

# **A Call for Land Tenure Security Inclusion in Cambodia Sustainable Development Goals:**

## **2020 CSO Report on Sustainable Development Goal in Securing Rights to Land and Resources in Cambodia**

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## OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

### *Land and SDGs, focus on 1.4 and rural tenure security*

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the Global Goals, were adopted by 170 United Nations Member States in September 2015 (ODC, 2019) “as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030” (UNDP, n.d.). It covers three pillars including economy, social affairs and environment (Ry, 2021). These 170 members endorsed the 2030 Agenda and committed to implementing the SDGs, a set of 17 Global Goals in a 15- year period (Land Portal, n.d.). “Achieving the SDGs requires the partnership of governments, private sectors, civil society and citizens alike to make sure that a better planet is left for future generations” (UNDP, n.d.). These goals have been broken down into 169 targets and 230 indicators. SDG 1 seeks to “end poverty in all its forms everywhere” and to eradicate extreme poverty and overall poverty by 50 percent by 2030 (ODC, 2019). “The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development contains land-related targets and indicators under SDGs 1, 2, 5, 11 and 15” (Land Portal, n.d.). The 2030 SDG global agenda acknowledges land as an asset and factor in which the poverty and inequality in rural and urban areas needs to be addressed. “Land is a significant resource, both cross-cutting and critical to achieving the SDGs. It is discovered that there are eight targets and 12 indicators related to land” (Land Portal, n.d.). Therefore, land tenure security significantly contributes to the achievement of the SDGs for ending poverty and hunger. Furthermore, land tenure security is important for poor populations to access and sustain their livelihoods. Likewise, without land tenure security, families and communities are vulnerable to expropriations and face numerous challenges to access financial resources, markets, and other services. Therefore, the inclusion of land ownership and control under SDG target 1.4 is very significant, as this places land rights on the global agenda. The inclusion of land indicators in a number of the SDG targets, has highlighted land rights as a critical strategy in ending hunger and poverty (ANGOC, 2019).

#### **Goal 1 - No poverty**

#### **Target 1.4**

By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance (GLTN, n.d.)

#### **Indicator 1.4.2**

Indicator 1.4.2 is composed of two parts: (A) measures the incidence of adults with legally recognized documentation over land among the total adult population; while (B) focuses on the incidence of adults who report having perceived secure rights to land among the adult population. Both parts provide complementary data sets on security of tenure rights, needed for measuring the indicator (UN-Habitat and World Bank, 2020).

In addition, land rights security for women in particular is seen as vital to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)— especially with regard to eradicating poverty, ending hunger, and ensuring gender equality (Goal 1, 2, and 5). Land rights security has seen some progress through land titling. However, women still require stronger support and interventions to ensure that they can make decisions on land use and enjoy its benefits. In the end, land rights security uplifts the whole community and brings the world closer to realizing the SDGs (Salcedo-La Viña, 2020).

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 2000 to 2015 comprised the following eight targets: 1) Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; 2) Achieve universal primary education; 3) Promote gender equality and empower women; 4) Reduce child mortality; 5) Improve maternal health; 6) Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases; 7) Ensure environmental sustainability; and, 8) Develop a global partnership for development (World Bank, n.d.). Under these eight goals, there are 18 targets and 48 indicators to measure progress towards the MDGs (ITU, n.d.) As the MDG period concluded in 2015, the UN officially launched in 2016 the bold and transformative 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by world leaders at the United Nations (We Can End Poverty, n.d.). Following the official launch, Cambodia enthusiastically supported the agenda set out by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2016 to 2030 (RGC, 2019).

**Table 1: Development Goals Contextualized for Cambodia**

Development Goals	Years	Goals	Targets	Indicators
MDGs	2000 to 2015	8	18	48
CMDGs	2000 to 2015	9	25 (overall targets)	106 (target/indicators) <sup>1</sup>
SDGs	2016 to 2030	17	169	230
CSDGs	2016 to 2030	18	88	148

The Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) then fully adopted the SDGs to fit the Cambodian context regarding national needs, challenges, and aspirations. The Cambodia Sustainable Development Goals (CSDGs) have been fully integrated into the National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) 2019 to 2023 which provides a large proportion of the country's Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) data; and, via proposed inclusion in the Budget Strategic Plan of the line ministries and agencies. The said plan is a major part of Cambodia's performance-based budgeting arrangement. This innovation and effort of the RGC is intended to make the country known internationally (UN, 2019).

All the UN member-States have committed to achieve the Sustainable Development Targets by 2030. However, there is a clear gap between what is being committed and the delivery of the commitments. For example, in the case of land targets, in the 2020 SDG Voluntary National Review (VNR) only seven countries reported on specific land targets. The gap results from many reasons ranging from lack of political will, as well as shortage of resources including technical capacity (International Land Coalition - ILC, n.d.).

Given the integral role that CSOs played in the formulation of the 2030 agenda, they are likewise key to the monitoring and reporting the status of the implementation of the SDGs. Hence, the initiation by the Land Watch Asia Land Monitoring Working Group (LWA LMWG) of country reports focused on SDG 1.4. From a CSO perspective, these reports will provide a broader picture of land rights and tenure security of *rural populations*, in order to contribute towards assessing the RGC's performance in meeting SDG Target 1.4.

<sup>1</sup> RGC. (2003). *Cambodia Millennium Development Goals Report 2023*. Ministry of Planning.

Under Target 1.4, the indicator on *secure tenure rights* (Indicator 1.4.2)<sup>2</sup> and the related indicator on *secure rights to agricultural land* (Indicator 5.a.1)<sup>3</sup> are both classified by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) as belonging to Tier II as of March 2021. This means that, while there are internationally-recognized methodologies to produce information for these indicators,<sup>4</sup> member-countries do not regularly produce such data.

This may be one reason why the land agenda has not been prominent in recent SDG reporting processes of governments. In most cases, States do not report on land in their SDG Country Reports and Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs). In situations where State parties include land in their SDG reports, the contents mostly contain descriptions of their programs on land, with little or no discussion on the issues and challenges faced by the rural poor, thus not providing a complete picture of the situation. CSOs are therefore well-positioned to analyze available data independently and highlight gaps and ways forward in achieving SDG Target 1.4.

## GLOBAL METHODOLOGIES IN MEASURING 1.4.2 BY CUSTODIAN AGENCIES

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Globally, land tenure has recently been recognized by the establishment of the SDG indicators 1.4.2 and 5.a.1. In response to this, the Global Donor Working Group on Land (GDWGL) and the Global Land Indicators Initiative (GLII) have taken on the role of guardians of indicators 1.4.2 (UN Habitat and World Bank) and 5.a.1 (FAO).<sup>5</sup> They are jointly developing a standardized survey instrument to collect the relevant data for computation of both indicators (WB, FAO, and UN-Habitat, 2019).

