in the implementation of activities.
- The Country Office is also promoting disability inclusiveness in UNCT and UN related activities and not only OHCHR. This includes the UNPRPD project that has been

<b>endorsed in its second phase after a successful assessment of the UNPRPD Secretariat of the first phase led by OHCHR, UNDP And UNESCO.</b>		
<b>Key Actions</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
<b>5.1.</b> In line with the recommendation of the Gender Accreditation Assessment, continue to develop an internal and external <b>communication strategy and action plan</b> with specific objectives related to gender integration and how women's rights can be institutionalized in the communication efforts of the office. <sup>138</sup> This approach <b>will continue to</b> foster a shared vision and facilitates the seamless integration of women's rights and gender concerns across all communication initiatives. Draw upon the expertise of the Gender Integration team (WRGS).	Country Office Comms – HQ UNCG- UNCT	Q4/2025
<b>5.2.</b> Similarly, develop specific objectives related to disability integration and how the rights of persons with disabilities can be mainstreamed in the OHCHR Cambodia communications activities. Seek support from the Disability Focal Point at HQ, as well as from the UNDIS Technical Guidance.		Q4/2025
<b>Recommendation 6:</b> Formulate an Organizational Development Plan taking into account evaluation and Gender Accreditation recommendations		
<b>Management position on recommendation:</b>		
<b>ACCEPTED</b>		
<b>Management comment:</b>		
<b>INITIATED- The Country Office has created a tracking table for the Gender Accreditation report recommendations to monitor progress of implementation.</b>		
<b>Key Actions</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
<b>6.1.</b> Formulate an <b>Organizational Development Plan</b> , which takes account of all evaluation recommendations and sets out measures, milestones and timeframes to ensure that the Country Office is fit for purpose in the context of the new theory of change and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. Consider incorporating Gender Accreditation recommendations <sup>139</sup> into this plan. Consider utilizing a tracking system for the follow up to evaluation recommendations, ensuring that the recommendations are effectively integrated into the work	Country Office Gender Section/Geneva	Q4/2025

<sup>138</sup> OHCHR Cambodia Gender Assessment (January 2024): Knowledge and communication – the office has achieved another extraordinary result meeting **100%** of the benchmarks (**4 out of 4**). The **office's communication work is commendable, including strong campaigns that are both inspiring and captivating**. Through use of social media, the commitment of OHCHR Cambodia towards gender equality and women's rights is effectively showcased to the public. The draft communication strategy presents a valuable opportunity to institutionalize gender integration in communication practices. This will ensure that gender considerations are consistently reflected, even when they are not the primary focus of the content. Congratulations on this significant step forward!

<sup>139</sup> OHCHR Cambodia Gender Assessment (January 2024): Organizational culture and workplace – the country office has achieved **57% (4 out of 7)** of the markers under this area. Staff has been informed about policies, indicating progress. The Gender Accreditation Programme has contributed to institutionalizing these efforts. Additionally, due considerations are given, and appropriate actions taken regarding reasonable accommodation.



