Preparing and accessing decent work amongst rural youth in Cambodia : case study

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

RURAL EMPLOYMENT

CASE STUDY

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Acronyms

ACTS	ASEAN Credit Transfer System
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AEC	ASEAN Economic Community
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ATVET	Agricultural technical and vocational education and training
BSDA	Buddhism for Social Development Action
CAL	Computer-assisted learning
CARDI	Cambodian Agricultural Research and Development Institute
CCT	Conditional cash transfer
CEDAC	Centre d'Etude et de Développement Agricole Cambodgien
CLC	Communal Learning Centre
CLEC	Community Legal Education Center
CNQF	Cambodian National Qualifications Framework
CRCC	Cambodian Research and Consultancy Center
DACP	Department of Agricultural Cooperative Promotion
DAFF	Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries
DGRV	German Cooperative and Raiffeisen Confederation
DOLVT	Department of Labour and Vocational Training
DRE	Decent rural employment
ECCD	Early Childhood Care and Development
ECOVOC	Vocational Training in Organic Vegetable and Fruit Production
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FASMEC	Federation of Associations for Small and Medium Enterprises of Cambodia
FBS	Farmer Business School
FIA	Fisheries Administration
FNN	Farmer and Nature Net
FSA	Financial services association
GAP	Good agricultural practice
GDP	Gross domestic product
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GMS	Greater Mekong Subregion
ICT	Information and communications technology

IDP	Industry Development Policy
IDPOOR	Identification of Poor Households
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
JFFLS	Junior Farmer Field and Life School
KAPE	Kampuchean Action for Primary Education
KCNSA	Kampong Cham National School of Agriculture
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LLSP	Local Life Skills Programmes
MAFF	Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries (Cambodia)
MIJARC	Mouvement Internationale de la Jeunesse Agricole et Rurale Catholique
MOEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
MOLVT	Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training
MOP	Ministry of Planning
MOU	Memorandum of understanding
MOWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs
MRC	Migrant Resource Centre
NEA	National Employment Agency
NEP	National Employment Policy
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NGS	New Generation School
NIS	National Institute of Statistics
NPYD	National Policy on Youth Development
NSDP	National Strategic Development Plan
NTB	National Training Board
NTF	National Training Fund
NVIB	National Vocational Institute of Battambang
NYAP	National Youth Action Plan
NYDC	National Youth Development Council
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

OSH	Occupational safety and health
PES	Public employment service
PNSA	Prek Leap National College of Agriculture
PPP	Purchasing power parity
PRA	Participatory rural appraisal
PSOD	Prom Srey Organization for Development
PTC	Provincial Training Centre
R&D	Research and development
RGC	Royal Government of Cambodia
RPITSB	Regional Polytechnic Institute Techno Sen Battambang
RUA	Royal University of Agriculture
SEAFDEC	Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center
SEZ	Special Economic Zones
SLE	Centre for Rural Development
STNA	Skills and training needs assessment
TOT	Terms of trade
TREE	Training for Rural Economic Empowerment
TSSD	Tonle Sap Poverty Reduction and Smallholder Development Project
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
TVETSDP	Technical and Vocational Education and Training Sector Development Program
UBB	University of Battambang
UN	United Nations
UN/DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VC	Value chain
VSO	Volunteer Service Overseas
VTC	Vocational Training Centre
WAP	Working-age population
WDC	Women's Development Centre
YRDP	Youth Resource Development Program

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Executive summary

Youth aged 15–24 years account for approximately one-fifth of the population in Africa, Asia and Latin America, a figure that is expected to grow in the coming decades. This means that millions of young people will face great difficulties entering the labour market and finding quality jobs and decent working conditions. The situation is especially challenging in rural areas where a large proportion of young people live, and where it is even more difficult to access decent jobs. In many cases, rural youth have only limited access to good quality education and training, which further exacerbates their situation.

Moreover, there is a need to pay particular attention to youth aged 15–17 who have reached the minimum age for employment. Youth of this age face additional challenges in terms of assessing adequate training, productive resources and services and joining producer organizations. At the same time, this period is decisive for the transition from school to work; it determines their ability to transition out of poverty. Moreover, many people from this age group in developing countries work in agriculture and are exposed to hazardous working conditions. When children under 18 carry out hazardous work, it is child labour and can affect their ability to access decent work as adults.

To address these challenges, FAO promotes decent (self-) employment for rural youth. As part of its decent rural employment agenda, FAO commissioned the Centre for Rural Development (SLE) to undertake a case study in Cambodia and determine which skills and training opportunities young people need to gain access to decent employment in rural areas. The goal was to develop recommendations to support the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) and FAO Cambodia in developing adequate measures. Furthermore, the SLE was asked to provide a practitioner's guide to assess skills and training needs focusing on rural youth aged 15–17.

The Cambodian context

The population of Cambodia is approximately 14.68 million. An estimated 76 percent of the population live in rural areas where occupations are primarily in the agricultural sector. In Cambodia, an estimated 65 percent of the population is below the age of 30. The number of youth in the country is expected to increase at a rate of 7.7 percent a year over the next 5 years. Due to the expected population growth, there is a concern that the formal economy will not be able to absorb the growing number of young people entering the workforce each year; as a result, many young people migrate. According to the World Bank, in 2013, there were approximately 1.2 million Cambodian emigrants, accounting for 7.4 percent of the total population. Additionally, there is a high rate of rural-to-urban migration. Women migrate to work primarily as domestic workers or in the garment sector, while men often work in construction or in the agricultural and fishing sectors.

The percentage of youth working in the agricultural sector dropped from 83.5 percent in 1999 to 47.1 percent in 2013 and continues to decline. Youth that do work in agriculture mainly work on the family farm. Despite the overall decline, agriculture remains an important economic sector. Cambodia's agricultural landscape has changed in recent decades. Its share of the GDP was approximately 45 percent in 1993 and dropped to below 30 percent in 2017. The Government promotes a policy that targets added value linked to the

processing of agricultural products, but the implementation of this policy depends on investment and the availability of skilled labour. In fact, more and more small farmers are required to diversify their income sources and combine on- and off-farm activities.

The poverty rate, as defined by the national poverty line, dropped from approximately 50 percent in 1992 to around 13.5 percent in 2014. Poverty is largely concentrated in rural areas; in 2011, 91 percent of poor households were located in rural Cambodia. Poverty is also associated with limited access to education.

Most Cambodians (82.5 percent) work in vulnerable conditions, primarily as unpaid family workers and own-account workers. Child labour is still a considerable problem in the country: 19.1 percent of Cambodian children aged 5–17 (755 245 people) are economically active, and most are from rural areas. In recent years, labour regulations have been strengthened, with emphasis on occupational safety and limits on working hours. However, regulations are rarely enforced outside the garment industry.

Although wages have increased over time, low wages and unfavourable working conditions remain constraints for most Cambodians.

Training programmes in Cambodia are offered in formal technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions coordinated by the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MoLVT); participants receive a recognized certificate on completion. Informal training programmes are also offered by, for example, other ministries, NGOs and extension services, but they do not always provide an official certificate. Formal TVET is available primarily in urban areas, which makes it difficult for rural youth to attend programmes. Due to the parallel structure of formal and informal training, governance problems between the MoLVT and Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) arise. For example, responsibilities regarding the supervision and coordination of non-formal trainings may overlap or be unclear. Agricultural training tends to comprise short-term programmes. With regard to higher education in Cambodia, three universities offer agricultural programmes.

Methodology

In accordance with the MAFF and FAO Cambodia, three provinces were selected: Battambang, Kampong Cham and Kampong Chhnang. To gain a better understanding of the problems youth face when entering the labour market, the team investigated both the supply and the demand side of the labour market. Qualitative methods were applied during the field research phase. Data was collected through 37 focus group discussions, 89 expert interviews and two stakeholder workshops. In the selected villages, focus group discussions were held with youth, primarily those between 15 and 17 years old, to identify their employment-related needs and aspirations. Qualitative interviews were held with employers, heads of department, teachers and training providers among others, to obtain additional information about skills and training needs, training and job counselling services offered, and about how national policies on agriculture, education and training are applied. The interviews included both open and closed questions. Thus, the primary barriers and enablers for the access of youth to decent jobs were identified.

In addition, two stakeholder workshops were held with key actors in the field of youth employment in agriculture in Phnom Penh to verify the research design and findings.

Results

The goal of the Royal Government of Cambodia is to positively transform Cambodia's agricultural sector to increase yields, diversify crop production and foster agroprocessing. To achieve this transformation, the Government needs, among other things, to build on the potential of young people in Cambodia. Youth must be motivated to enter the agricultural sector by enabling the profession to generate a competitive level of income to support a decent lifestyle. However, this study highlights the tremendous lack of decent employment opportunities along the agricultural value chain in rural Cambodia. At present, very few enterprises engage in high-level processing or employ skilled workers on a permanent or regular basis. A limited number of employers were identified along value chains, and most employers preferred unskilled and seasonal labourers. Therefore, there appears to be no strong formal mismatch between employers' demands for skills and the skills youth possess. Few decent rural employment opportunities were found, and many existing jobs lacked decent income-generating opportunity and decent working conditions, and did not fulfil occupational safety standards.

The study shows that many of the barriers and enablers to young people accessing decent employment and training programmes are similar across case study sites. Most youth who participated in focus group discussions were still in school.

Hardly any of the youth interviewed stated agriculture as their first choice of employment. Very few interviewees named working in agriculture as a career aspiration. Others saw agriculture as a backup option. They perceived agricultural work to be physically demanding, high risk and not very profitable, a view supported by families working in the fishing and farming industries. The barriers cited included the low income generated, poor soil quality, low agricultural productivity, high cost of inputs, difficulties accessing land and lack of new techniques. The challenges posed by climate change further underpinned this negative view. Nevertheless, some positive aspects were mentioned, such as the opportunity to produce healthy food, the flexibility and the possibility to work close to the family home.

Most youth entering agriculture are self-employed and work as small-scale farmers. Therefore, an assessment of skills and training needs in rural areas should focus on the skills required to be self-employed. Young farmers need to run their farms as businesses and must understand how the market functions in order to meet market demands and increase their bargaining power.

When planning to develop capacities and skills, through, for example, training programmes, it is crucial to consider the type of self-employment that interests participants. This can range from selling his or her own labour daily to running a large enterprise.

Poverty and the structural problems of the agricultural sector mentioned above are the main barriers for youth in accessing decent rural employment. However, their lack of access to quality education and training programmes, as well as the limited support and information available to them to help them make good decisions, were identified as significant challenges. Reversing this situation requires a sustainable enhancement of the education system, as well as the provision of appropriate training services to ensure successful school-to-work transition.

A well-balanced policy mix reflecting national and local circumstances can encourage employment opportunities and create an environment that enables rural youth. Building on previous research on agriculture in Cambodia, agricultural transformation requires promotion of agribusiness enterprises, support

to community-managed organizations of farmers, promotion of agropreneurs, and investments in agricultural and rural development, particularly in infrastructure, energy, water, education and health. Framework enhancements, such as access to land, finance, ICT, markets and value chains, are also of great significance to farmers and especially to rural youth. Youth are often denied access due to age restrictions. The RGC and MAFF need to work on these issues and create a framework where young people can become involved in agriculture more easily and successfully. However, this study focuses on the benefits that trainings can have for the improvement of decent rural employment conditions for this age group.

Recommendations

Access to school education

Access to school education is crucial for rural youth and a precondition for taking part in TVET and other trainings. Income-related poverty and its implications have a high negative impact on access to schools and the ability of youth to stay in school. The study reveals a lack of access to relevant technical, business and life skills training in formal school systems. Secondary education curricula should be revised to introduce or emphasize life skills, business skills and adequate agricultural skills, both theory and practice.

For low-income families in rural areas, going to school entails high opportunity costs in the form of reduced family income. The promotion of school feeding programmes and conditional cash transfer programmes (CCT) related to school enrolment and attendance can reduce early school dropouts.

Training needs of rural youth

Institution-based training services and non-governmental and private training initiatives contribute significantly to skills building, especially in remote areas. Institutionalized agricultural training provision requires further strengthening to support the national goal of transforming Cambodia's agricultural sector; the diverse nature of skills acquisition opportunities should be maintained.

Several experts and other interviewees claim that lack of access to community-based agricultural training programmes remains an issue for youth in rural Cambodia. The study highlights the need for young people to attend long-term agricultural programmes; moreover, training providers should work towards expanding long-term training programmes. Findings suggest that such developments would have a more sustainable impact on agricultural productivity and diversification than the provision of an ambiguous number of short-term training offers.

Access to TVET

The RGC has increasingly supported the most vulnerable students by assisting them in priority areas, such as accommodation, meals and transportation. To encourage young people to participate in TVET, scholarship opportunities could be increased. This could also help reduce the high dropout rate of young training participants.

At present, a limited number of bridging programmes provide out-of-school youth with a second chance to complete secondary education and pursue TVET. Due to the country's rapid demographic shift and the associated demand for future skills, TVET access for those already in the workforce or those who have completed secondary education could also be promoted.

The general perception of TVET is negative. In fact, it is viewed as a second-rate education for poor people. This poses a great challenge to enrolling youth in new and existing agricultural training programmes. Awareness raising and information sharing are needed to demonstrate the potential held by employment (especially self-employment) in agriculture and the potential positive impact of agricultural training on agricultural productivity and income generation.

Methodology of youth-tailored agricultural trainings

Trainings tailor-made for rural youth must cover a variety of topics, including basic business skills, so youth can identify business opportunities and fully develop innovative ideas. They should also teach soft skills that foster students' self-esteem and prepare them for the job market.

In remote areas where training centres do not exist, arrangements for mobile training and blended e-learning courses can foster the agricultural education of young people.

The Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools (JFFLS), developed by FAO and implemented in many countries around the world, have proven to be a successful model for agriculture-related trainings. To improve incomes, employment opportunities and access to markets, and to strengthen organizational capacities (i.e. farmer associations and organizations), the JFFLS programme teaches vulnerable children and youth (age 15–24) agricultural and life skills. The training programmes last 6–12 months and follow the local cropping cycle. The hands-on programme is accompanied by a training of trainers programme. Simultaneously, youth are encouraged to initiate good agricultural practices within their households. Due to increased employment and self-employment opportunities in many countries where JFFLS are held, the approach has been adapted to suit many different contexts. So far, it has not been implemented in Cambodia. Initiating this programme in Cambodia seems promising, although substantial financial resources are required.

Farm as a business – the skills needed

In the current context of Cambodia's labour market, agricultural self-employment is often the only option available to young people. Nevertheless, young people tend to have limited access to financial services as well as limited knowledge when it comes to business and entrepreneurial skills. According to an NIS, MoP and ILO study, the most frequently stated challenges for young people's businesses are lack of financial resources (cited by 51.6 percent) and insufficient business expertise (14.8 percent) (NIS, MoP and ILO, 2015). Financial institutions need to enable better access for and tailor financial services to young people. Furthermore, training programmes should involve practice in planning and running a micro-enterprise and include coaching by people with business experience. Life skills training components focusing on self-empowerment, problem solving and decision making are key for young people; however, few support mechanisms exist enabling them to start their own business and reduce the risks associated with doing so.

There are many successful international examples that follow a similar strategy in providing necessary skills training programmes. Using a combination of theoretical and practical learning, training services supply not only technical skills, but also soft and business skills.

Many potential training beneficiaries in Cambodia come from vulnerable backgrounds and often lack a basic education. Considering this educational disparity, a possible approach could be to design learning modules that not only cover skills relevant to agricultural work and entrepreneurship, but also offer an opportunity for trainees to catch up on basic education they have missed, including functional literacy and numeracy skills.

Post-training support

Since risks associated with entrepreneurship are particularly challenging for rural youth, it is important to establish support mechanisms. Post-training support, such as mentoring, has the potential to eliminate some of these risks.

Within the scope of this study, former training participants reported having been left largely alone after trainings, with the result that they lacked the know-how to implement the new agricultural techniques acquired.

Thus, it is essential to ensure post-training support for all public and private training programmes, especially for young people.

School-to-job transition

The study reveals that school-to-job transition services are limited in Cambodia's rural areas. As often stated by youth, students lack information about future job possibilities. Thus, support needs to be provided for early career counselling by qualified career advisers.

Although job centres exist in the provinces, their visibility and relevance to youth in the villages remains low. TVET centres can play an important part in improving the school-to-job transition. They could be upgraded to become one-stop service institutions, providing trainees with convenient employment services such as apprenticeship opportunities, job counselling and information about how to develop their own businesses.

The involvement of employers is fundamental for successful school-to-job transition. Companies require support to invest in and train young people in an area of their company with potential for expansion. According to UNESCO, governments should strengthen the role of companies in skills development by identifying the skills they require their employees to have. In regular monitoring processes, such as ILO labour force and employer surveys, comprehensive data must be gathered on employer needs and labour turnover.

Gender differences in accessing education, training and work

Several interviewees mentioned that accessing education is more difficult for girls. However, official numbers do not support this. In fact, girls today are more likely to complete primary school than they were in the past. However, the situation varies between urban and rural areas. Boys in urban areas have higher completion levels in lower secondary school than girls in urban areas, while rural children generally lag behind their urban peers. Girls, on the other hand, have higher chances of completing secondary school. Although perceived gender gaps are not reflected in the official numbers, they do still exist, and further research is needed to define the nature and the exact scope and scale.

Gender stereotypes influence job- and training-related decisions. As stated in several studies, women face more difficulties and longer school-to-work transition periods than men. Work in garment factories is considered a female profession, while construction work is primarily undertaken by men. In agriculture, mainly women perform the task of transplanting seedlings, while men operate machinery, such as hand tractors. Nevertheless, the agricultural sector is considered appropriate for both men and women, according to participants. Female youth must often help their parents more than their male siblings, which suggests a gender-specific barrier. Women may also have less access to enabling factors, such as land titles. In many cases, women deal with a triple burden: responsible for childcare, domestic labour in the home and economic tasks. According to local authorities and national experts, young mothers are a particularly vulnerable group due to their high workload comprising house chores and family obligations – they are often required to do more than young fathers. It is important to provide young mothers with flexible opportunities to re-enter the education system or training programmes when it is convenient to them.

Youth empowerment

Participation and representation of young people in politics is pivotal to youth's ability to address concerns and aspirations. When designing policies for youth, their opinions need to be considered in order to create appropriate measures. The same holds true for employment policies for youth. As the study highlighted, all forms of youth participation are scarce in Cambodia. Youth clubs serve to strengthen youth networks, help them to cooperate with one another and raise their self-confidence. To foster youth empowerment, a culture of participation among youth must be created in schools and training institutions.

Furthermore, young people need to be involved in political decision making. This can happen through an exchange with decision makers or through participation in meetings of local authorities. However, both authorities and parents must first be made aware of the importance of youth involvement. Political participation can be promoted through various means, including government engagement, NGO interventions, volunteering initiatives and media involvement.

Finally, it is critical that youth receive support to help organize themselves. They must be trained in organizational skills and public speaking. A possible next step is to create a network for youth organizations that allows them to exchange ideas with their peers. Through peer learning, youth can be encouraged to voice their opinions publicly.

Safe migration

Migration is a central topic. In Battambang Province, for example, up to 90 percent of youth in some villages migrated to Thailand. Thus, informing youth of their rights and providing the facts about legal migration is an important part of improving access to decent working conditions. Several stakeholders stressed the importance of education-related projects for young people that focus on safe migration, since this group is especially vulnerable to exploitation and unsafe working conditions.

Circular migration is common practice for rural youth in Cambodia. Migrants who have returned to Cambodia can contribute to further development by sharing the knowledge and experiences they gained abroad. The Government, in particular the MoLVT, should engage in encouraging return migration by providing employment services that are tailor-made for returning migrants and recognizing the skills they acquired abroad.

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1. Introduction

Youth, defined as 15–24-year-olds by the United Nations (UN), account for approximately one one-fifth of the population of developing and emerging countries, and their numbers are expected to continue to grow in the coming decades. In Cambodia, an estimated 65 percent of the population is below the age of 30.

Many youth in Cambodia work in rural areas where decent employment opportunities are rare. The youth unemployment rate in rural areas is low (around 7 percent), while current national underemployment rates, which consider all age groups, are believed to be over 40 percent. Due to a growing population, there is concern that the formal economy will not be able to absorb the growing number of youth entering the workforce each year. Meanwhile, more young people migrate for work to Viet Nam or Thailand, or into the garment sector, where they are prone to unsafe labour migration or unskilled, low-paid work. The proportion of youth working in the agricultural sector declined from 83.5 percent in 1999 to 69.8 percent in 2004, and continues to decline. Those who remain in agriculture often work on family farms.

Young people between the ages of 15 and 17 face specific challenges, as this age is decisive for how youth transition from school to work. Furthermore, young people at this age encounter major barriers to accessing resources, services, employment opportunities and markets; they operate primarily in the informal sector due to an unclear labour regulation framework which often exposes them to unsafe working conditions (FAO, 2017a). Cambodian youth in rural areas have difficulty accessing high-quality education. As a consequence, they are often low-skilled and at risk of being trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty. There is a need to harness the innovative potential of this age group. This can be achieved by supporting youth to enable them to stay at school as long as possible, and by allowing those who dropped out of school to enter technical and vocational education and training programmes.

Despite this need, there are few programmes and policies focusing on youth aged 15–17 (FAO, 2017a). Technical and vocational education and trainings often ignore the specific situation of rural youth. To address these challenges, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) commissioned the Centre for Rural Development (SLE) to undertake a case study in Cambodia to investigate what skills and training young people need in order to gain access to decent employment in rural areas, specifically in agriculture. FAO asked the SLE to provide a practitioner's guide to assess skills and training needs focusing on rural youth aged 15–17.

The purpose of this study is to assess the skills and training needs of rural youth in Cambodia and to develop recommendations on how to foster their access to decent employment. The skills and training needs assessment (STNA) was conducted in the provinces of Kampong Chhnang, Battambang and Kampong Cham. The study will be utilized primarily by FAO in Rome and in Cambodia, and by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) of Cambodia, and additional national ministries. The study was prepared by a team from SLE under the supervision of Heidi Feldt. The interdisciplinary team consists of Lisa Kirtz, Manuel Marx, Nora Nebelung, Verena Vad and Johannes von Stamm.

Chapters 2 and 3 present the framework and the methodology of the case study. Chapter 4 then describes the context of Cambodia, with reference to the economic background, the labour market, youth and migration; skills and training are then examined in Chapter 5. The results of the field studies of the three provinces are analysed and discussed in Chapters 6 and 7. The paper includes examples of the promotion of youth access to decent work at international level. Chapter 8 is a collection of research-based recommendations that aim to provide relevant stakeholders with ideas for improving the employment situation of rural youth in Cambodia.

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2. Framework

The overall framework of the study is two-tiered. The institutional framework describes how the study is embedded into different policies and strategies of FAO and the MAFF. The conceptual framework comprises the definitions of youth, the concept of decent employment and the developed guiding questions on rural youth employment in Cambodia.

2.1 Institutional framework

This study is embedded in the FAO strategic framework on decent rural employment and the MAFF childhood policy. It therefore supports rural poverty eradication efforts by the Decent Rural Employment Team of FAO and the Gender and Children Working Group, as well as the Technical Coordination Committee on Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) of the MAFF in Cambodia. The study aims to contribute to the following:

- FAO's Strategic Programme 3: Rural Poverty Reduction.
- Portfolio development on decent rural employment.
- New road map on the elimination of the worst forms of child labour in agriculture through promotion of skill building for youth.
- Integration of youth into jobs along agricultural value chains (VCs).

Furthermore, the study supports the implementation of the MAFF Policy and Strategy Framework on Childhood Development and Protection in the Agriculture Sector 2016–2020, objective three: "Improve vocational skills of youth in agricultural production". The possibility of scaling up the STNA to other provinces is under discussion. Finally, the study may also prove useful to other decision-makers and ministries engaging in rural youth employment, as well as to public, private or civil society institutions involved in planning related to agricultural and rural development.

2.2 Conceptual framework

The easiest way to define youth is by age, especially in relation to education and employment. As mentioned above, the UN defines youth as persons between the ages of 15 and 24. This definition is without prejudice to other definitions by member states, some of which vary significantly. In the case in Cambodia, for example, youth is defined as persons between the ages of 15 and 30 (MoEYS, 2011). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child defines children as persons below the age of 18. The line between youth and children is blurred for those between the ages of 15 and 17: children in this age group can legally be employed in Cambodia, since the minimum age for employment is 15.

The 15–17 age group is often neglected in the global discourse on youth employment, as well as in national youth policies. Youth under 18 years face specific barriers and vulnerabilities. They can easily succumb to child labour and face additional challenges in accessing decent employment opportunities, as well as financial and social protection services (FAO, 2017a). They are at greater risk of being exploited, especially in the agricultural sector. In the worst circumstances, exploitation can include physical and/or sexual abuse. This is compounded by factual circumstances that result in higher probabilities of youth aged 15–17 engaging in hazardous child labour. In Cambodia, around 19 percent of children below the age of 18 are economically active. More than half of them (56.9 percent) are child labourers, many of whom (31.3 percent) work under hazardous conditions (ILO and NIS, 2013).

In 1999, the International Labour Organization (ILO) developed the Decent Work Agenda. This became an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the form of Goal 8 (Decent Work

and Economic Growth), which addresses the aforementioned issues. According to the ILO:

> *Decent work sums up the aspirations of people in their working lives. It involves opportunities for productive work that delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families; better prospects for personal development and social integration; freedom for people to express their concerns, to organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives; and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men (ILO, 2006).*

The agenda rests on four main pillars, namely: employment creation and enterprise development; social protection; standards and rights at work; and governance and social dialogue.

While the ILO leads the Decent Work Agenda, FAO plays a crucial complementary role promoting decent employment in rural areas, acknowledged in its Strategic Framework for 2010–19 (FAO, 2013a). Rural employment includes:

> *any activity, occupation, work, business or service performed by rural people for remuneration, profit, social or family gain, in cash or kind, including under a contract of hire, written or oral, expressed or implied, and regardless if the activity is performed on a self-directed, part-time, full-time or casual basis (FAO, 2013b, p. 1).*

According to FAO, decent rural employment (DRE) – comprising self-employment – includes any activity, occupation, work, business or service performed for pay or profit by women and men, adults and youth in rural areas that acts in accordance with the following six conditions (also referred to as the six pillars). **Decent rural employment:**

1. Respects the core labour standards as defined in ILO Conventions, and therefore such labour:
   a. is not child labour;
   b. is not forced labour;
   c. guarantees freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining and promotes organization of rural workers; and
   d. does not entail discrimination at work on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction, social origin or other.
2. Provides an adequate living income.
3. Entails an adequate degree of employment security and stability.
4. Adopts minimum occupational safety and health (OSH) measures, which are adapted to address sector-specific risks and hazards.
5. Avoids excessive working hours and allows sufficient time for rest.
6. Promotes access to adapted technical and vocational training.

According to FAO, rural workers lack the technical and entrepreneurial skills needed for the demands of the rural labour market. In addition, rural youth are particularly disadvantaged in terms of access to training and agricultural extension services (FAO, 2015a). This study aims to assess the skills and training needs of rural youth in Cambodia while also investigating possible ways to create better access to DRE.

