

Strengthening Resilience through Strong Social Protection

Background

The last few years have dealt many unexpected global crises that have had a direct impact on many Cambodians' lives and livelihoods. The COVID-19 pandemic saw a drop in the average household income, businesses nationwide have been impacted by rising inflation and fuel prices triggered by the Ukraine-Russia invasion, and farmers and have seen yields drastically cut due to climate change-related floods, droughts, and other natural disasters. Repercussion from mega trends such as climate change and geo-political tensions are expected to continuously affect households

Besides these, Cambodians also face other life shocks. Life shocks refer to events that impact lives and livelihoods and also include accidents, disability, old age, illness, job loss or unemployment. Social protection is key to nurturing a resilient society. Social protection schemes can serve as a tool to help people cope with these occurrences, contributing to poverty alleviation, human capacity development and social cohesion.

The government of Cambodia recognizes this and has actively worked to advance the development of the country's social protection system to ensure citizens can live a dignified and productive life. In 2016, the government adopted the National Social Protection Policy Framework (NSPPF). This document outlines social security (Pensions, Health Insurance, Employment Injury, Unemployment, Disability) and social assistance (Emergency Response, Human Capital Development, Social Welfare of Vulnerable People) schemes that the government wants to initiate and put in place until 2025.

Commissioned by the German government, with co-funding from the Australian government, the Improving Social Protection and Health (ISPH) project supports the government of the Kingdom of Cambodia to establish a strong shock-responsive and inclusive social protection and health system that provides quality services that improve the livelihoods of Cambodians.



Project name	Improving Social Protection and Health
Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)
Project region	Cambodia
Lead executing agency	National Social Protection Council
Duration	October 2021 - September 2024

Our Approach

In the area of social protection, ISPH primarily provides policy advice and conducts capacity development initiatives in support of the National Social Protection Council (NSPC) which consists of its general secretariat and line ministries such as the Ministry of Planning, Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation, and the Ministry of Health.

Under the leadership of the NSPC, ISPH is involved in a number of reforms. They can be broadly categorized under technical advice towards narrowing policy gaps, strengthening of existing schemes and programs, as well as well capacity enhancement of selected national social protection actors. Specifically, the project focuses on:

- **Enhancing the shock responsiveness and contingency planning** of the national social protection system by providing technical assistance to implement the soon-to-be endorsed Shock Responsive Social Protection Framework.



Left Photo: Household Interview being conducted

Right Photo: Issuance of Equity Card from commune official



Kelvin Hu
E-mail: kelvin.hui@giz.de

Franziska Fuerst
E-mail: franziska.fuerst@giz.de

Left Photo: Equity Card holder entitles to get cash transfer

Right Photo: Equity Card holder gets free birth delivery service at public health entities

- **Strengthening the Identification of Poor Household program (IDPoor)** which is the foundation of the national social protection system. The current system is to be evolved into a social registry, further underpinned by a robust management information system. It is intended to additionally include new population groups and more data about households. In this way, vulnerable households (e.g. above the poverty line) can be identified at an early stage and given targeted support in order to prevent them from slipping into poverty.

- **Building institutional capacity** of key actors. Specifically, two key new governmental organizations – the National Social Assistance Fund which will implement all social assistance programs in the future and the Social Security Regulator which will regulate the social security system – are being supported in institutional capacity development.

- **Expanding universal access to high-quality, affordable health services** for all sections of the population. The aim is to expand coverage in terms of number of people, types of benefits, and quality of services provided. Target is on both the tax-financed (Health Equity Fund) and social insurance (operated by the National Social Security Fund) schemes. Primarily, ISPH supports evidence-based policy dialogue towards building a fairer and more efficient system with improved checks-and-balances.

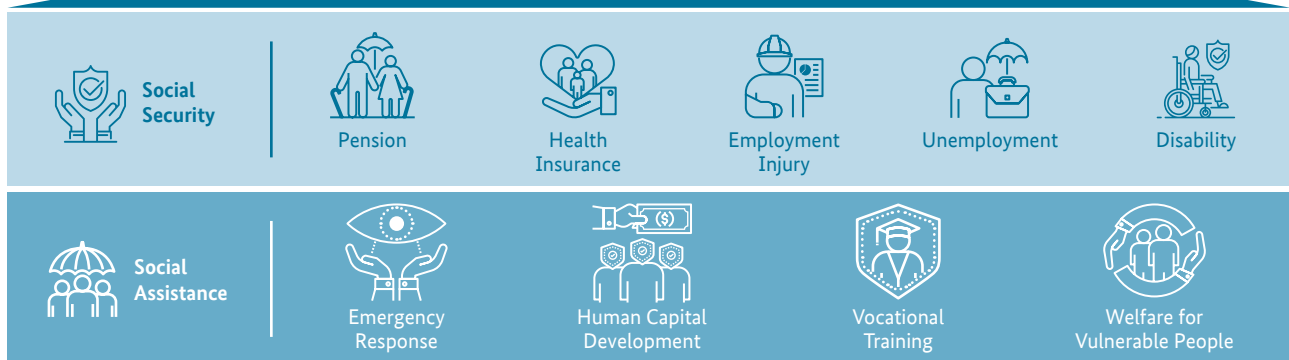
- **Support the development of new initiatives.** An example is the conceptualisation of a new program which supports poor households through the provision of a stipend to attend short courses. This is done with the aim of upgrading skills as a means to attain better livelihoods.

- **Awareness raising amongst the most vulnerable.** In order to improve the population’s understanding of their rights, entitlements and opportunities to participate in social protection schemes, ISPH supports measures to improve communication between the government and citizens. This includes, for example, working with civil society organizations at grassroots level to promote understanding (focusing on vulnerable groups such as female-headed households, persons with disabilities and indigenous communities) and expanding the capacities of commune and village authorities who are often the main source of information for communities.

Outlook

Cambodia’s social protection system remains in a nascent and developing stage. While the foundations for an effective, efficient and integrated system have been laid with the NSPPF and progressive expansion of social protection schemes, the next phase of development is to cement these gains. COVID-19 has reaffirmed the importance of investing in social protection. Investment in social protection is not only an investment in a country’s human capital development and productivity, it also serves as an effective tool for fighting poverty and above all, contributes to a nation’s social cohesion and peace.

Social Protection System



Published by
Deutsche Gesellschaft für
Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

Registered offices Bonn and Eschborn, Germany

Improving Social Protection and Health
Sayon Building
#42 Samdach Pan Street (214), Phnom Penh
Phone +855 (23) 884476
Fax + 855 (23) 884976
giz-kambodscha@giz.de
www.giz.de/kambodscha

Printed by
GIZ Cambodia

Design
GIZ Cambodia

Photo credits
ISPH Team

Text
ISPH Team and MT Team

On behalf of
Federal Ministry for Economic
Cooperation and Development (BMZ)

In cooperation with
National Social Protection Council, Cambodia