### Objectives

From a CSO perspective, this report will offer a clearer picture of land rights and tenure security of rural populations, to assess Cambodia's performance in relation to meeting SDG Target 1.4. This write-up also covers data available for SDG indicators on land rights, which provide direct information on progress towards Target 1.4. Aside from the official indicators, this report will also discuss other qualifiers of land rights and tenure security that may not be captured by the SDG indicators at first glance (ex. land conflicts, informal and customary tenure, transparency, and implementation issues in land governance). Finally, this paper also contains recommendations on how government should report on land rights and recommendations on land rights policies and programs.

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<sup>2</sup> Proportion of total adult population with secure tenure rights to land, (a) with legally recognized documentation, and (b) who perceive their rights to land as secure, by sex and type of tenure

<sup>3</sup> (a) Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; and, (b) share of women among owners or rights bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure

<sup>4</sup> Such as the methodology for gathering globally comparable national data on 1.4.2 and 5.a.1, developed by custodian agencies UN Habitat, World Bank, and FAO: <https://gltn.net/2019/08/27/measuring-individuals-rights-to-land/>

<sup>5</sup> GLII is the Global Land Indicators Initiative, established in 2012 and hosted by the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN).

In particular, this report is being prepared to:

- contribute towards sustaining the reporting processes of governments on SDGs, with emphasis on land-related targets;
- lobby governments to use the CSO report as inputs to their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) and SDG Country Reports; and,
- pursue the policy work of CSOs on land rights by optimizing the SDGs as a space for dialogue with various stakeholders.

### **Methodology**

This report was developed based on secondary data and primary data. The secondary data was obtained from different sources such as government, UN agencies, and NGOs. The reviewed documents included research papers, studies, government censuses, related laws, Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), and other related laws and reports. Previous reports prepared by Land Watch Asia (LWA) which STAR Kampuchea anchored for Cambodia, namely, the 2018 CSO Report: Land Data, the Cambodia National Institute of Statistics: A Scoping Study on National Statistics Office in the Context of SDG Indicator 1.4.2, and the 2020 Cambodia Land Monitoring Report were also sources of information for this report.

For the primary data, the information incorporated in the report was collected from individual interviews, a validation workshop, a Focus Group Discussion (FGD), and multi-stakeholder dialogues. The FGD and the validation workshop were conducted with 51 people on 4 August 2021 in order to collect ideas and inputs to improve the report. Similarly, an interview was also conducted with four informants from NGOs and National Institute of Statistics (NIS) personnel on 9 February 2021 and on 25 February 2021, respectively, including generating more information on how the relevant institutions collect data to produce the progress report and VNR.

In summary, the data gathering phase underwent the following process:

- Desk research on the related topic;
- Key informant interviews (KIIs) with NGO staff and government officers to map out efforts of government and CSOs to pursue SDG Target 1.4;
- An FGD with CSOs to validate the findings and solidify recommendations; and,
- A multi-stakeholder workshop to present and further validate the contents of the report, among an audience of CSOs, community-based organizations, government agencies, international organizations, media, and other groups/ sectors deemed relevant to the discussion.

## **LEGAL FRAMEWORK ON LAND RIGHTS FOR SMALLHOLDERS, POLICIES ON LAND RIGHTS FOR WOMEN (INDICATOR 5.A.2) AND SUPPORT SERVICES**

### ***On farmers and smallholders***

After two decades of civil war and the Vietnamese occupation, agricultural land property rights in Cambodia were reestablished during and following the 1993

to 2000 period. However, the limited access to markets, inappropriate use of power, and the absence of effective mechanisms to protect the farmers resulted in increased incidence of landlessness, land exploitation, and land insecurity. At the same time, the land concession system was reintroduced without proper guidance and control mechanisms (Diepart & Sem, 2015). Mineral exploitation led to serious environmental degradation and did not contribute much to the national treasury despite the big commercial revenues generated. At the same time, conflicts escalated around access and control over land and natural resources. To address these issues, the RGC first focused on developing new laws and regulations. This strong legal basis allowed the RGC to establish a land tenure institution, and to promulgate the 2001 Land Law.

The 2001 Land Law differentiates between five various domains of property. All land continues to be owned by the State unless its ownership has been legally privatized. Within this domain, *State public land* refers to State land with a public interest (roads, mountains, military bases, or land where a public service is delivered such as a school, an administrative post, public hospital land or land that has a natural origin such as forest, water bodies, river beds, and so on). In contrast, *State private land* is defined simply as all State land that is not State public land, and can be legally privatized. The *private domain*, meanwhile, includes all land that has full legal private ownership. Then, there is also ownership of *Buddhist properties* that exist within the premises of Buddhist monasteries, and finally the *indigenous community land* where indigenous communities have established residence.

The implementation of the 2001 Land Law embraced a number of “new” formalization processes of land property rights. Central to these is the formal transfer of State property (domain) to private or collective property rights, and the differentiation between State private land and State public land. This is highly contentious because large-scale concessions to private entities have remained a central element of State land management in Cambodia.

There are three types of land concessions in Cambodia: a) Social Land Concessions [SLCs], b) Economic Land Concessions [ELCs], and c) Use, Development and Exploitation Concessions [UDEC]. The core objective, according to the government, is two-fold: a) to improve tenure security and access to land through a market-based land distributive system [relying on land titling, cadastral administration, and land markets] and redistributive land reform through SLCs; and, b) to stimulate investment to improve productivity and agricultural diversity under the system of “concessions.”

To deal with land conflicts as a consequence of granting economic land concessions (ELCs), Prime Minister Hun Sen issued a moratorium, known as Order 01 in May 2021. The Order 01 intends to cease the granting of ELCs to the companies that extended onto the State land (Dwyer, 2015). Also, the Order 01 attempts to curb the escalation of the violent land conflict and confrontations between the concessionaires and the people, forest crimes, and illegal logging (Diepart & Sem, 2015a).

On 26 June 2020, the World Bank (WB) approved USD 93 million credit for Cambodia’s LASED III (Land Allocation for Social and Economic Development Project III). This credit is provided in order to help improve land tenure security and access, as well as access to infrastructure, agriculture, and social services for the country’s landless and poor smallholders and indigenous communities. This project also provides sustainable access to land and natural resources to small agricultural producers and rural communities, which is a key component



of the government's effort in response to poverty reduction as set in the SDGs. This project will go through a legal framework for SLCs that expands land titling for the landless rural poor (The World Bank, 2020).

Cambodia's 2001 Land Law recognizes *phaukeak* (Khmer for "individual possession rights"), granting individual titling after five years of peaceful possession of land after 1979 (Wellmann, 2018). And only persons or legal entities of Khmer nationality have the right to own land in the Kingdom of Cambodia (Land Law, 2001).