The following **guiding questions** formed the structure of the case study and are discussed in the concluding chapters:

1. What do rural youth need to access decent employment?
2. What is the demand of the labour market?
3. What skills and life skills are needed for rural youth to find decent employment?
4. How should agricultural technical and vocational education and training (ATVET) be structured and what topics should be emphasized to enable youth to access decent employment?
5. What must be done to make work in the agricultural sector more attractive for rural youth?

3. Methodology

The following chapter describes the methodology of the skills and training needs assessment (STNA). The STNA approach includes data collection, data processing and analysis, as well as recommendations. Information was gathered from both primary sources (national and international expert interviews, focus group discussions and interviews in three provinces, and the results of two stakeholder workshops in Phnom Penh) and secondary sources. Figure 1 displays the STNA approach.

FIGURE 1: **STNA approach**

Source: Authors.

3.1 Data collection

To analyse Cambodia's legal framework and national policies on youth employment and labour standards and to obtain an initial understanding of training needs, enablers and barriers for decent rural youth employment, interviews were conducted with leading key experts at the regional FAO and ILO offices in Bangkok. In addition, interviews with experts from international organizations, ministries, donors, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), government institutions, universities and other research institutions took place in Phnom Penh (see Annex 1 for a complete list of interview partners). Selected experts, representatives of the provincial agriculture departments, organizations active in youth capacity development and youth organizations were invited to a kick-off workshop in Phnom Penh to discuss the research goals and methodology. The workshop participants carried out a stakeholder mapping exercise to compile a list of stakeholders. Three topics – youth participation and empowerment, youth employment in agriculture, and technical and vocational education and training (TVET) – were discussed. The issues raised at the workshop helped the team gain further insights, raise awareness and improve the planning of the field trips.

Data was gathered primarily in three provinces. The provinces were preselected by the MAFF on the basis of the following criteria:

- Fisheries and/or industrial crop production (rice, cassava) are present.
- Potential exists for development of the agricultural sector, including vegetable crop growth.
- The departmental structure of the MAFF supports youth in agriculture.

Kampong Chhnang includes many fishery communities, while Battambang and Kampong Cham are strongly shaped by agriculture. The Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) in each province supported and facilitated the research process. (See Annex 2 for details of the sampling criteria.)

Focus group discussions were held with young people, in particular with youth aged 15–17. The purpose of the focus group discussions was to pinpoint skills and training needs, and identify the barriers and enabling factors that influence access to decent employment. Focus group discussions were also conducted with parents from the villages to investigate their views on young peoples' job-related needs; the parents were not necessarily related to the interviewed youth, but all had children in the target age group (15–17 years). Teachers and local authorities in the villages and communes were also interviewed. To further explore the skills and training needs, employers, training providers and participants and other stakeholders, such as research institutions, job centres and provincial departments, were interviewed. As requested by the MAFF, interviewees were selected according to their engagement in the value chains of vegetable crops, industrial crops (e.g. rice), animal raising and fisheries/aquaculture. The DAFF identified villages and communes in the respective provinces and arranged focus group discussions and interviews in a total of 13 villages in the three study provinces. The DAFF also assisted in the selection of further interview partners in line with the sampling criteria (see Annex 2) and according to the project requirements and time restrictions. World Vision provided contacts to three agricultural cooperatives and four youth clubs in Battambang. Prom Srey Organization for Development (PSOD) provided contacts to the youth club, Child and Youth Brave, in Tbong Khmum. A total of 37 focus group discussions (with youth, parents, training participants and agricultural cooperatives) were conducted, in addition to 57 interviews in the provinces and 32 interviews at national level. In total, 400 interviewees participated in the study.

The field data collection employed the use of two main instruments:

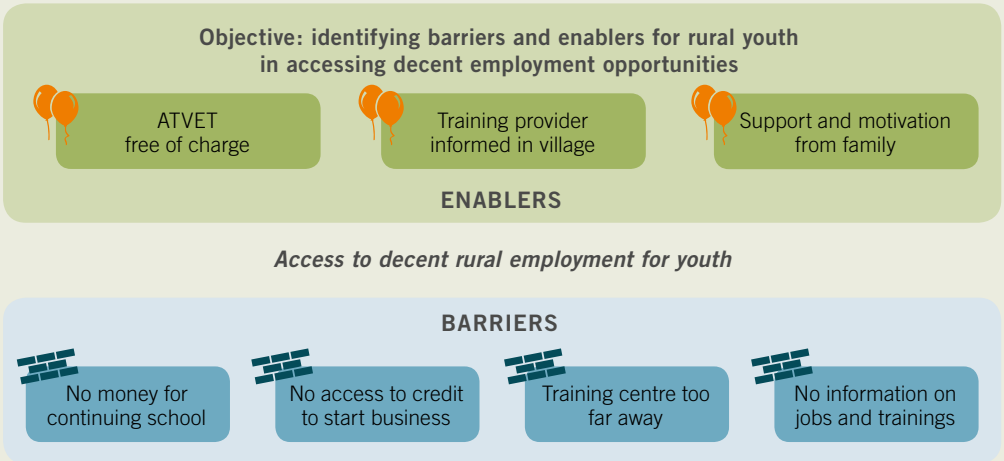
- **Focus group discussions** to identify the job-related needs of youth in the selected villages.
- **Qualitative interviews** with both open and closed questions to obtain additional information on skills and training needs, training and job counselling services offered, and the application of national policies on agriculture, education and training.

TABLE 1: Number and composition of interviewees by province and interview group

	Youth	Parents	Teachers	Local authorities	TVET providers	Other training providers	Training participants	Employers	Job centres	Agricultural cooperatives	Provincial departments	University	National experts
Phnom Penh/ Bangkok	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	32
Kampong Chhnang	18	17	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-
Battambang	71	24	4	4	2	6	6	2	1	34	3	1	-
Kampong Cham	61	57	6	5	1	7	6	6	1	16	3	1	-
Subtotal	150	98	12	11	3	13	12	8	2	50	7	2	32
Total													**400**

The focus group discussions with rural youth comprised two stages. First, participants were asked to present themselves, their daily activities and their job aspirations. Presentation methods included writing or drawing on a poster (one side of the poster representing the present, the other side the future), in addition to oral presentations. During the presentations, the interviewers asked questions about family structure, migration and training, with the aim of gathering additional information on the individual living conditions of each young person, including their potential path dependency and previous experiences. Second, a participatory rural appraisal (PRA) method, namely force field analysis, was implemented to foster an interactive discursive analysis on the participants' access to decent work. In the balloons and stones method described by Kumar and Chambers (2002) and portrayed in Figure 2, a theme is visualized as a bar that can be influenced – either by barriers worsening or by enablers improving a situation. In this case, the theme was access to decent work for rural youth. Barriers and enabling factors were represented, respectively, by stones and balloons on either side of the white bar. The focus group participants were then encouraged to imagine how their situations could be improved by decreasing the barriers or strengthening the enabling factors.

FIGURE 2: Force field analysis



Source: Authors.

Additional information was gathered through interviews with teachers, local authorities, training providers, job centres, employers and other relevant stakeholders, including youth clubs. The interviews were semi-structured with both open and closed questions. Questions were asked on the following topics: skills and training needs of rural youth and rural employers; skills mismatches; the quality of offered trainings; market trends; job counselling offers; and the application of national policies regarding agriculture, employment and education. Two national consultants and two interpreters facilitated the focus group discussions and interviews, which were conducted in Khmer.

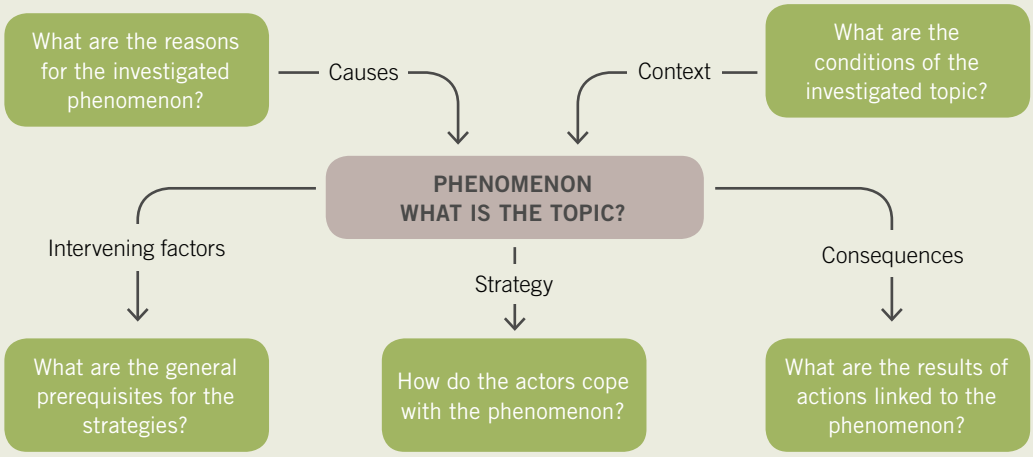
Based on the experiences of a two-day pre-test in Kampong Chhnang, data collection methods were adapted to suit the availability of interview partners and the rural context. For example, planned qualitative interviews were modified to become focus group discussions. In another case, the method of assessing the life, business and technical skills of rural youth was adjusted when a standardized rating scale was found to be inappropriate for the context of rural Cambodia; the methodology was adapted to include open questions about the importance of exemplary skills such as communication and negotiation.

3.2 Data processing and analysis

Collected data was processed following the theoretical approaches of content analysis and grounded theory in order to systematically analyse all data (Glaser and Strauss, 2009; Strauss and Corbin, 2008). MAXQDA[1] served as a tool to structure insights gained through focus group discussions and interviews by applying thematic codes. In a first step, data was coded openly (i.e. there were no fixed coding schemes), leaving space for subsequent adaptation. While coding the data, categories describing the investigated phenomenon were identified. The phenomenon structure served as an analytical tool to translate from descriptive to analytical codes. In a second step, the open coding was further developed into a coding scheme following the logic of the structure of the phenomenon and the previously defined guiding questions. This step, known as "axial coding", facilitates understanding of connections between different categories.

Figure 3 illustrates how a code scheme can be applied to reflect data systematically. It is important to identify the connections between root causes, context variables and intervening factors related to the phenomenon. In doing so, it is possible to analyse strategies and consequences of the phenomenon systematically (Strauss and Corbin, 2008, p. 76).

FIGURE 3: Phenomenon structure



Source: Struebing, 2008, p. 28 (adapted).

1 MAXQDA is a software-based data analysis program, which allows qualitative, quantitative and mixed-method analyses.

3.3 Formulation of recommendations

Relevant ideas from the interviews were coded to formulate feasible recommendations for improving access to decent employment for rural youth. Once the recommendations were drawn up, the enablers and barriers were analysed, noting the similarities and differences between the provinces. Expert opinions at national and provincial level, as well as suggestions emerging from the workshop in Phnom Penh and concerning youth empowerment, youth in agriculture and TVET, were incorporated to complement the picture. The study also reviewed national and international experiences, studies and best practices regarding the improvement of access to decent employment for rural youth with a special focus on trainings and school/training-to-job transitions. The results were then analysed and the most feasible and appropriate options selected. The above-mentioned guiding questions steered the research towards conclusions and possible solutions based on the data gathered. These results were then used to formulate recommendations, which were discussed with several national and international experts before being presented at the final stakeholder workshop in Phnom Penh. The final workshop brought all stakeholders together, allowing people from different backgrounds to share experiences and ideas, and verify, adjust or complement the recommendations made by the research team.

3.4 Validity of the methodological approach

Due to time and financial constraints, some social or geographic particularities, such as the situation of youth in mountainous regions or the livelihoods of indigenous peoples, were not covered in the case study. However, other researchers have focused on other provinces and vulnerable groups. This study complements their findings with the goal of generating transferable results (ADB, 2013; CDRI, 2015).

Furthermore, it was not always possible to maintain the established sampling strategy due to the limited eligibility of the desired interview partners. This was especially the case for the 15–17 age group of interviewees, most of whom were school students. For this reason, the research in some villages may lack insight into the job-related needs of youth who have already dropped out of school. Many young people over 15 years have already migrated to Phnom Penh or to other countries, mainly Thailand. However, when formulating and discussing the recommendations, different needs of youth subgroups were identified in scenarios including both dropouts and migrants.