plans of the relevant teams for implementation. <sup>140</sup> Request managers to submit new updates to FOTCD every six months.		
<b>Recommendation 7:</b> Continue programme prioritization on economic / social and cultural rights and support the establishment of an independent NHRI		
<b>Management position on recommendation:</b>		
<b>ACCEPTED</b> -with a minor edit on adding social and cultural after economic.		
<b>Management comment:</b>		
<b>ONGOING</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Country Office continues to follow on the establishment of NHRI after exerting successful efforts on aligning its draft law with the Paris Principles.</li> <li>- Specific attention is given to programmes on social protection, mainstreamed in the UNSDCF 2024-2028.</li> <li>- The regularization of the economist post will certainly assist in boosting further the work of the Country Office on social protection.</li> </ul>		
<b>Key Actions</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
<b>7.1.</b> In terms of <b>programme prioritization</b> , continue to prioritise protection and prevention, including support to establishment of an independent NHRI, law reform in line with international human rights standards, and attention to economic social and cultural rights, keeping a spotlight on access to social protection and human rights economy, among other issues.	Country Office FOTCD/NIRMS	Q4/2025
<b>Recommendation 8:</b> Mainstream disability inclusion into all phases of the Country Programme cycle		
<b>Management position on recommendation:</b>		
<b>ACCEPTED</b>		
<b>Management comment:</b>		
<b>ONGOING</b> – As mentioned above, the Country Office has already deployed a disability inclusiveness advisor for seven months in 2024 to ensure a better reflection of relevant policies into the planning and in the implementation of activities of OHCHR and UNCT through the UNPRPD project and UNSDCF.		
<b>Key Actions</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
<b>8.1.</b> In line with the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy, mainstream disability inclusion into the Country Programme design, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation. A twin-track approach is required to mainstream disability inclusion. The twin-track approach combines mainstream programmes and projects that are inclusive of persons with disabilities as well as programmes and projects that are targeted towards persons with disabilities. It is an essential element of any strategy that seeks to mainstream disability inclusion successfully. Mainstreaming should also follow a human rights-based approach to disability inclusion. This	Country Office  Relevant departments in Geneva HQ	Q4/2025

<sup>140</sup> One interlocutor has suggested making this part of the Country Programme so that follow up can be done through PMS.

should include participation and consultation of Organisations of Persons with Disabilities.		
<b>Recommendation 9:</b> Ensure the integration of the human rights-based approach in the next Common Country Analysis and UNSDCF		
<b>Management position on recommendation:</b>		
<b>ACCEPTED</b>		
<b>Management comment:</b>		
<b>INITIATED-</b> The UNSDCF has been endorsed and signed by the Government of Cambodia in January 2024. The Country Office has already contributed to mainstreaming human rights into this national framework. The result is satisfactory and the Country Office is actively participating in three Result Groups (RG) out of four, and co-chairing with UNESCO the RG that is relevant to social transformation with the following Outcome [by 2028, people in Cambodia, especially those at risk of being left behind, live in an increasingly gender equal and inclusive society with active civic space and enjoy more effective and accountable institutions].		
<b>Key Actions</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Time-frame</b>
<b>9.1.</b> In the preparation of the revised <b>Common Country Analysis and UNSDCF</b> (due in 2028), ensure that OHCHR invests in influencing the UNSDCF and integration of the human rights-based approach as a core priority in the five year and annual work planning, synchronised with the UNSDCF cycle. Ensure that the recommendations, findings and guidance of human rights mechanisms are increasingly incorporated into both these documents, including UPR, treaty bodies, and special procedures, in order to promote coherence and efficiency, while recognizing RGC's needs for assistance as reflected in the recommendations.	Country Office	Q4/2025
<b>Recommendation 10:</b> Establish a <b>multi-country platform</b> for discussion to clarify common issues around simultaneous functioning of the Special Rapporteurs with a country mandate and a UN human rights field presence		
<b>Management position on recommendation:</b>		
<b>PARTIALLY ACCEPTED</b> –(i) and (ii) could be accepted while (iii) would need to be explored.		
<b>Management comment:</b>		
<b>CO Cambodia to advise on the experience with SR on Cambodia -if needed- to develop better work modalities.</b>		
<b>Key Actions</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Time-frame</b>
Consider establishing a platform for discussion to clarify the following issues: (i) the respective mandates of the <b>Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Cambodia</b> and the OHCHR Cambodia Country Office and whether there are potentially overlapping parts of these mandates; (ii) guidance regarding the nature of the relationship between the independent Special Rapporteur and the OHCHR Country Office, particularly in view of the perception of the government and the independence of the Special Rapporteur from the United Nations; (iii) consider a	Geneva HQ (FOTCD, TESPRDD)	Q4/2025

multi-country platform to consider common issues amongst the nine countries in the world that have a Special Rapporteur with a country mandate as well as a UN human rights field presence. <sup>141</sup>		
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<sup>141</sup> SR Afghanistan, SR Cambodia, SR Burundi, SR DPRK, SR Myanmar, SR OPT, SR Russia, IE CAR, and IE Somalia