### **On indigenous peoples (IP)**

It is apparent that the RGC has promoted industrial models of development and extensive natural resource extraction, especially in areas where IP communities live, violating the preservation of these communities' way of life and use of their land. Due to lack of a comprehensive legal framework to protect indigenous land rights and poor implementation of laws to protect collective ownership rights, the indigenous communities face severe tenure insecurity and displacement from their homes and land (NGO Working Group on ICESCR-Cambodia, 2019).

The 2001 Land Law protects the collective rights of the IP communities over land and also provides for the development of a comprehensive legal framework to govern relevant processes, rights, and protections (Land Law, 2001). The Law also allows IPs to claim communal land titles (CLTs) over their customary lands, thereby granting them the right to protect their ownership as private owners (NGO Working Group on ICESCR-Cambodia, 2019).

Shifting cultivation may be carried out in areas specifically identified as "reserved land." Apart from this, forestland is excluded from being titled (Wellmann, 2018).

Article 23 of the 2001 Land Law also states that indigenous communities shall continue to manage their land. As such, indigenous land should not be expropriated prior to cadastral titling and mapping (Land Law, 2001). The government's LASED III project "has also promoted Indigenous Communal Land Titling (ICLT) to enhance tenure security for indigenous people over their lands" (The World Bank, 2020).

### **On women's land rights and tenure**

With the intention of promoting gender equality as a means to promote economic growth and development, and reduce poverty, two SDG indicators 5.A.1 and 1.4.2 have been included in the SDGs. As a result, women's land rights and tenure have also been brought to the fore in the international agenda (Doss & Meinzen-Dick, 2020). Importantly, the international community now fully recognizes the importance of securing women's land rights. This is evidenced by the inclusion of women's land ownership and secure tenure rights as indicators for poverty eradication (Goal 1), ending hunger (Goal 2), and gender equity (Goal 5).

Likewise, the Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forestry (VGGT) recognizes that women and girls have equal tenure rights and access to land, fisheries, and forests. A number of developing countries generate policies to ensure that land titling and land registration are mandated or promote joint titling of household land in the names of both spouses as well as land registration in the name of women individually (Salcedo-La Viña, 2020). In Cambodia, for instance, women and men have equal rights to property ownership as joint titling by both spouses.

These equal rights to land and property ownership by both men and women is enshrined in the 1993 Cambodian Constitution which reads that, “all persons, individually or collectively, shall have the right to ownership. Only Khmer legal entities and citizens of Khmer nationality shall have the right to own land. Legal private ownership shall be protected by the law. The right to confiscate possessions from any person shall be exercised only in the public interest as provided for under law and shall require fair and just compensation in advance” (Cambodian Constitution, 1993).

### ***On pastoralists, water-users, and forest dwellers***

Article 40 of the Law on Forestry reads, “For local communities living within or near the Permanent Forest Reserves, the State shall recognize and ensure their traditional user rights for the purpose of traditional customs, beliefs, religions and living as defined in this article. The traditional user rights of a local community for forest products and by-products shall not require the permit. The traditional user rights under this article consist of: a) The collection of dead wood, picking wild fruit, collecting bees’ honeys, taking resin, and collecting other forest by-products; b) Using timbers to build houses, stables for animals, fences and to make agricultural instruments; c) Grass cutting or unleashing livestock to graze within the forests; d) Using other forest products and by-products consistent with traditional family use; and, e) The right to barter or sell forest by-products shall not require the permit, if those activities do not cause significant threat to the sustainability of the forest” (Forestry Law, 2002 Article 40).

### ***On fisherfolk***

Article 59 of the Law on Fishery reads that all Cambodian citizens have the rights to form Community Fisheries in their own areas on a voluntary basis to take part in the sustainable management, conservation, development, and use of fishery resources. The procedures to form the Community Fisheries shall be determined by a Sub-decree, Article 60. The Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries is entitled to allocate part of the fishery domain to the community fishers that live inside or nearby the fishery domain as community fishing area (Law on Fishery, 2006).

## **COUNTRY EFFORTS TO PURSUE SDG TARGET 1.4**

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Cambodia enthusiastically endorsed the agenda set out by the SDGs 2016 to 2030. In late 2015, Cambodia started reviewing and mapping the global goals and targets to national priorities. The country accepted all 17 SDGs and added one additional goal, related to clearance of land mines and of Explosive Remnants of War (reflecting the national priority of de-mining Cambodia’s territory). Therefore, the final CSDG version comprises of 18 *Cambodian Sustainable Development Goals*, 88 nationally relevant targets, and 148 (global and locally-defined) indicators including 96 as national Indicators (CSDG Framework, 2016 to 2030).

Under the Ministry of Planning, the NIS has achieved major gains in mainstreaming the CSDGs, especially in the localization process of the SDGs for CSDGs at the national level of the government. The CSDGs were approved by the RGC in 2018. However, based on the reviewed documents, *indicator 1.4.2 pertaining to land*



tenure is not found in the 2016 to 2030 CSDGs. Yet, there is “1.4.1: Percentage of total members of registered community fisheries and forestry with tenure rights to fisheries and forestry resource management through effective community registration and development” (CSDG 2016 to 2030).

In the National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) 2014 to 2018, the progress of land administration, land planning, urbanization, and land distribution is reported. For example, until the end of 2018, 73.25 percent of the total seven million land titles — exceeding the target by 3.25 percent — including land registration of 24 indigenous communities equal to 684 titles, were issued; 8,353 complaints of land disputes were solved; and, a total of 3,967 cases were completed involving 21,002 families residing on 6,320 hectares. In addition, a QR Code on a new model of land titles was launched, through which information is accessible on smartphones (NSDP, 2019 to 2023; 2019).

### **Government’s efforts and CSOs’ role in CSDG monitoring and reporting**

As with the CSDG Framework, the Voluntary National Review (VNR) relies on a wide consultation process. Since the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) was introduced in 2007, civil society organizations (CSOs) and human rights defenders (HRDs) have constantly engaged in the process, in order to effect positive change for human rights across the world. The role of civil society has proven to be vital for the success of the UPR (UPR Info, 2017). Thus, the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda is promoted as being more participatory and equitable — with the planning and implementation of the SDGs incorporated into local development strategies such as the NSDP) 2014 to 2018 (ODC, 2018).

A key purpose of the VNR is to track Cambodia’s national performance on the CSDGs, drawing on quantitative data and qualitative reports. It has adopted a “whole of government” approach involving line ministries and agencies, and local administrations; and, a “whole of society” approach open to civil society and business actors; with regular consultations taking place throughout the process. The six global prioritized goals are specifically CSDGs 4, 8, 10, 13, 16, and 17 (NGOF, 2019).