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4. Country context: Cambodia

4.1 Socio-economic context and rural development

4.1.1 Demographic trends

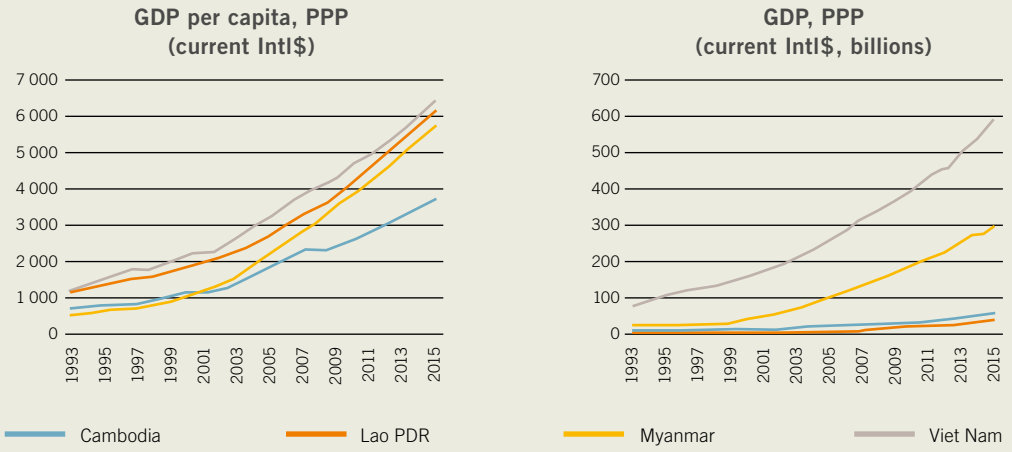
According to the 2013 Cambodia Inter-Censal Population Survey, the total population of Cambodia is 14.68 million and projected to rise at an annual rate of 1.6 percent. An estimated 76 percent of the population live in rural areas, where occupations relate primarily to agriculture. Phnom Penh is the country's capital and largest city, with an estimated population of 1.68 million people. Phnom Penh's annual population growth of approximately 2.34 percent exceeds the national average of 1.83 percent, ranking it among the highest in the country. Similar growth rates are observable in other urban centres, namely Battambang, Siem Reap and Sihanoukville (MoP and NIS, 2013). The recent spikes in urban population growth have largely been attributed to internal migration, in which people from poor and rural areas move to factory-laden peri-urban areas, Special Economic Zones (SEZs) along the inner Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) trade routes and larger plantations in the southern part of the country (UNESCO, 2013a; World Bank, 2017). In the previous census in 1998, youth accounted for 26 percent of the total population; this proportion rose to 31.5 percent in 2012 (MoP, 2012). This trend is largely due to the increase in birth rate following the reign of the Khmer Rouge, and overall, an estimated 65 percent of the population is below 30 years of age. The total number of youth in the population is expected to increase by 7.7 percent over the next 5 years (MoP and NIS, 2013).

4.1.2 Post-war development

Cambodia's recent history explains some of the persistent challenges that the country faces today. Following almost two centuries of occupation, Cambodia declared its independence from France in 1953. The country soon became involved in the Second Indochina War and experienced three more decades of political turmoil. One of the most detrimental events in the country's recent history was the establishment of Democratic Kampuchea – the given name of the state ruled by the Khmer Rouge from 1975 to 1979. Led by Pol Pot, the regime was oppressive and nationalist, and carried out far-reaching socio-economic changes, including forced depopulation of urban centres and forced engagement in agricultural activities. Under the rule of the Khmer Rouge, an estimated 1.7 million people died from overwork, disease, mass executions and starvation. The Khmer Rouge systematically forced the country to follow Pol Pot's vision of a communist agrarian economy, in which money was abandoned, books were burned, and academics, teachers and the intellectual elite were murdered (Chandler, 1993). Both policymakers and agriculture experts have expressed the view that the image of agriculture suffered under the Khmer Rouge. As a result, the population has a generally negative perception of agriculture, in particular of agricultural cooperatives.

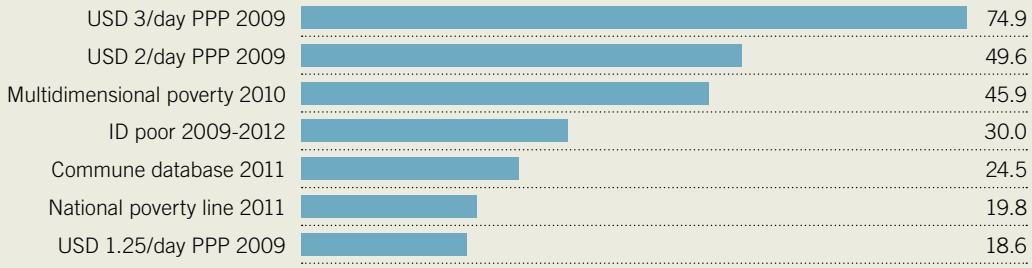
In 1999, Cambodia became the tenth country to join the regional intergovernmental organization, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Cambodia's economy quickly started to recover after the war. Over the past 19 years, economic expansion has occurred at an average annual rate of 7.6 percent. In 2016, Cambodia became a lower-middle income country. Nevertheless, despite high growth rates, the country lags behind its regional peers, especially in terms of per capita gross domestic product (GDP) at purchasing power parity (PPP), as Figure 4 illustrates.

FIGURE 4: GDP Development in Selected Countries in Southeast Asia



Source: World Bank, 2017.

FIGURE 5: Cambodia's poverty rate (%) measured at different poverty lines



Source: ADB, 2014.

4.1.3 Poverty and inequality in Cambodia

Cambodia's economic growth resulted in a decrease in income-related poverty in both urban and rural areas. In 1992, the poverty rate measured by the national poverty line was approximately 50 percent. It dropped to around 13.5 percent in 2014. While this development is significant, it must be noted that the poverty line fluctuates. Figure 5 depicts significant differences in poverty rates drawn from commonly used poverty measurements for the years 2009 to 2012.

Poverty is largely concentrated in rural areas, where 91 percent of poor households were located in 2011. Poverty is also associated with education, which is linked to the need for youth to seek higher education or skills training. In 2011, adults in households below the poverty line received an average of 3.3 years of formal education, compared with 5.1 years for adults from non-poor households (ADB, 2014).

With regard to gender, a 2014 World Bank study on poverty in Cambodia found that the difference in poverty rates experienced by women who headed households compared with men who headed households was marginal: 22.5 percent versus 20.1 percent (ADB, 2014; World Bank, 2014). However, the 2014 country poverty analysis conducted by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) found that declining income poverty did not translate to improved well-being for women and girls; it argued that increased well-being can only be achieved if resources are shared equally between

male and female household members. High levels of anaemia, malnutrition and domestic violence are evidence that women are disadvantaged. The same study also found that women who are heads of households tend to experience social and economic shocks more severely; this is attributed to the fact that women tend to have inferior economic possibilities and own less land.

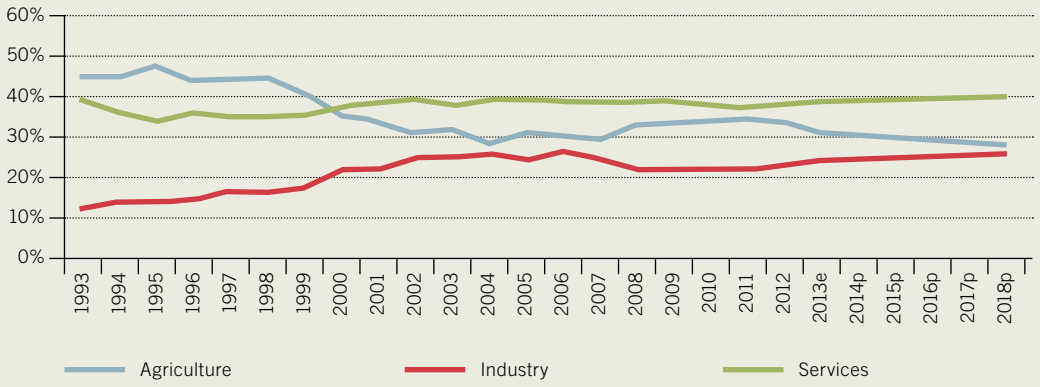
4.1.4 Agriculture

Agriculture has the potential to lift people out of poverty, in particular when policies and investments are directed towards improving productivity, diversification and processing, and increasing exports. According to a recent World Bank report on agriculture in Cambodia, more than 60 percent of poverty reduction during the last decade can be attributed to the agricultural sector. This is primarily due to higher rice prices which stimulated rice production and resulted in higher wages for farmworkers (World Bank, 2015).

Cambodia's agricultural landscape has undergone a process of diversification in recent decades. In 1993, the agricultural sector accounted for approximately 45 percent of GDP; by 2002, this figure had fallen to 30 percent. In the wake of the global economic crisis, agriculture had a revival, thanks in part to rising commodity prices, but its share of GDP then dropped below 30 percent. In the same period, the industry share of GDP rose from around 11 percent in 1993 to just below 30 percent in 2002. The share of the service sector remained relatively stable at around 40 percent (see Figure 6). However, agricultural land and labour productivity subsequently increased (World Bank, 2015). For example: crop cultivation diversified to include increased production of cassava, maize and vegetables; the paddy sector progressed, focusing on the more profitable aromatic rice paddy; and yields increased for most crops.

Nevertheless, in order to "increase agricultural growth around 5 percent per annum through enhancement of the agricultural productivity, diversification and commercialization and livestock and aquaculture farming" (MAFF, 2015b, p. 26), Cambodia aims to further modernize its agricultural sector. Furthermore, the Cambodia Industrial Development Policy 2015–2025 promotes agricultural development and in particular the growth of the processing industry. Currently, the agroprocessing industry is weak compared with neighbouring countries. As a result, almost all products are exported to Viet Nam or Thailand for processing (NIS and MoP, 2015; World Bank, 2015). The government policy targeting added value linked to the processing of agricultural products requires investment and skilled work. Likewise for crop diversification and the processing of vegetables and fruits: skilled workers are needed for production, processing, packaging and distribution of products. There is great potential for adding value and generating greater income.

FIGURE 6: Sectoral shares of GDP, 1993–2018 (projected)



Source: Kuoch and NEA, 2015.

According to the World Bank, small farmers with land area of < 1 ha are less likely to expand and integrate into emerging modern food value chains. In 2011, small-scale farmers accounted for 48 percent of rural land-owning households; indeed, Cambodia has seen a trend in which large farms (> 3 ha) become larger and small farms (< 1 ha) become smaller (World Bank, 2015). The average farm size in Cambodia is currently estimated to be 0.5 ha (Millar, 2017). Consequently, an increasing number of small farmers need to diversify their income sources and engage in off-farm activities. Such activities can involve migrating to urban areas to work in factories, construction and other industrial and service sectors. According to a UNESCO/IFAD study in 2016 on the situation of young women and men in Cambodia, both on- and off-farm activities contribute significantly to individuals' livelihoods (Robinson-Pant, 2016). Training providers need to consider these trends when designing suitable training services for youth.

4.2 Youth in Cambodia

Cambodia has several policies and legal provisions relating to youth, i.e. people aged 15–29. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia (1993) provides a legal framework for the rights of young people, including the right to vote and the right to stand as a candidate for election (§34). The macro-level policy framework for youth development in Cambodia includes the Rectangular Strategy III (2014–18) and the National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) adopted in 2011 (RGC, 2013). The Industrial Development Policy, the National Employment Policy (NEP) and the Labour Migration Policy also relate directly to youth. In 2011, the Cambodian Government developed the National Policy on Youth Development (NPYD). The policy calls for a holistic approach across all concerned sectors, and requires each sector:

> *to work together to improve youth's capacity and provide them with opportunity to develop their potential in education, employment, health and decision making, and participation in development of their families, communities, nation and the world (ILO and NIS, 2013).*

The strategy focuses on 12 areas of action, including education, training and capacity building, provision of health service, entrepreneurship, youth participation, volunteerism, gender and drug use. In the framework of the NPYD, the related ministries work together to support youth. The National Youth Development Council (NYDC) was established in 2014 to coordinate and implement the NPYD (NYDC, 2014). The National Youth Action Plan (NYAP) was drafted in 2015, but it still has a very limited budget and is not yet operational. In general, important policies have been drawn up, but they have yet to be fully implemented. According to national experts, the importance of youth and the need to deal with the challenges they face, receives little attention at national, provincial and district level.

4.3 Cambodian labour market

Cambodia's working-age population (WAP)[2] is relatively young. The Labour Force Survey (LFS), carried out between 2011 and 2012, revealed that Cambodia's workforce (aged 15 and above) grew from about 4 million in 1980 to 10.7 million in 2012, with the youth labour force (ages 15–24) around 3.4 million. Hence, Cambodian youth comprised 31.8 percent of the total labour force in 2012 (ILO and NIS, 2013). In 2015, three-quarters (74.1 percent) of the youth population in Cambodia were employed; of these, 67.5 percent were self-employed (NIS, MoP and ILO, 2015).

Cambodia's employment–population ratio is among the highest in the world at 97.3 percent. It is estimated that the country's WAP will continue to grow considerably. Consequently, the economy will be under increasing pressure to provide quality jobs. However, most Cambodians currently work in vulnerable conditions, i.e. as unpaid family workers or own-account workers. Vulnerable employment generally lacks basic social or legal protection and is considered an important indicator of quality of employment (ILO and ADB, 2015; ILO and

2 According to the ILO definition, the WAP includes all persons in the population above a specified age threshold; it is used for statistical purposes to define the economically active population.

NIS, 2013).[3] According to the LFS, an estimated 81.2 percent of all employed persons in 2012 were own-account or contributing family workers in vulnerable employment. This figure is in line with the ADB findings from 2015, which revealed an 82.5 percent share of workers in vulnerable employment. Moreover, although employment rates are high, the underemployment share is believed to be over 40 percent. This statistic depends on various factors, for example, a shortage of jobs matching workers' skill sets (preventing people from working at full capacity) and part-time work done by youth.

The proportion of youth working in the agricultural sector declined from 83.5 percent in 1999 to 69.8 percent in 2004, as more young people migrated to find work in Viet Nam or Thailand or to work in the garment sector (primarily young women) (ILO, 2016a). This number dropped further to 47.1 percent in 2013 (ILO and NIS, 2013). The LFS in 2012 estimated that the service sector accounted for 41.5 percent of the employed population, followed by agriculture (33.2 percent) and industry (25.2 percent) (see Table 2). On the one hand, agriculture was no longer the leading sector for employment; on the other hand, when the working situation of young people was taken into account, the agricultural sector was still the largest employer at 47.1 percent.