Led by the Ministry of Planning (MoP), the VNR consultative process began in late 2018. CSOs expressed a strong commitment to raising public awareness on the SDGs and the VNR process at both the national and sub-national levels (NGO Forum, 2019). Thus, they play a significant role in promoting an open, inclusive, and transparent participatory method on VNR reporting among all relevant stakeholders. The VNR documents efforts to adapt and deliver the CSDGs through the establishment of institutions and mechanisms; their integration within the National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) 2019 to 2023 and public budgeting; and, SDG advocacy and citizens’ engagement. The VNR also reviews progress to date of all Cambodian SDGs, with an in-depth review of the six prioritized SDGs (Education, Decent Work and Growth, Reduced Inequality, Climate Action, Peace and Institutions, and SDG Partnerships). However, as mentioned, land indicator 1.4.2 is not included.

Moreover, these six areas each figure within the RGC’s strategic planning priorities, as set out in the Rectangular Strategy-Phase IV (RS IV) and the NSDP (SDG-UN, 2019). The RS IV acts as a comprehensive policy framework for formulating the “National Strategic Development Plan, 2019 to 2023” with clearly defined indicators and a timeframe for implementation that must be consistent with the RGC’s sectoral policies (Bing, n.d.). The RGC recognizes that it is early in the implementation process that sustainable efforts are needed, and

has set out concrete delivery proposals on management oversight, monitoring and evaluation, and resourcing (SDG-UN, 2019).

### **Lead government agency in charge of monitoring progress towards the SDGs**

Acting as lead technical focal point, the MoP has overall responsibility for the national M&E process and maintains the indicator database of CSDGs. Mandated to receive and compile data, the MoP is tasked to submit annual updates and five yearly-milestones reports subject for review by the RGC (RGC, 2019).

The Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction (MLMUPC) is responsible for indicator 1.4.1 related to land ownership (ODC, 2019). According to Mr. Mar Sophal, Socio-Economic Equity in Development (SEED) Program Manager of the NGO Forum on Cambodia (NGOF), CSOs had developed a VNR parallel report and presented it to the UN in New York in 2019. For the progress report of CSDGs, CSOs were invited to provide inputs to the last revision of the report of CSDGs in an inter-ministry meeting held in 2019.

As indicator 1.4.2 has yet to be included in the CSDGs, there is no specific sub-committee under the MoP that looks into SDG 1.4.2. However, the General Planning Department and the National Institute of Statistics (NIS) under the MoP are responsible for monitoring and following up the implementation of the CSDGs and the NSDP. These institutions also have a role in evaluating the progress and collecting data to include in the CSDG report. The MLMUPC and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) are responsible for gathering data and preparing the report related to land, but not to provide data specific to indicator 1.4.2.

The technical responsibilities of the MoP include advising RGC stakeholders on design, estimation, and calculation of indicators; on data collection; and, on reporting procedures and conventions. The MoP is also responsible for the specific indicators; while the provision of supporting data rests with the respective line ministries and agencies. Their capacity and data systems need to be urgently strengthened through the National Strategy for Development of Statistics (NSDS), which is a significant complementary initiative to designing and monitoring the CSDGs (RGC, 2019).

As part of the NSDP mid-term review, a series of consultation meetings with line ministries was jointly organized by the General Directorate of Planning and the NIS on localization and incorporation of SDG indicator 1.4.2 into the CSDGs (Sochea, 2018).

### **Government and CSO efforts towards reporting on land-related issues and indicators**

As early as 2013, the Cambodian Human Rights Action Committee (CHRAC) — a coalition of 21 NGOs and Association members working in the field of human rights, democracy, and legal aid in Cambodia — prepared the UPR to submit to the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC). Among the 17 issues reported on, one was on land, another was on housing rights, and the third was on eviction (CHRAC, 2013).

Also, the UPR of Cambodia, submitted to the UN in 2014 by IIMA (Istituto Internazionale Maria Ausiliatrice) and VIDES (International Volunteerism Organization for Women, Education, Development) reported the issue related

to the protection of the right to land of all Cambodians, especially indigenous peoples, as stated in Articles 8 and 10 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted by Cambodia in 2007 (IIIMA & VIDES, 2014). Cambodia's 2014 UPR indicated that Cambodia had appointed representatives to protect the land interests of "poor people," as well as to cooperate with NGOs to address land conflicts through practicing an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanism. Even so, land issues remain a major concern (UPR Cambodia, 2019).

In 2018, STAR Kampuchea (SK) conducted a study on "Land Data and the Cambodia National Institution of Statistics: A Scoping Study on National Statistics Office in the Context of SDG Indicator 1.4.2." The aim of the study was to review and learn how the SDGs are mainstreamed in the National Institute of Statistics (NIS). The report concluded that the NIS is a strategic partner in the refinement of the methodology to measure land tenure in Cambodia. At that time, the NIS had indicated its willingness to conduct a pilot feasibility study to improve and incorporate available data on SDG indicator 1.4.2 into its future censuses and surveys, once the CSDGs would be approved (Sochea, 2018).

A study on "Implications of Closing Civic Space for Sustainable Development in Cambodia" revealed that rights violations related to land grabbing and unsustainable land management obstruct the achievement of the CSDGs and the SDG 15 (Life on Land). The key factor is that the political elite and rich people use their close ties to take advantage of the forests and timber. So, the ability of civil society to monitor or to conduct the campaign against land grabbing is limited (Schroder and Young, 2019).

After the CSDGs were approved in 2018, the NIS began its pilot feasibility study on the inclusion of data related to indicator 1.4.2 in its censuses and surveys. Based on interviews with key informants, the government recognizes the importance of indicator 1.4.2. In 2017, the MoP had conducted a feasibility study on how to integrate this indicator in the CSDGs, and reassessed it in 2019 for possible inclusion in the CSDGs in alignment with the global SDGs. Apparently, indicator 1.4.2 is planned to be added to the CSDGs in 2023. This will also foster collaboration within the land sector in terms of data sharing among land agencies, to be consolidated into reports on Cambodia's progress on SDG Goal 1, Target 1.4 — particularly SDG Indicator 1.4.2. This will likewise support implementation of the NSDP policies, including those for the land sector (Sochea, 2018).

At present, there are two mechanisms under the NIS that handle coordination with NGOs and CSOs for their inputs to the VNR. These are the Statistics Coordination Committee (SCC) which handles government agencies and the Technical Working Group on Population and Poverty Reduction — a high-level platform of government, development partners, and CSOs. The NGO Forum on Cambodia (NGOF) and the Cooperation Committee for Cambodia (CCC) are part of these coordination partners. These two big umbrella groups are playing a key role within their respective networks of NGOs, to facilitate linkages once inputs of statistical data for the planning process are sought (Sochea, 2018).