Most young people in agriculture work on the family farm, giving rise to two problems. First, 46.8 percent of youths are unpaid family workers, and very few are able to move from unpaid family work to stable and/or satisfactory employment (NIS, MoP and ILO, 2015). Second, 19.1 percent of Cambodian children aged 5–17 years (755 245) are economically active, according to a survey on child labour conducted by the National Institute of Statistics (NIS) of Cambodia and the ILO; and the majority (86.7 percent) live in rural areas (NIS, MoP and ILO, 2015). The Child Labour Department of the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MoLVT) implemented the National Action Plan on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (2008–2012), and in 2012, preparation began for a new Action Plan. Furthermore, in 2015, the MAFF developed a Policy and Strategic Framework on Childhood Development Protection in the Agriculture Sector 2016–2020. Its strategic goal is to promote the protection and development of children in agriculture, especially of vulnerable children in poor farming families.

In addition to the abolishment of child labour, other factors such as a living income can contribute to the creation of DRE. The Cambodia Labour Law of 1997 provides a range of minimum entitlements, including working hours, overtime and leave, regulation of temporary and permanent contracts, maternity rights, occupational health and safety, and payment of wages. According to the Labour Law, the MoLVT and its departments are responsible for labour administration. Table 3 illustrates working conditions regulated by the Labour Law and its first amendment in 2007, and the 2002 Law on Social Security.

TABLE 2: Employed population (15+) by main sectors

	Total		Youth	
	Number	**(%)**	**Number**	**(%)**
Agriculture	2 392 879	33.2	1 839 383	47.1
Industry	1 816 794	25.2	862 333	22.1
Services	2 987 743	41.5	1 200 600	30.8
Total	7 197 416	100.0	3 902 316	100.0

Source: ILO and NIS, 2013.

3 However, employment in the agricultural sector was not considered in the LFS measurement of informal employment.

Progress has been made in recent years in terms of strengthening labour regulations; however, outside the garment industry, regulations are rarely enforced. Low wages and unfavourable working conditions remain constraints for most Cambodians. The MoLVT has fixed a minimum wage for workers employed in the garment and footwear industries, and it is often referred to by other sectors. The minimum monthly wage of USD 40 was originally introduced in 1997; it has since been adjusted eight times to reach the current rate of USD 153, and is scheduled to increase to USD 170 in 2018 (Sineat, 2017). Wages earned in rural areas are substantially lower than those earned in urban areas; the difference between agricultural and non-agricultural wages is relatively minimal in rural areas (World Bank, 2015). The average income of rice farmers is believed to be around USD 50–100.

During the worldwide economic crisis, industry and services were unable to absorb the growing WAP, a failing acknowledged by the National Employment Agency (NEA) in its 2014 Skills Needs Survey: "in this situation, the agriculture sector acted as a sponge, providing shelter and subsistence to many young people who could not find employment in modern sectors". Given the significant population increase during the past three decades, combined with the economic boom, the provision of adequate jobs and training opportunities is expected to remain a major challenge for Cambodia. Access to decent and productive employment opportunities is essential for people-centred development, and the demand for training and quality education is set to increase in the coming years (ILO, Luch and Kuoch, 2013).

TABLE 3: Legal working conditions in Cambodia

Minimum age for employment	15 years
Minimum age for hazardous work*	18 years
Normal weekly hour limit	48 hours
Overtime limit	10 hours per day
Max. weekly hours limit	60 hours
Min. annual leave	15 days
Duration of maternity leave	90 days
Amount of maternity leave benefits	50%

* Hazardous work includes working underground; lifting, carrying or moving heavy loads; deep-sea and off-shore fishing; working near furnaces or kilns used to manufacture glass, ceramics or bricks; firefighting; construction and demolition work; work involving exposure to harmful chemical agents; work done in high temperatures; and handling and spraying of pesticides and herbicides.

Source: RGC, 1997.

TABLE 4: Average monthly income from employment in 2012 (USD)

	Cambodia	Urban	Rural
Agriculture	109.88	115.70	109.72
Industry	112.30	138.87	106.22
Services	131.87	160.53	109.64

Source: ILO and NIS, 2013, p. 60.

4.4 Migration

According to the Ministry of Planning (MoP), 80 percent of Cambodian migrants, including internal and external migrants, are under the age of 30 (World Education, 2015). Rural youth are likely to leave their homes to earn the comparably higher wages paid in the capital and in neighbouring countries. According to a recent World Bank study, Cambodians can earn three times as much in Thailand, where the monthly minimum wage is USD 279 (Testaverde *et al*., 2017). Many Cambodian villages, therefore, face demographic challenges, as there are few young people in the rural workforce. Migration estimates vary significantly depending on the source of information. According to the World Bank, in 2013, there were approximately 1.2 million Cambodian emigrants, representing 7.4 percent of the total population; in contrast, 75 000 migrants come to Cambodia from other counties. It is clear that Cambodia primarily supplies – rather than hosts – migrants (World Bank, 2016).

In 2014, the MoLVT and the ILO reformulated the Labour Migration Policy for Cambodia:[4]

> *To develop a comprehensive and effective labour migration governance framework that protects and empowers women and men throughout the migration cycle, ensures that migration is an informed choice, and enables a positive and profitable experience for individual workers, their families and communities, that also contributes to the development of Cambodia. Recognizing and responding to the distinct needs of migrant workers with respect to their gender, sector, legal status and other individual characteristics, is central to the Policy and its effective implementation (MoLVT and ILO, 2014, p. 32).*

Increased remittances, skills acquisition, lower unemployment and poverty reduction were acknowledged as positive outcomes of migration (MoLVT and ILO, 2014). In this respect, memorandums of understanding (MoUs) and similar migration agreements were established with Thailand, Japan, Malaysia, Qatar, Korea, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait (ILO, 2016b). Despite these arrangements, emigration from Cambodia is mostly irregular (MoLVT and ILO, 2014).

Young Cambodians migrate primarily to Thailand, Korea, Malaysia and Japan, due to a wide range of push-and-pull influences. "Push" factors: the pace of employment creation cannot keep up with the fast rate of population increase; economic expansion is mainly concentrated in urban areas, with rural Cambodians left behind; and although the poverty rate has declined in Cambodia, it remains one of the highest in the region. "Pull" factors: nationals in the receiving countries decline unskilled, low-paid and risky jobs; neighbouring countries offer year-round employment opportunities (especially significant, considering work in rural regions of Cambodia is primarily seasonal – (SEAFDEC, 2017); and comparably high wages can be earned in the destination countries (probably the strongest draw).

A gender difference exists in Cambodian migration patterns. Women tend to migrate to become domestic workers, whereas men often work in construction or in the Thai fishing sector (MoLVT and ILO, 2014). Safe migration and decent working conditions abroad are of great concern as "reports of abuse and exploitation of domestic workers have been recorded in all countries where Cambodian domestic workers are employed" (ILO, 2016b).

Due to the often abusive working conditions, Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs) have been established by the NEA and NGOs in Battambang, Prey Veng and Kampong Cham provinces and in Phnom Penh, supported by the Tripartite Action to Protect Migrants within and from the Greater Mekong Subregion from Labour Exploitation (GMS TRIANGLE project). The MRCs provide a space for potential migrants to obtain information about work-related migration, including labour rights of migrant workers in the destination countries. Furthermore, returning migrants and their families can file complaints and ask for legal assistance. In summary, MRCs aim to provide potential migrants with access to information and to assist them in making more informed decisions (ILO, 2014a).

4 The first Labour Migration Policy was published in 2010.

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Migrants' remittances make a significant contribution to household incomes in Cambodia. About half of migrant workers living abroad send money back to their families to help reduce poverty (Testaverde *et al.*, 2017). The World Bank estimated an inward remittance flow of USD 731 million in 2015 (World Bank, 2016, p. 89). At the same time, Cambodia faces the threat of "brain drain" – the loss of human capital and a potentially major obstacle to development. Close to 15 percent of educated citizens live in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries and are in most cases (40 percent) overqualified for the jobs they hold abroad. Indeed, despite Cambodia's rapid economic transition, educated Cambodians are still likely to seek work abroad (Yap, 2017).

A 2012 survey by the MoP of migrants in Phnom Penh and village chiefs and households in rural areas revealed that circular migration is an important phenomenon, in particular with regard to workers in the garment industry and construction. Village testimonies, supported by international research, suggest that migrants returning home bring many benefits, specifically capital, knowledge and skills (MoP, 2012; Testaverde *et al.*, 2017). In 2014, an International Organization for Migration (IOM) study carried out interviews with 667 returning migrants from Thailand, of which 70 percent were 20–40 years old. Over one-third had not finished primary education and over two-thirds had emigrated due to a lack of employment opportunities or income in Cambodia. Interestingly, when asked about their work-related needs in Cambodia, "78.4 percent of respondents said they required help in finding a job, and 60.3 percent required vocational skill training" (MoLVT and ILO, 2014, p. 15). This indicates a need for tailor-made training programmes and school-to-work transition support. In conclusion, migration has the potential to make an important contribution to the development of the Cambodian society when: migration is regular and safe; benefits linked to diasporas, such as remittances, are well-utilized; and return migration is encouraged. Training programmes can play an important role in fostering advantageous migration for Cambodians.

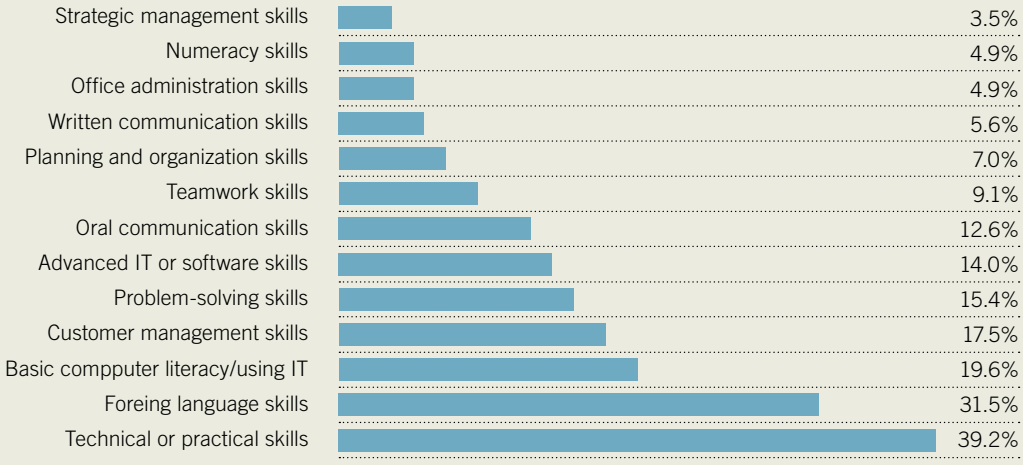
5. Skills and trainings

5.1 Skills and skills gaps in Cambodia

The skills gap for formal employment refers to a situation "when the existing staff cannot perform up to the level required by employers" (Bruni, Luch and Kuoch, 2013). Skills gaps arise mainly from a lack of appropriate training and education. There is an ever-growing demand for medium-level skills, especially for service workers in both the service and the industry sectors; likewise, high-level skills are increasingly required among the industrial skilled workforce. Moreover, more skilled farmers and agricultural workers will be needed in the agricultural sector, considering the expected move from simple crops to livestock (Bruni, Luch and Kuoch, 2013). The Employer Skills Needs Survey 2014 identified which specific skills are lacking (see Figure 7) among technical/practical skills, language skills and basic IT skills (Kuoch and NEA, 2015). These shortages represent a significant constraint to sustained growth and the development of a diversified economy.

A precondition for bridging the skills gap is the availability in rural areas of primary and secondary education that is both of high quality and accessible. An analysis of socio-economic data suggests positive developments in this area, for example, literacy rates for youth aged 15–24 are just below 90 percent, which is the average in lower-middle-income countries (World Bank, 2017). Nevertheless, young people still face challenges when seeking employment opportunities (Seangmean, Sokheng and Somonich, 2015), due to their limited access to education. In 2015, 13.5 percent of the labour force had no education, 27.8 percent had completed primary school, 14.0 percent lower secondary education, 6.8 percent upper secondary education and only 5.4 percent post-secondary education (NIS and MoP, 2016). In comparison, 46.9 percent of the Thai labour force had some primary schooling or no schooling, 31.7 percent secondary schooling and 20.7 percent higher-level education (National Statistical Office Thailand, 2016): a substantial proportion of the Thai population completed a higher level of studies compared with Cambodians.

FIGURE 7: Skills shortages



Source: Kuoch and NEA, 2015.

5.2 Cambodian TVET system and strategy

The general education system in Cambodia comprises four levels: pre-school education, primary education, secondary education (lower and upper) and higher education. After compulsory education (6 years of primary school followed by 3 years of lower secondary school), students have a the option of enrolling in formal technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programmes or continuing for 3 years of upper secondary education. TVET programmes are available at three different levels (each lasting 1 year) in a wide variety of non-agricultural areas, including general mechanics, vehicle repair, agricultural mechanics, computer technology, electricity, electronics and civil engineering. In some parts of the country, agricultural topics are also taught in TVET institutions and Provincial Training Centres (PTCs). The formal TVET system also recruits upper secondary school graduates who have started or completed Grade 12. The duration of training varies depending on the course, but lasts at least 1 year. Upon completion, participants are awarded a formal certificate (Cambodia Qualification Framework I, II and III), which entitles them to continue to higher education. According to the Department of Labour Market Information, the total number of participants in public TVET institutions is increasing and reached 36,120 trainees in the 2015/16 academic year.

Access to formal TVET programmes presents major challenges: only a limited number of bridging programmes exist to provide out-of-school youth with a second chance to complete secondary education and pursue TVET; in addition, formal TVET is primarily offered in urban areas.