### ***Latest government reports on SDGs: Still without land indicators***

Cambodia's Voluntary National Review 2019 on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was the latest document produced by the RGC. Based on the summary of the VNR 2019, the country's performance on the nine goals of the Cambodian Millennium Development Goals (CMDGs) were reported: 1) Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger, 2) Achieve Universal Primary

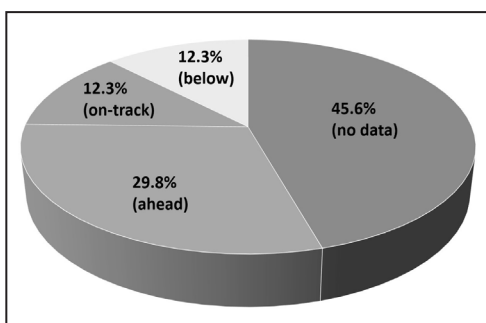
Education, 3) Promote Gender Equality and Empowering Women, 4) Reduce Child Mortality, 5) Improve Maternal Health, 6) Combat HIV/AIDs, Malaria and Other Diseases, 7) Ensure Environment Sustainability, 8) Global Partnership, 9) Demine/Remove Explosive Remnants and Assist Victims (CSDG Framework, 2016 to 2030). Land targets were not among these.

In the VNR’s progress reviews, a majority of the CSDG targets were rated as “ahead” or “on track” while the other targets are rated as “promising.” The former include the six prioritized goals (Education, Decent Work and Growth, Reduced Inequalities, Climate Action, Peace and Institutions, and SDG Partnership). Moreover, these six goals appear in the RGC’s strategic planning priority as set out in the RS IV and the NSDP 2019 to 2023 (RGC, 2019).

The VNR also claims that Cambodia has achieved the MDGs and its ambitions for the CSDGs correspond to the country’s development story of rapid post-conflict recovery, dramatic poverty reduction, and its emergence as a high-growth, lower middle-income country. It likewise reported that the “SDGs fully align with the Royal Government’s long-term development vision as articulated in Vision 2050, and in its medium-term instruments — the Rectangular Strategy (RS) IV and the NSDP 2019 to 2023” (RGC, 2019).

Based on the 2019 VNR, the results of the CSDGs’ implementation shows that Cambodia has achieved beyond the milestone, 29.8 percent; on-track (close to specific milestone), 12.30 percent; below the milestone, 12.30 percent; and, no data, 45.60 percent (Ry, 2021).

**Chart 1: Result of CSDGs based on VNR (12 Goals)**



Source: Ry, 2021

The statistical data is connected to the list of variables and indicators of the NSDP, the CSDGs (formerly the CMDGs), and the ASEAN. The production of statistical data is aligned with the circumstances of Cambodia’s current social and economic development.

Based mainly on the Strategic Development Plan (SDP) or framework of each line ministry, decisions on official statistical data

or indicators are made. As the SDP is apparently aligned with the Government Rectangular Strategy (GRS), and the NSDP is likewise expected to be aligned with the CSDGs, each line ministry has a role to generate data and indicators which are considered important to measure the progress and the achievements of the SDP as well as the corresponding portions of the NSDP and the CSDGs. The generated data, indicators, and achievements are submitted to the Director General (DG) of Planning in the MoP upon request every year (NIS, 2012a).

Data to be collected specific to land are stipulated in the Statistical Master Plan (SMP), an overarching document on statistic programs of the RGC which is used together with the NSDP (NIS, 2012a). Under its internal governmental arrangements, for instance, land sector statistics are reported by the MLMUPC (Sochea, 2018).

Cambodia’s 2019 UPR also reports that land ownership remains a prominent area of concern. Current policies of the RGC appear to exploit a lack of entitlements



among the public to expedite private developments, resulting in widespread land grabbing and forced evictions. The report highlights the crackdown on protesters and journalists who were reporting on land disputes, and were then intimidated, harassed, and interrogated by the authorities for their activism. The UPR also recommends that the State ensure that all pending land disputes, evictions, and relocations be settled in a fair, transparent, negotiated, and adequately compensated manner (UPR Cambodia, 2019).

### ***CSO consultations and alternative monitoring reports***

Land organizations and stakeholders worldwide are committed to fully implementing the SDGs and to monitoring land-related indicators, especially 1.4 and 1.4.2, in order to promote responsible land governance (Land Portal, n.d.). In Cambodia, however, monitoring of land indicators within the SDGs remains overshadowed by other goals and targets.

The NGOF organized a Consultation Workshop on “Engaging CSOs in the Cambodia Voluntary National Review” on 15 February 2019 with 60 participants (18 women) from national and international organizations to provide the inputs of CSOs on climate change in response to Goal 13 of the SDGs.

The theme for the VNR 2019 was empowering people and ensuring inclusivity and equality. The six goals reviewed in depth were: a) Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all; b) Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all; c) Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries; d) Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts; e) Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels; and, f) Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development. The CCC conducted three sub-regional workshops to collect CSOs’ inputs for discussion in this workshop (NGO Forum, 2019).

On 7 to 8 September 2020, a national reflection workshop was organized in Phnom Penh on the “Implementation of CSDGs 2016 to 2030 and the NSDP.” This workshop was jointly organized by the NGOF and CCC, as well as other NGOs working on education, health, children, women, and gender. There were 141 participants (36 were women) from different State institutions, the private sector, the academe, development partners, civil society, NGOs, and communities from 15 different provinces. The workshop focused on three overall sectors: a) Planet and prosperity, concerning Goals 11, 13, 14, and 15; b) People, concerning Goals 3, 4, and 5; and, c) Peace and partnership, concerning Goals 6 and 17 (NGOF & CCC, 2020). This workshop did not cover Goal 1: No poverty and Target 1.4 on land tenure security.

Based on interviews with key informants, there is no Land Working Group that monitors the land-related targets of SDGs, particularly 1.4.2. For CSOs, NGO Forum and CCC coordinate the mobilization of NGOs in Cambodia to gather inputs on indicators and monitor the progress of the CSDGs in general.

On the other hand, NGOF in collaboration with CCC and Cambodian Human Rights Action Committee (CHRAC) and other key networks jointly organized a series of discussions with the following objectives:

- Sensitization of the process and contents of SDGs and Financing for Development, and Paris Outcome: Climate Change;



- Mapping out current institutions of CSOs about their key focuses and how are they related to SDGs;
- Discussion on governance arrangement within the NGOs/CSOs for engagement in localization of SDGs in Cambodia and beyond; and,
- Development of a concrete event calendar for CSOs participation in each event linked with localization of SDGs at subnational, national and international levels (NGO Forum, 2018).