The non-formal TVET system is primarily set up in PTCs, Vocational Training Centres (VTCs) and Communal Learning Centres (CLCs).[5] These institutions offer short-term courses lasting 1–4 months and focusing on agriculture, construction, motorcycle repair skills, crafts and basic food processing. Non-formal vocational trainings do not provide certificates in accordance with the Cambodia National Qualification Framework (CNQF). Due to the parallel structure of formal and non-formal TVET, governance problems arise between the MoLVT and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS), for example, responsibilities regarding the supervision and coordination of non-formal trainings are overlapping and unclear (UNESCO, 2013a).

TABLE 5: Cambodia's National Qualifications Framework (CNQF)

CNQF level	Education system	TVET system	Higher education
8		Doctoral degree	Doctoral degree
7		Master's degree in Technology and Business	Master's degree
6		Bachelor's degree in Technology, Engineering and Business	Bachelor's degree
5		Higher Diploma of Technology and Business	Associate degree
4	Upper Secondary School Certificate	TVET Certificate III	
3	Upper Secondary School Certificate	TVET Certificate II	
2	Upper Secondary School Certificate	TVET Certificate I	
1	Lower Secondary School Certificate	Vocational Skills Certificate	

Source: UNEVOC, 2014 (adapted).

5 According to the Department of Labour Market Information, Provincial Training Centre (PTC) and Vocational Training Centre (VTC) are defined as TVET institutions offering training from short-course to Diploma level.

Furthermore, in order to understand the scope of vocational skills training available in Cambodia, it is important to look beyond the formal and non-formal public TVET system. In rural areas, skills training programmes are provided by the Government as well as numerous private sector bodies and NGOs active in the field of skill building. NGOs primarily offer training services on a small scale at provincial or communal level.

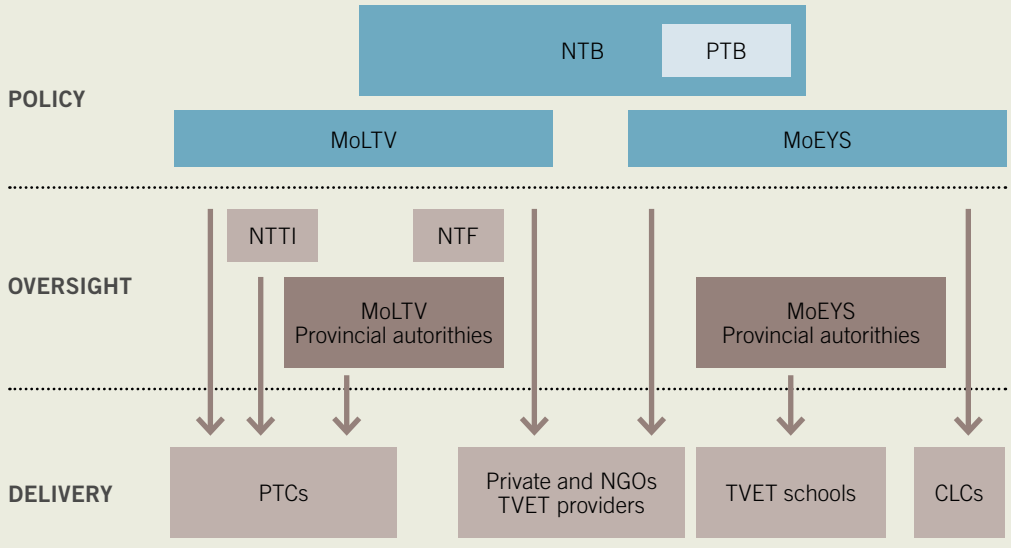
The National Technical Vocational Education and Training Policy 2017–2025 provides a framework for the development of a TVET strategy to enable workforces to better respond to labour market demands; it contributes to industrial development and the provision of decent employment opportunities. The policy is embedded in the Industry Development Policy (IDP) 2015–2025 and the National Employment Policy (NEP) 2015–2025, both of which support the creation of decent employment.

Until 2004, TVET services were overseen by the MoEYS, and when responsibility shifted to the MoLVT in 2005, the MoEYS continued to be involved in TVET. In addition, other ministries provide TVET services or have designed complementary policies (e.g. the MAFF's policy for childhood development). Nevertheless, the majority of TVET services are provided by the MoLVT through 39 institutions spread across the country.

The National Training Board (NTB) is responsible for the TVET system in Cambodia; it determines policy and oversees consultancy and monitoring. The Directorate General of TVET within the MoLVT supports the NTB and provides policy direction and guidelines for national skills development. Consequently, the emphasis is not only on the provision of training, but also on labour market needs and on the demand for skills. Membership of the NTB is under the chair of the Deputy Prime Minister. There are 31 additional members, of whom 16 are senior government officials (including 5 secretaries of state, 3 undersecretaries, and 8 director generals or deputies). In addition, all ministries with direct involvement in TVET provision are represented on the Board.

The TVET system is funded by the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC), international organizations, international and national donors, and other stakeholders. Figure 8 illustrates the connections between the various actors. Government and non-government funds are allocated by the NTB through the National Training Fund (NTF), established in 1998.

FIGURE 8: TVET system and governance



Source: UNESCO, 2013a.

In 2012, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) conducted a study on the Cambodian TVET system. The report noted that Cambodia had already taken several steps to improve the quality of training services (UNESCO, 2013a), but further intervention was necessary, especially in terms of national coordination between TVET and general secondary education. Requirements include the following:

- Build stronger public–private partnerships with employers.
- Improve the quality of trainings.
- Increase the flexibility of TVET.
- Improve career guidance.
- Provide sustainable financial resources for the qualitative expansion of TVET.
- Develop hands-on learning through apprenticeships and by connecting schools with work.

To meet these needs, the National Technical Vocational Education and Training Policy 2017–2025 set the following goals:

- Raise the quality of TVET to meet national and international market demands.
- Increase equitable access to TVET for employment generation.
- Promote public–private partnerships and aggregate resources from stakeholders to support sustainable development of the TVET system.
- Improve the governance of the TVET system.

5.3 Agricultural education and training in Cambodia

Three universities in Cambodia have agricultural programmes. The leading agricultural university is the Royal University of Agriculture (RUA) in Phnom Penh. Founded in 1964, it is the only exclusively agricultural higher education institution in Cambodia and offers four different types of degrees: associate, bachelor's, master's and doctorate. The University of Battambang (UBB) opened in 2008 and includes an agricultural curriculum offering short-course training programmes, a bachelor's programme and a master's programme. The Prek Leap National College of Agriculture (PNSA) in Phnom Penh formally reopened in 1984 and offers degrees and short-course training programmes.

Other relevant institutions offering agriculture courses are the Kampong Cham National School of Agriculture, the Chea Sim University of Kamchaymear and the Build Bright University in Siem Reap. In addition, several agricultural research institutions operate in Cambodia, including the Cambodian Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI) and the Centre d'Etude et de Développement Agricole Cambodgien (CEDAC).

Agricultural training tends to focus on short-term programmes – in contrast with industrial training, which often offers long-term programmes. Non-formal agricultural training programmes are offered by a large variety of institutions, including the Department of Agricultural Extension, the Regional Agriculture Research and Training Centres of the General Directorate of Agriculture, NGOs, farmer promoters, commercial traders and input suppliers (MAFF, 2015a).

During the 2015/16 academic year, public training institutions offered a total of 23 non-formal agricultural topics and reached 9 363 participants throughout the country (77.5 percent of all short-term trainees). The most frequently attended short courses related to chicken raising (2 067 trainees), vegetable growing (1 640 trainees) and pig raising (1 024 trainees). Trainings corresponding to levels 1, 2 and 3 as defined in the CNQF do not exist for agriculture.

RGC continues to face major challenges: how to stimulate the creation of decent employment opportunities for youth; and how to enable young workers to access decent employment through skills trainings. In response to these challenges, policymakers have adopted major technical and soft skill development programmes to ensure both quality and quantity of training services. It is important that future investments focus on courses dealing with development plan targets.

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TABLE 6: Short course enrolment by course name, whole country

No	Course name	Number of courses	Enrolment
1	Chicken raising	84	2 067
2	Vegetable growing	69	1 640
3	Pig raising	42	1 024
4	Camposh fertilizer	30	729
5	Mushroom growing	36	600
6	Fish farming	24	495
7	Cattle raising	16	370
8	Crop growing	13	361
9	Post-harvest technology	11	280
10	Rice crop	11	259
11	Branch tree crossbreed fruit	9	220
12	Food processing	8	210
13	Graft tree	7	180
14	Natural fertilizer	7	163
15	Cricket raising	6	160
16	Veterinary	9	145
17	Village livestock	8	121
18	Cassava growing	4	80
19	EM fertilizer	4	79
20	Frog raising	4	70
21	Animal food	3	60
22	Organic vegetable	1	30
23	Orange growing	1	20
Total		407	9 363

Source: Department of Labour Market Information, 2017.

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6. Case study provinces

Three case study provinces, namely Kampong Chhnang, Battambang and Kampong Cham, were chosen by MAFF to conduct research at local level.

In Kampong Chhnang, the focus was on fishery communities. In Battambang and Kampong Cham, research was conducted in farming communities where rice and cassava are produced for the market, while cashew cultivation, animal rearing, vegetable production and fishing are for home consumption only.

TABLE 7: Interview participants in selected provinces

Province	Kampong Chhnang	Battambang	Kampong Cham
No. of focus groups with youth	2	8	7
Total no. of youth interviewed	18	71	61
No. of focus groups with parents	2	4	7
Total no. of parents interviewed	17	24	57
No. of focus groups with training participants	0	1	1
Total no. of training participants interviewed	0	6	6
Teachers	1	4	6
Local authorities	2	4	5
Agricultural TVET providers	0	2	0
Other training providers	0	6	6
Provincial departments	1	3	4
Agricultural cooperatives	0	3	2
Rural employers	0	2	6
Matching institutions/job centres	0	1	1
Research institutions	0	1	1
Subtotal	43	140	170
Total			353

6.1 Kampong Chhnang

Capital: Kampong Chhnang

Population: 523 202

Poverty rate (IDPoor): 29.5%

Average farm size: 1.25 ha

6.1.1 Geography

Kampong Chhnang Province is in the central part of Cambodia, and is subject to regular flooding during the rainy season in the Tonle Sap area[6]. The name derives from the Khmer word *chhnang* for pottery, the traditional product of the province.

According to the last Inter-Censal Population Survey, 523 202 people live in the province (MoP and NIS, 2013). The population density is 95 persons per km^2.

6.1.2 Economy

The majority of the active labour force in the province is engaged in agriculture, especially in subsistence farming at household level, followed by the wholesale and retail trade sector and manufacturing. Agricultural wage labour represents a significantly smaller percentage of the population as most people work on small family-run farms. Most non-farming activities are concentrated in the "development corridor" along National Road 5, which connects Phnom Penh with the Thai border, and where people abandon agriculture, fishing and forestry to work in the industrial and service sectors. This trend is the result of urbanization, industrialization and the high demographic pressure placed on agricultural land, as farmers are no longer able to secure livelihoods solely from farming (mainly rice production).

Nevertheless, the vast majority of occupations are self-employed private jobs (94 percent), mostly in family agriculture. The Government employs 3.5 percent of the active working population and foreign companies hire another 2.1 percent (GIZ, 2013, unpublished).

6.1.3 Agriculture and fisheries

The Tonle Sap region is home to the largest freshwater lake in Southeast Asia. It is listed as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The region is one of the world's most productive inland fishing waters. Together with the surrounding forests and floodplains, the river and lake basin play an important role in supporting the livelihoods of over 1.2 million people.

According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the Tonle Sap region is under threat from illegal fishing practices, medium- and large-scale commercial fishing, water pollution, hydropower dams and deforestation. The environment is negatively affected and the habitats of fish are being destroyed (IUCN, n.d.), producing a serious impact on the livelihoods of fishing families in the surrounding provinces.

Rice production dominates the cropping system in Kampong Chhnang Province. Rice cropping systems vary depending on water flow, topography and soil quality; for example, dry season rice is important in the floodplain. In the northern part of the province, deep water is predominant.

Crop diversification is more important in lowland districts and concerns mainly annual crops, such as corn, soybean and cassava. However, an analysis of migration and deforestation suggests that agricultural systems have expanded into the uplands in the last 10 years; the forest cover has been cleared and converted into family-based cash crop systems, including both annual crops (e.g. cassava and sugar cane) and perennial crops (e.g. cashews).

6.1.4 Education

As in the rest of Cambodia, the net enrolment rate at primary schools is high (93.6 percent), but there is a significant drop at lower secondary school (60.4 percent) and again at upper secondary school (26.7 percent) (MoEYS, 2017).

The completion rate for girls is higher than that for boys (respectively, 53.69 percent and 41.13 percent

6 Tonle Sap (Khmer): Tonle means "great river" and Sap means "not salty" or more commonly, "great lake". It is the largest lake in Southeast Asia. The name "Tonle Sap" refers to the lake and the river that flows from the lake and joins the Mekong in Phnom Penh.

in lower secondary schools, 23.3 percent and 18.6 percent in upper secondary schools). The average dropout rate for Grades 7–9 is 14.3 percent, increasing to 21.2 percent for Grades 10–12. Overall, the school performance of girls is better than that of boys; for example, in 2016, the number of female students who repeated Grade 4 was 173, compared with 380 boys.

6.1.5 Youth job aspirations – barriers and enablers

The field survey took place in Kanleng Phe and Kampong Ous, two water–land-based villages on the Tonle Sap River. Water–land-based villages are ecosystems sited on water for 6 months and on land for 6 months. The two villages are located in the ecological zone most affected by seasonal changes in the water level. The inhabitants are primarily fishers and farmers, and families rely heavily on fisheries, rice and mung bean farming. Households are organized mainly in fisheries communities: in Kanleng Phe, 250 households are part of the fisheries community, and in Kampong Ous, 240 households. The livelihoods of families change according to the season, and the economic activities depend on the availability of water, fish and other animals and plants, as well as on their access to fertile land used primarily for rice production during the dry season. According to the Identification of Poor Households (IDPoor) Programme of the RGC, more than 30 percent of households are considered "very poor" or "poor"; the average family monthly income in the two villages is 200 000–400 000 Riel (USD 50–100). Both villages have primary schools. The secondary schools are located in the district capitals, but transport is expensive; moreover, the villages are isolated during the rainy season, which is an additional constraint.

During field visits, two focus group discussions took place with youth aged 14–18 and with parents and representatives of the fishing communities, and interviews were conducted with teachers and the provincial representatives of fisheries' administrations. All the parents interviewed in both villages were farmers and fishers. See Annex 3 for detailed information on the interviewees (youth and parents).

A total of 18 young persons participated in the focus group discussions. Most of them went to school, but a significant number (7) had dropped out, primarily for economic reasons. Two of the interviewees lived with only one parent (the other parent had migrated) and another interviewee was orphaned. Those attending school stated that they helped their parents outside school hours, working at the farm or in fisheries (primarily boys) or searching for snails (primarily girls). Most parents confirmed that the children had to work in their free time, but stressed that they did not miss school due to work. Only in Kaleng Phe did parents admit that children sometimes missed school due to the workload at home and in agricultural and fishing activities.

Teachers stated that from Grade 4, the curriculum includes agricultural topics, such as science, natural resource protection, botanical insecticides, crop cultivation, chicken rearing and compost making. They assume that students are interested in agriculture, since their parents work as farmers. Fishing is not part of the curriculum. However, since agricultural yields are low and there is a lack of access to markets, neither parents nor students perceive agriculture to be an attractive occupation.

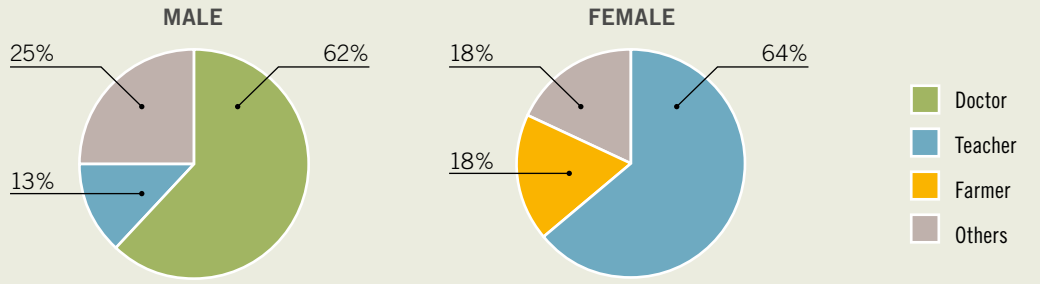
According to teachers, the high dropout rates are for the following reasons:

- Households have a poor economic situation, obliging young girls and boys to contribute to household income.
- Students cannot keep up with the subject matter and many have to repeat classes because they fail.
- Some young people get married at an early age and leave the village to work elsewhere.

Job aspirations of youth

When asked about their work aspirations, two of the young people indicated that they would like to be farmers/fishers like their parents (one of them had already dropped out of school to work on the family farm and in fisheries). Seven wanted to become teachers and five wanted to become doctors. Other professions named once were police officer, singer, military member and civil engineer.

FIGURE 9: Job aspirations of youth, Kampong Chhnang



Source: Authors.

When asked if they could imagine working in agriculture, only 5 of the 18 participants gave a positive answer, citing for example, growing vegetables and rearing chicken. Fishing was seen as an additional activity for home consumption, rather than as a full-time job. Migration, mainly to Thailand or into the garment industry in Phnom Penh, was a relevant factor, as most participants already had relatives working in the city or abroad. It was not, however, their preferred option.

Barriers to decent rural employment

When asked about the barriers to accessing decent work, participants mentioned lack of education and skills, and that there were fewer decent jobs in rural areas than in urban areas. Agriculture was perceived as a hard task, performed in harsh conditions (under the sun with long working hours) and characterized by numerous difficulties (lack of technical development, high input prices, and poor earnings due to the low prices of agricultural products). Lack of land and the high cost of renting land were cited as further barriers to making a decent living from agriculture and fisheries. One young person mentioned that the pesticides used in agricultural work were damaging their health. Agriculture and fisheries were viewed very poorly: only five young people were prepared to work in agriculture – on condition that the market price for products allowed them to earn a decent income and only if technical support was in place.

The parents interviewed shared the views of their children. They named the same barriers to decent employment, specifically the difficulty of earning a decent income from agricultural work due to the low prices of agricultural products. They cited input costs and the damage due to extreme weather (i.e. flood and droughts) as the main barriers. Consequently, they did not want their children to become fishers or farmers. However, their aspirations for their children's futures were not especially high: they wanted them to work in garment factories or as construction workers. They did want their children to receive further education and training, but said that they needed support from outside (both financial support and training). Poverty was cited as the main hindrance to a good education. The parents and youth who participated in the focus group discussions were too poor to buy school materials and could not afford the transport required for secondary school. Parents' main concern was that children should stay close to home and not be exposed to drugs or other bad influences.

Enablers

Parents, teachers, local authorities and youth all stated that an important enabler to decent employment was access to high-quality education in the village. Parents expressed the need for grants and financial support in order to be able to keep their children in school. The village does receive support from NGOs that build classrooms and provide some financial support for school attendance, but such projects reach few families; nevertheless, such projects were considered important. The parents placed no expectations on the Government.

When teachers were asked what young people needed to improve their access to better working conditions, they replied:

- technical training;
- innovative ideas;
- modern equipment (e.g. tractors), money and land; and
- a different mindset.

The representatives of the fishing communities highlighted the possible benefits of training, and more specifically of formal TVET. Young people would then be able to gain a better understanding of agriculture and thus improve yield and market access in order to earn a decent income from agriculture through good training.

6.2 Battambang

Capital: Battambang

Population: 1 025 174

Poverty rate (IDPoor): 32.1%

Average farm size: 3.12 ha

6.2.1 Geography

Battambang is Cambodia's third-most populated province. Covering an area of 11 929.05 km^2, it is the fifth-largest province in Cambodia. In line with national demographic trends, Battambang's population is young (Provincial Master Plan Sub-Working Group, 2011). Battambang's working population is 613 138, of which 134 657 are aged 15–19 and 196 041 are aged 20–29 (CDC, 2012a). According to official IDPoor data from 2013, almost one-third of the province's population is considered poor (25–50 percent in the districts studied) (MoP, 2015a).

Due to its proximity to the Thai border, Battambang served as a refuge for the Khmer Rouge until the 1990s. In an interview with representatives of Handicap International, it emerged that following the prolonged presence of the Khmer Rouge in Battambang, the province had the highest number of landmines in the country and consequently the highest number of people with disabilities.

Labour migration to neighbouring Thailand is high, especially among young people; this is often explained by the higher wages paid in Thailand. The Department of Labour and Vocational Training (DoLVT) in Battambang estimates that 1 050 000 Cambodians work in Thailand; of these, 750 000 own a valid passport and 300 000 migrated illegally. Illegal status makes migrants very vulnerable and efforts are underway to reduce risks. For example, Thailand has almost 100 migration offices where Cambodian migrants can register and receive a passport and working permit.

6.2.2 Economic development

Overall, 80.5 percent of households in Battambang make their livelihoods from agricultural activities (78 percent crops, 2 percent fishing, 0.5 percent livestock). A further 7 percent are employed in the service sector. Of the remaining 12.5 percent, an estimated 0.3 percent are employed in private sector enterprises, while the occupations of the other 12.2 percent are unidentified. Employment shares vary significantly among districts and regions. For example, service sector employment accounts for around 27 percent of the population in the city of Battambang.

In 2011, unemployment was low, with 45 000 registered unemployed (30 000 men and 15 000 women) (Provincial Master Plan Sub-Working Group, 2011). Labour is relatively cheap, with salaries ranging from USD 50 to USD 90 per month for unskilled labour, i.e. lower than the national average of USD 109.88. The skill premium is significant, and wages for higher skilled workers start at USD 180 per month (USAID, 2010).

The province investment profile reveals that the most promising areas for economic development are tourism, light manufacturing and mining (primarily gold, iron ore, aluminium, phosphate, limestone and precious stones), as well as agriculture and agribusiness. The province has a relatively good transportation infrastructure, including railways and a river port, as well as 13 commercial banks and 11 microfinance institutions (CDC, 2012a). In Battambang, 54 large and medium companies and 364 small businesses were registered between January 2008 and August 2009. There are also over 6 000 private enterprises currently operating in

Battambang, including agroprocessors, such as rice mills (340), noodle manufacturers (13), wineries and other food-processing companies (15), restaurants and food stalls (> 1 700), wholesalers (17) and other retailers (> 1 800) (USAID, 2010). However, according to USAID (2015), there are few modern agroprocessing facilities.

6.2.3 Agriculture and fisheries

Agriculture plays a central role in Battambang's economic development and employment structure. With an average agricultural holding size of slightly over 3 ha, Battambang ranks fourth in the country. In contrast, the average size of agricultural holdings in Kampong Cham and Kampong Chhnang is just over 1 ha (NIS and MoP, 2015).

The favourable climatic conditions allow farmers to grow two rice crop cycles per year. Battambang is known as the country's "rice bowl" – the area where most Cambodian rice is grown. However, it also produces red corn (nearly 70 percent of national production), green beans (45 percent) and soybean (38 percent), and accounts for more than one-third of the country's cassava production. In Cambodia, Battambang is mainly known for its oranges and pomelos. However, other fruits – mango, jack fruit, banana, pineapple, grapes and coconuts – are also grown in the province, as well as mixed vegetables, cotton, palm oil and lemon grass (NIS and MoP, 2016; USAID, 2010, 2015). Despite the generally favourable conditions, Battambang is very susceptible to changes in climate. Between 2008 and 2013, droughts and consequent food insecurity affected an estimated 88 percent of villages, making Battambang the most affected province in the whole country (NIS and MoP, 2015).

The second-most common source of agricultural income in Battambang is animal rearing, primarily ducks, chicken, pigs and cattle (USAID, 2010). In addition, around 33 900 tonnes of freshwater fish are raised in Battambang (CDC, 2012a), but fishing and fish cultivation are only found in 0.1 percent and 17 percent of villages, respectively. Gathering of forest products (0.5 percent) and other industries and services (1.7 percent) remain relatively rare (NIS and MoP, 2016).

6.2.4 Education, TVET and other trainings

Battambang has more than 500 primary and 100 secondary schools, as well as one university (CDC, 2012a). In the 2015/16 academic year, 2 148 students graduated from secondary schools. While dropout rates are low for primary school, they increase significantly for lower and upper secondary school (see Table 8).

The average distance to education facilities varies significantly among districts. In general, primary schools are an average of 0.8 km from the house. In contrast, secondary schools are 5 km and high schools over 12 km from the family home. The lack of public transport and school bus services, combined with long distances, leads to limited access to post-primary education and training facilities, especially for children from poor households (Provincial Master Plan Sub-Working Group, 2011).

Battambang is home to three state TVET providers offering a range of courses, including agricultural training. The Regional Polytechnic Institute Techno Sen Battambang (RPITSB) and the National Vocational Institute of Battambang (NVIB) provide long-term and short-term agricultural TVETs. The

TABLE 8: Enrolment numbers and average dropout rates in Battambang Province, 2015/16

	Enrolment	Dropout	Female	Male
Primary school (Grades 1–6)	166 622	7.1%	5.4%	8.6%
Lower secondary school (Grades 7–9)	39 592	21.3%	19.3%	23.6%
Upper secondary school (Grades 10–12)	16 840	24.2%	23.5%	24.9%
Total	238 054			

Source: MoEYS, 2017 (adapted).

Battambang Institute of Technology provides short-term agricultural trainings lasting about 1 week and covering topics ranging from mushroom cultivation to chicken rearing.

In 2016, the RPITSB began offering a 2-year diploma in agriculture and 22 participants are currently enrolled. Prospective students must have started or completed Grade 12 of secondary school. Students take classes in the morning; the modules are taught consecutively and it is not permitted to suspend one's studies or discontinue and re-enter later. This restriction is a problem for rural youth, who often do seasonal work on farms or help their families at home. Not only does participation in non-flexible long-term training courses entail high opportunity costs, but youth may be unable to participate in or complete the courses. In order to increase its outreach to young people, the RPITSB plans to offer C1 to C3 level courses in agriculture in accordance with the CNQF for students who have completed Grade 9. Additional short agricultural training courses lasting 1–4 weeks are offered in the field; however, course availability is reliant on external financial support.

Since 2015, the NVIB has offered a 2-year diploma in agronomy. The first round of 13 students is expected to graduate in 2017. NVIB also offers 1-week agricultural trainings in communities covering a range of topics: fish, frog, pig and chicken rearing (including cage building); mushroom production; vegetable cultivation; and basic agricultural food processing, such as banana frying. These short courses consist of practical classes over 5 consecutive days.

The DoLVT provides short-term training programmes similar to those offered by TVET institutions; indeed, some programmes are run in collaboration. DoLVT training programmes are free of charge and focus on additional income-earning activities, such as chicken raising and mushroom cultivation, and on improving rice-farming techniques. The content of each training programme is discussed with district councils and in forums in communes, to ensure that programmes meet people's needs and align with communal investment plans. The training programmes build on prior knowledge; the content may go beyond basic animal-rearing and plant-cultivation techniques and cover issues such as animal health (vaccinations), the fundamentals of climate change adaptation, and the value chain approach. According to DoLVT representatives in Battambang, the trainings also target vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities, widows and widowers, dropouts and the elderly.