SILAKA, a Cambodian NGO, had produced Social Watch country reports covering the periods 2002 until 2012:

- 2002 - Towards assimilation into the world economy;
- 2003 - The long road to poverty eradication;
- 2004 - The race to meet the Millennium Development Goals;
- 2008 - Accountability needed;
- 2009 - Economic growth must be re-directed; and,
- 2012 - Human and social capacities should be the priority.

In regard to land, a Social Watch report does mention that, in 2009, the RGC awarded several concessions of over 10,000 hectares on the slope of Mount O Ral, where almost 900 Suy live in five villages in the Treapang Chor commune. The land concessions were granted for corn plantations and tourism without seeking permission from the local population, including the Suy, who immediately protested, asserting their right over their lands and resources (Social Watch, 2012).

### **Role of CSOs in the VNR 2020**

In truth, the land agenda has not been prominent in the recent SDG reporting processes of governments. In most cases, States do not report on land in their SDG country reports and VNRs. In situations where State parties include land in their SDG reports, the content is mostly descriptions of their programs on land, with little or no discussion on the issues and challenges faced by the rural poor — thus not providing a complete picture of the situation. Given this, CSOs are well positioned to analyze data independently and highlight the gaps and ways forward with regard to land (ANGOC, 2019). The RGC is preparing the VNR 2020, which aims to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the SDGs in each country that is a member of the United Nations. The VNR process involves all stakeholders: the government, the private sector, the academe, and civil society (NGO Forum, 2019).

To contribute to these efforts, the NGOF, together with seven NGOs/CSOs, co-organized the “National Consultation Workshop on Engaging CSOs in the Cambodia Voluntary National Review 2019.” The workshop had 60 participants (18 women) from NGOs and community-based organizations (NGO Forum, 2019). However, it did not specifically discuss land issues.

Mr. Mar Sophal, Socio-Economic Equity in Development (SEED) Program Manager, NGOF, mentioned in his presentation at the consultative and validation workshop on the CSO Report regarding SDG 1.4 conducted on 5 August 2021, that CSOs are indispensable and valuable partners in the process of achieving the CSDGs. In line with this, CSOs have set out five strategies that apply to their areas of expertise:

- Disseminate information on the CSDGs widely to the public, especially young people, in both urban and remote rural areas;

- Build the capacity of CSOs themselves to incorporate the CSDGs into their action plans in order to mobilize additional resources to contribute to achieving this goal;
- Promote partnerships among the private sector, NGOs, development partners, and government authorities to prioritize national policies and strengthen cooperation without leaving anyone behind;
- Monitor and evaluate the implementation of the CSDGs, ensuring a civil society space and open and inclusive participation; and,
- Gather resources and cooperate to jointly implement, monitor, and evaluate the CSDGs on 7 to 8 September 2020, through a “National Reflection Workshop on the Implementation of the Cambodia Sustainable Development Goals (CSDGs) 2016 to 2030 and the National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) 2019.”

In the course of developing the 2020 VNR, the Ministry of Planning (MoP) was open to CSOs giving their inputs on the indicators and the implementation of the CSDGs and the NSDP. NGOs submitted their inputs through relevant ministries responsible for consolidating and transmitting these to the MoP. CCC and NGOF were regularly invited to attend the meetings of such agencies to provide comments on the indicators being assessed.

## WHY IS INDICATOR 1.4.2 NOT BEING MEASURED OR REPORTED ON?

The Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction (MLMUPC) is responsible for reporting on indicator 1.4.2, and the National Institute of Statistics (NIS) is tasked to consolidate these reports. However, when the draft CSDGs — consisting of 18 goals, 89 targets, and 248 indicators for monitoring and evaluating the NSDP — were finalized and submitted to the Council Minister for approval in 2018 (Sochea, 2018), security of land tenure was not among the indicators to be measured and reported on.

### ***On gathering information and reporting of legally-recognized documentation***

The NIS is the official statistics policy-making body of the RGC with responsibility for establishing and leading an integrated National Statistics System (NSS), covering all designated official statistics of ministries, government institutions, and their respective statistics units (NIS, 2012b). As part of the Ministry of Planning (MoP) of the RGC, the NIS is mandated to serve as the “focal point on statistical matters in Cambodia. The NIS compiles and consolidates statistics provided by centralized office and also collect primary data through household and establishment survey; and population, agricultural and economic censuses” (Meng, 2015). According to the 2019 Census of Cambodia, the NIS is “responsible for reviewing, editing and coding the questionnaires, data processing, data aggregation, producing other results such as specialized demographic studies” (Cambodia Census, 2019).

In addition to the NIS, “designated statistical units within ministries and government institutions shall be responsible for collecting, processing, compiling, analyzing, publishing and disseminating other official statistics to the

public according to the data requirements of users” (Sub-Decree on Designated Official Statistics). There are statistical bureaus and sections as well within the planning and statistics departments of the various ministries and in the planning and statistical units at the province and district levels.

Despite all these, based on the reviewed documents and the interviews conducted, there is no land indicator to measure the SDG 1.4.2 among all the statistics generated.

### ***Who decides on data to be collected?***

Article 2 of the Statistic Law “aims to serve the statistical information requirements of the policy-makers in formulating and evaluating policies and socio-economic programs in responding to the socio-economic development of the country, as well as the information needs of the decision-makers and researchers in the wider national and international communities” (RGC, 2010). It means that the Statistics Advisory Council (SAC) will decide on the data to be collected in response to the information needs for decision-makers and other stakeholders. For example, the SAC is to advise the MoP regarding policies on official statistics (Sochea, 2018).

Two preliminary analyses were jointly developed by the RGC in partnership with United Nations agencies. They include the 2016 Rapid Integrated Assessment (RIA) and the 2017 SDG Assessment. To map the country’s NSDP and other major strategies, RIA sought to identify areas of alignment between the SDGs and Cambodia’s policy agenda while the SDG Assessment focused on the indicators and availability of reliable data sources (VNR, 2019)

### ***On gathering information and reporting of disaggregated data by sex and type of tenure***

Based on the census conducted in 2019 by the NIS, there is no information about disaggregated data by sex and type of tenure. Moreover, in the 2019 report of MLMUPC, there is also no information about issued land titles disaggregated by sex.

### ***On gathering information and reporting of perception on tenure security***

An article on “Investigating Perceptions of Land Issue in a Threatened Landscape in Northern Cambodia” published by the Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute (MDPI)<sup>6</sup> reports that issues related to management, security, and access to land highly affect the well-being of rural communities in developing countries, especially in contested conservation landscapes where land and its access is often restricted. In such context, local people’s motivation for sustainably managing their resources and achieving conversion targets is highly tied to their perception of well-being. This is because locally valued resources such as land have material as well as relational symbolic dimensions.

The MDPI publication also says that access to land has been recognized as a significant concern. This is based on a survey in 20 selected villages. The results of the survey show that 62 percent of the 1,129 respondents disagreed with the

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<sup>6</sup> MDPI is a pioneer in scholarly open access publishing and has supported academic communities since 1996.

statement that their current land access was enough to meet their household needs; and 47 percent of respondents stated that their future access would not be enough (Beauchamp et al., 2019).

Most of the land documents are written in English and these documents are mostly available in the libraries of government and NGOs, which communities have difficulty accessing.

## RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE COUNTRY'S METHODOLOGIES IN MEASURING AND REPORTING SDG 1.4.2

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In the long run, by 2030, Cambodia is committed to ensuring “that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance” (VNR, 2019). However, Cambodia’s VNR does not include tenure issues — in terms of the government’s response to SDG 1.4.2 — as a specific category of the report.

Likewise, the General Population Census of Cambodia 2019 (GPCC, 2019) does not include land tenure in the report. The 2019 Census is a part of the 2020 Round of Population and Housing Census, as recommended by the United Nations.

In Cambodia, four censuses have been conducted — the first in 1962, the second in 1998, the third in 2008, and the last one in 2019. A census plan was developed in 2016 and later was approved by the RGC. A National Census Committee was then formed in 2017.

Under the MoP, the NIS was tasked to generate enumeration maps using hand-sketched area plans for the entire country. The NIS was also mandated to review, edit, and code the questionnaires, then handle data processing, data aggregation, and the production of specialized demographic studies (NIS, 2019).

STAR Kampuchea, NGO, and CCC have since submitted a recommendation to the government to add an indicator on land (1.4.2) into the CSDGs.

### ***On informal and customary recognition of land rights: Main issues and recommendations***

The customary tenure system in Cambodia grants rights to citizens to use a piece of land and benefit from its outputs (usufruct rights) (Williams, 1999). This means that families who had cleared and use a piece of land for production are allowed to claim possession rights (*phaukeak*) over that land, with the concept of “land acquisition by plough” (Ironsides, 2017).

However, to acquire possession, every citizen needs to follow the Cambodia 2021 Land Law which says that any person who, for no less than five (5) years prior to the promulgation of the Law, enjoyed peaceful, uncontested possession of immovable property that can be legally acquired privately is given the right to request a definitive title of ownership (2001 Land Law, Article 30). Furthermore, the Law protects the deprivation of ownership by stating that “No person may be deprived of his ownership, unless it is in the public interest.” Thus, deprivation of

ownership may only be carried out in accordance with the procedures provided by the law and regulations and after fair just compensation in advance (2021 Land Law, Article 5) (Ironsides, 2017).

For the year 2020, the MLMUPC issued 607,893 land titles to citizens, equal to 86.8 percent of the total pieces of land available for titling. The Ministry reported that these land titles have been issued as part of its systematic land titling and communal land titling process (MLMUPC, 2020).

### ***On women's tenure security***

In Cambodia, women's tenure security is recognized by local legislation (Article 31 of the Cambodia Constitution) as well as international laws. However, in practice, women's tenure security has not yet been fully promoted and impacts heavily on the advancement of women's rights. In Cambodia, land conflict continues to obstruct the promotion of human rights, especially women's rights to tenure security. Culturally, Cambodian women are expected to fulfill household roles such as taking care of the children, cooking for the family, and helping their husbands in cultivation and fishing. However, when there are widespread land abuses and an absence of formal protections for their lands, Cambodian women are often at the forefront of protest movements to protect their land rights. This is because women perceive that access to land and other natural resources is essential to ensuring gender equality and an adequate standard of living. Interestingly, research by the Citizens Commission on Human Rights (CCHR) has shown that, when women have increased land tenure security, their participation in household decision-making increases, net household incomes increase, the incidence of domestic violence is reduced, and expenditures on food and education for children increase (CCHR, 2016).

### ***On land conflicts and land rights defenders: Main issues and recommendations***

In Cambodia, 85 percent of the country's 16 million people depend on agriculture; thus land for cultivation is their top priority (Sun, 2017).

From 2003 until November 2019, the Municipality, Provincial, Khan/District Cadastral Committee received 8,643 complaints. Of these, some 4,136 cases were completely solved by these Cadastral Committees, while 2,820 cases were returned to the plaintiffs (as they are not under the committees' jurisdiction), 908 were withdrawn, and 779 are still awaiting resolution (MLMUPC, 2019). Based on STAR Kampuchea's (SK) land dispute database, which collected 78 high-profile cases in 2020, land conflicts led to varied violations:

- Physical abuse (disappearance, illegal detention, injuries);
- Psychological abuse (harassment, threats, prosecution, mental illness);
- Economic abuse (denial of compensation, destruction of property, and loss of employment);
- Political abuse (sectarian discrimination, labeling, confiscation of property, harassment); and,
- Cultural abuse (change of religion, discrimination, and disruption of life and beliefs).

In general, land conflicts greatly affect human rights, food security, sovereignty, tenure security, and other rights. NGOs working in this field say that over half



a million Cambodians have lost their land (land rights) in the span of 20 years (LICADHO, 2018). Likewise, in the majority of situations, human rights concerns arise largely in the context of governance of tenure. Land issues impacting upon human rights may go beyond the governance of land tenure, extending to environmental protection and access to natural resources (UN, 2015).

Land violations are the most critical and rampant form of human rights violations occurring in Cambodia today. It is estimated that as many as one third of Cambodian families have been involved in a land dispute. These disputes involve land grabs by the RGC or related entities, the sale of public land to private entities, and the appropriation of land for economic projects (CCHR, n.d). CCHR has developed a project seeking to ensure that vulnerable and marginalized communities affected by land conflicts together with human rights defenders (HRDs) and CSOs are able to take action to recover their land, and hold the RGC and private companies accountable for their actions. Ultimately, the project seeks to achieve land security and tenure for these marginalized people, as well as establish respect for land rights by the RGC and private companies throughout Cambodia (CCHR, n.d.).

In line with this, a “Multi-stakeholder Validation Workshop on 2020 Country Land Monitoring” was organized by SK on 30 June 2021, with the participation of 35 NGOs and community members. The workshop produced the following recommendations:

**Government should:**

- Ensure that investors consider the interest of the community, especially the IPs;
- Conduct an inventory of the State public land and the State private land to avoid the abuse of State land which can be classified as social and economic land concessions;
- Speed up the systematic land registration;
- Strictly implement the law and require all to respect the law in conformity with Article 196 of the Civil Law;
- Speed up the amendment of the Land Law;
- Speed up the approval of the Environmental Code which includes Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC);
- Be open-minded and allow the people to enjoy their right to express their concerns, and stop the arrest of land activists;
- Strengthen the implementation of the laws and create responsive mechanisms to protect the land and natural resources;
- Solve land problems peacefully with the engagement of the community and civil society;
- Strengthen the practices of FPIC and EIA as endorsed by UNDP;
- Eliminate impunity; and,
- Eliminate nepotism, work closely with NGOs, and consider NGOs as valuable partners.

**NGOs should:**

- Strictly monitor land conflicts;
- Have a common advocacy mechanism to deal with land conflicts;
- Continue to educate the citizens on relevant laws;
- Provide intervention and help people to create evidence-based research studies;

- Collaborate with other NGOs involved in similar sectors in order to work together for a common interest and build a strong voice; when NGOs are divided, their voice weakens and negatively impacts on the community;
- Encourage one another to continue to support communities further;
- Not be afraid to talk directly to the government, rather than talk behind the government or only with other NGOs; and,
- Should continue to enhance the capacities of IPs.

***The community should:***

- Not be intimidated, but must be strong and work together with one voice;
- Further strengthen its capacity and should not rely on only one person as the leader of the community; anyone can lead the community to have one voice;
- Be self-reliant, have strong leadership, and reduce dependence on NGOs; and,
- Develop a good strategy to protect themselves from illegal arrest and to curb land conflicts.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT TO PRODUCE A MORE TRUTHFUL AND ACCURATE REPORT ON LAND TENURE SECURITY**

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On 5 March 2021, CCC and NGOF jointly conducted the “Online Workshop on Providing Inputs for Revision of Targets and Indicators of the Cambodia Sustainable Development Goals (CSDGs) Framework 2016 to 2030 Based on the Impact of COVID-19.” This workshop was attended by 62 NGOs, including national and local NGOs.

The workshop produced the following recommendations:

- Consider withdrawing or seek sources to support the indicators;
- Modify the indicators;
- Modify the targets (based on the resource of data);
- Collect data (based on the cycle of data); and,
- Consider adding more indicators, including SDG 1.4.

The participants noted two major challenges:

- The spread of COVID-19 drew heavily upon government resources, thus greatly affecting the achievement of the 2016 to 2030 CSDGs. Despite the growth of the economy and investments of the private sector resulting in high public revenues, funding from development partners dropped significantly. Thus, Cambodia needs more funds to strengthen its public services.
- Lack of information related to the indicators on the governance, reform, and strengthening of the management system for the public sector; as well as the lack of data for monitoring and evaluation — for example, the project on a public finance strategy for development of statistics, the reform of public administration, and the program to promote the sub-national democracy.

## REFLECTIONS ON HOW CSOs CAN SUSTAIN THE LAND AGENDA THROUGH THE SDGs

Below are the recommendations from 51 participants who attended the validation workshop on 5 August 2021, representing CBOs and NGOs working in the land sector; the MLMUPC; the Provincial Department of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction; the Cambodian Human Rights Committee (CHRC), and other relevant institutions.

### **For government:**

- The detailed written documents on the progress of CSDGs should be compiled;
- The various stakeholders at both sub- and national levels should be engaged in the process of implementation and reporting of CSDGs, to ensure transparency and accountability;
- Division of responsibilities among government institutions should be more specific in regard to CSDG progress reports, and the VNRs should be shared to relevant stakeholders;
- The land complaint information/data should be available through online platforms; and,
- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) should be conducted with the participation of the relevant ministries, CSOs, the private sector, and the affected target communities.

### **For civil society organizations:**

- Maintain the cooperation and strengthen the partnership with the government and relevant stakeholders to highlight challenges and incorporate solutions into the national strategic plan;
- Disseminate information on the Land Law and strengthen citizens' capacity and knowledge, especially among the vulnerable groups;
- Ensure that relevant documents, such as land registration/titles, are available for citizens to access;
- Provide information to citizens on the number of beneficiaries who plan to register for a collective land title, and have this information available for inquiry from the commune councils; and,
- Advocate for the Land Law to encompass land rights, natural resource protection, forestry and fishery, and environmental codes.

### **What are opportunities for NGOs contributing to the SDGs achievements?**

- Upholding the SDGs as the common policy;
- Actively participating in monitoring the development and implementation process of the National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP);
- Advocating for the government to allocate a development budget to attain the CSDGs; and,
- Joining the Technical Working Groups (TWGs) of all institutions and ministries of legislative and executive branches in order to champion the interests of the vulnerable as a priority for possible solutions. □

## Acronyms

<b>ANGOC</b>	Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development
<b>CCC</b>	Cooperation Committee for Cambodia
<b>CCHR</b>	Cambodian Center for Human Rights
<b>CDC</b>	The Council for the Development of Cambodia
<b>CHRAC</b>	Cambodia Human Rights Action Coalition
<b>CMDGs</b>	Cambodia Millennium Development Goals
<b>CSDGs</b>	Cambodia Sustainable Development Goals
<b>CSO</b>	civil society organization
<b>DIDES</b>	International Volunteer Organization for Women and Education
<b>ECOSOC</b>	Economic and Social Council
<b>EIA</b>	Environmental Impact Assessment
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization
<b>FGD</b>	focus group discussion
<b>FPIC</b>	Free, Prior and Informed Consent
<b>GDWGL</b>	Global Donor Working Group on Land
<b>GLII</b>	Global Land Indicators Initiative
<b>GLTN</b>	Global Land Tool Network
<b>GPCC</b>	General Population Census of Cambodia
<b>IGO</b>	intergovernmental organization
<b>IIMA</b>	Instituto Internazionale Maria Austriatrice
<b>ILC</b>	International Land Coalition
<b>LASED</b>	Land Allocation for Social and Economic Development Project
<b>LWA</b>	Land Watch Asia
<b>MAFF</b>	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
<b>MDG</b>	Millennium Development Goal
<b>MDPI</b>	Multi-Disciplinary Digital Publishing Institute
<b>MLMUPC</b>	Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction
<b>MoP</b>	Ministry of Planning
<b>MRLG</b>	Mekong Region Land Governance
<b>NAC</b>	National Annual Conference
<b>NGO</b>	non-governmental organization
<b>NGOF</b>	NGO Forum on Cambodia
<b>NIS</b>	National Institute of Statistics
<b>NSDP</b>	National Strategic Development Plan
<b>ODC</b>	Open Development Cambodia
<b>RGC</b>	Royal Government of Cambodia
<b>RIA</b>	Rapid Integrated Assessment
<b>RS IV</b>	Rectangular Strategy for Growth, Employment, Equity and Efficiency Phase IV (2019 to 2023)
<b>SAC</b>	Statistics Advisory Council
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNDG</b>	United Nations Development Group (renamed UNSDG)
<b>UNDSG</b>	United Nations Sustainable Development Group
<b>UNESCAP</b>	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
<b>UPR</b>	Universal Periodic Review
<b>VNR</b>	Voluntary National Review
<b>WB</b>	World Bank

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Nhek Sarin

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