Non-state actors focus on training programmes for especially vulnerable groups (e.g. widows and orphans). The only training provider focusing solely on youth in agriculture is the Volunteer Service Overseas (VSO), which provides short-term training programmes on both agriculture and business management for youth.

Lastly, Women's Development Centres (WDCs) also offer short agricultural courses as well as 6–9-month vocational training programmes in areas such as food processing for women aged 18 and older.

6.2.5 Youth job aspirations – barriers and enablers

Data collection took place in five districts and seven villages in Battambang Province. During the field visits, focus group discussions took place: eight with youth, four with parents. In addition, interviews were conducted with local authorities, teachers, employers, provincial departments of relevant ministries, TVET institutions and research institutions. See Annex 4 for detailed information on the interviewees (youth and parents).

The main occupation of parents interviewed was farming – mostly rice cultivation, but some vegetable and fruit production. A high percentage of parents interviewed stated that their oldest children had already migrated to Phnom Penh or Thailand.

Of the 71 youth interviewed (47 girls and 24 boys), most came from families with at least one parent involved in agricultural work. A small percentage of parents had small businesses, some had government jobs, others had migrated in search of higher-paying jobs. Half the youth interviewed were already employed in agriculture, which includes helping parents in the field.

Youth job aspirations

The job aspirations of youth were an important topic in focus group discussions with both youth and parents. The largest group of interviewed youth

(44 people) hoped to work as teachers; notably, girls (68 percent) were more likely to name teaching as their future career, compared with 46 percent of boys. The second-most popular choice for girls were health-related professions (17 percent), while boys were more likely to name engineering (13 percent) or the police force (8 percent) as future professions.

The interviewees' aspirations depended on the reputation of the professions, but were also closely linked to a desire to help their families or villages and communities. Participants reported a strong desire to contribute to the family income, help educate the children or assist the sick and elderly. The professions named have a positive image and are associated with good working conditions (i.e. white-collar jobs). In general, the youth interviewed expressed a preference for staying in the village as opposed to migrating.

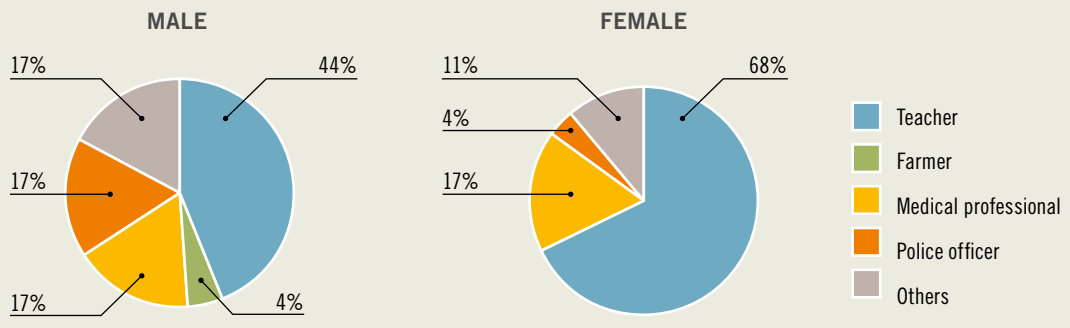
Of the youth interviewed, only three mentioned a desire to migrate; their reasons were finding employment in Thailand, studying in Singapore and studying in Japan. Most of the youth interviewed were aware of the benefits and risks of migrating, as many had seen and talked to peers who had done so. Migration experiences were diverse: some youth managed to improve their income, while others were subject to detention, unfair labour practices and exploitation.

None of the youth interviewed named agricultural work as a profession they desired. However, 22 did state that they could envisage doing farming in the future, either as a backup plan if they failed to achieve their desired position, or as additional work alongside their main profession.

Interviewees mentioned positive aspects of working in the agricultural sector: the possibility to produce healthy food; the chance to work close to the family home; and the flexibility to decide what crops to grow. However, the negative aspects heavily outweighed the positive aspects: first, agricultural work was considered "hard labour" in difficult weather conditions (heat and prolonged sun exposure); second, inputs were high cost, while agricultural products had low market prices. Teachers spoke of the lack of interest in agricultural topics; they also complained about inadequate teaching facilities and shortage of materials for making agricultural classes more interesting for students.

Parents aspired to decent jobs with stable incomes and adequate working conditions for their children; they also expressed the desire that their children stay close to home. They were sceptical about the prospect of their children working in agriculture. In fact, most parents did not want their children to engage in agricultural activities, for many reasons: adverse working conditions and exposure to hazardous fertilizers and pesticides; climate change and the prospect of worsening weather conditions; unstable markets exacerbated by low prices for agricultural products; and lack of investment in modernization of farming (e.g. irrigation systems and modern agricultural machinery).

FIGURE 10: Job aspirations of youth, Battambang



Source: Authors.

An analysis of the interviews in Battambang indicates that agricultural work needs to become more lucrative and less harmful. In order to make employment in agriculture attractive for youth, the following areas need to be addressed:

- Increase in the return on investment – reducing the prices of inputs and/or increasing the prices of agricultural products.
- Attention to health and safety – applying safe or organic pesticides to diminish health risks for agricultural workers.
- Improvement of harsh working conditions (e.g. long hours exposed to the sun and heat) – investing in modernization of agriculture through machinery and irrigation systems to reduce working hours and increase productivity.

Barriers to decent rural employment

Barriers to accessing DRE can be narrowed down to three categories:

- Limited access to education and training programmes.
- Shortage of decent jobs.
- Poor working conditions (failing to meet DRE criteria in the cases observed).

The limited access to education and training depends on a wide range of factors, described in detail below.

Financial constraints

Youth supported their families financially and to do so had to skip school. Teachers saw the poverty-driven need for youth to earn quick money as a barrier to education. Moreover, lack of financial resources resulted in a shortage of basic study materials. In some cases, youth reported being obliged to pay extra fees to teachers for informal classes in order to pass exams; besides being an additional financial burden, the requirement of extra fees is a form of corruption.

Distance and quality of education facilities

Teachers in rural areas considered physical access to be a barrier to education and training. Indeed, schools were often far from the home and there were few transportation options; furthermore, routes could be dangerous with many accidents occurring. Local authorities considered low-quality education in rural areas to be another barrier to accessing DRE.

Information about education and training opportunities

In addition to the barriers hampering access to education, the lack of information on training options was an additional barrier to accessing training programmes. In fact, youth had little to no knowledge of the availability of TVETs. The other main barrier to DRE access mentioned by almost all interviewees was a lack of decent job opportunities in rural areas. According to parents, job opportunities arose through contacts (which they lacked) and by paying bribes (which they were unable to do). Indeed, paying for a job appears to be common practice in rural Cambodia. Some added that youth lacked the motivation to find a decent job.

Youth did not consider self-employment in agriculture a feasible option, because of the financial constraints and the above-mentioned issues (low wages, price insecurity and harsh working conditions). According to the local authorities, there was a lack of role models to motivate rural youth. Many interviewees pointed out that self-employment bears many risks, especially with regard to access to finances (capital and credit).

As a consequence of the lack of job opportunities, local authorities reported high migration levels to Thailand. In the villages visited, the proportion of youth migrating to Thailand was 50–90 percent. However, many migrating youth were reported to return, especially around the age of 30, when they received a plot of land from their families. Other migrants, depending on their financial situation and the legal status acquired abroad, travelled back and forth during the year to visit family members and help during harvesting times.

Skills demand and working conditions in rural areas

The case study revealed a lack of demand for high-level skills in rural areas: first, there were a small number of employers along agricultural value chains; and second, employers along agricultural value chains had little to no demand for skilled labour. In addition, accessing work in agroprocessing remains a highly selective process and nepotism is commonly reported. In interviews, it emerged that the rice mill

and corn dryer company always employed about five skilled workers, all of whom were relatives of the owners, while the other employees were mainly unskilled labourers. Another issue was working conditions, which were not in line with the ILO's Decent Work Agenda. Security standards, such as preventative safety and health measures, were rarely met. Workers had no healthcare and working hours were reported to be exhausting.

Technical skills. Employers reported that young workers lacked highly specialized skills, such as rice quality control and corn drying. However, due to the very specific nature of these skills, employers did not expect training providers to teach them; these skills were taught on the job. There was not a high demand for other technical skills.

Life skills. Life skills include good manners, knowing how to cope with co-workers, being punctual and being capable of following orders. All in all, these were not perceived as highly relevant. On the contrary, key experts – and, importantly, the job centre in Battambang – believe that soft skills are in high demand. Soft skills will be increasingly important for future developments in the agricultural sector; farmers must acquire soft skills to engage with potential customers.

Business skills. Employers did not seek business skills in potential employees. Business tasks – purchasing crops and machinery, negotiations with customers, accounting, and management – were carried out solely by the company owners or close relatives.

Current jobs in agroprocessing companies do not demand a high skill level for which formal training would be a prerequisite. The necessary skills are limited to life skills, such as punctuality and willingness to work. While processing company wages are relatively decent (up to USD 150 per month), the jobs do not fulfil other DRE requirements, such as job security, social security, and occupational safety and health standards.

Enablers for decent rural employment

The most frequently mentioned enabler for rural youth accessing education was financial and motivational support from the family. Support from teachers and society was also mentioned in some cases. Local authorities identified farm size and irrigation quality as important factors in achieving stable and decent incomes.

Available support for rural youth

Several training providers offer agricultural and non-agricultural trainings across the province. While there are many positive outcomes, difficulties associated with the training programmes require further analysis:

TVET participants interviewed were generally optimistic about their training and about the relevance of the course content. Indeed, most participants interviewed would recommend the training programmes to other youth – despite their uncertainty about finding work in the near future. However, there were difficulties regarding missing equipment and lack of practical application possibilities – a problem confirmed by both TVET centres. Only one of the interviewed participants wished to actually work as a farmer; the others aspired to be civil servants at MAFF, extension workers, or employed by NGOs.

The DoLVT reported difficulties in short-term **training programmes on animal rearing**. The trainees did not always apply the acquired techniques, but instead fell back into old production and cultivation habits. They tended to raise their livestock and then sell and/or consume it rather than increasing the herd size to a sustainable level. Hence, the success of training programmes was difficult to evaluate and could be unsustainable.

The **format of the training programme** can hinder success. For example, full-day, 1-week trainings do not allow farmers the time they need to work in their fields, which can lead to financial losses. In addition, new techniques may not lead to an immediate income increase – or any increase at all. For example, in chicken rearing, a considerable period (around 12 weeks) must pass before the stock can be sold at a profit.

There are **no training programmes on market issues**. A past proposal to transform Cambodia's agricultural industry based on planned economy

principles, whereby each village would produce a specific good, was quickly dismissed as unfeasible. Nevertheless, the DoLVT in Battambang recognizes the need for improved communication and closer cooperation between the market (demand) and producers (supply). The DoLVT, therefore, considered including an essential training module on "market access and demand", but as of September 2017, no final decision had been made. The VSO raised another issue: extension workers have good theoretical but limited practical knowledge, especially with regard to market access. Consequently, extension workers are not well equipped to support farmers and agricultural workers in their day-to-day activities.

Women face particular constraints. Despite the availability of accommodation and food at the WDC, training participants still had to cope with the problem of reduced income, in particular when following a long training programme during which time they could not engage in income-generating activities. One component of the training involved the establishment of a collective business owned in equal parts by all women participants. This approach had limited success, in part because revenues were not generated immediately, but also because revenues were shared equally, i.e. individual efforts were not rewarded – a factor which demotivated many women. Men faced the same challenges, but women also had to contend with the fact that their husbands did not want them to stay away from home for an extended period.

The **job centre** in Battambang opened in 2010. It aims to support youth in the transition from school to work by disseminating information about employment possibilities through workshops in rural and urban settings. It also registers jobseekers in order to match them with job offers. Twice a year it offers employment-related training on how to write a CV and face an interview. However, the centre stated that it was difficult to reach young jobseekers. According to the centre, young people did not attend the official social information events, while many people in the villages reported that they had received no information from the job centre. The job centre saw few employment options in agriculture in contrast with greater opportunities for young people in tourism, factory work, NGOs and the microfinance sector. They also highlighted the gap between jobseekers' conceptions regarding salaries, working hours and skills and the employment opportunities actually available. However, the job centre planned to contribute to the improvement of TVETs by cooperating with TVET providers and aligning the curricula to meet market needs.

The three agricultural **cooperatives** supported by World Vision in the visited communes aim to tackle together some of the above-mentioned problems in agriculture. Cooperative membership (at the time: 63, 78 and 109 members) is characterized by a mixed gender distribution with a majority of older members. Nevertheless, the minimum age requirement is 18, and cooperatives are therefore accessible to younger farmers. The principal requirement to join is permanent residency in the commune. Cooperatives act as saving groups and members can borrow money. Cooperative members reported that obtaining loans was otherwise very difficult, especially for the poor and people without a land title. Cooperatives also serve as a knowledge-sharing platform, disseminating information acquired during trainings. Members expressed satisfaction with the services received; however, they complained that they had little bargaining power when discussing prices for their agricultural products with middlemen. In addition, while open to young farmers, the cooperatives did not have specific programmes to support youth.

According to the VSO, local authorities and parents, youth have little voice in the community due to rigid **social hierarchies**. To overcome this problem, World Vision and other NGOs promote youth clubs where teenagers and youth can meet and organize themselves to influence decision making at regional level. The four youth clubs examined in Battambang were relatively new, and one already had experience influencing decision making at local level – they had rehabilitated a pond and built a house for the youth club. Youth clubs were considered an important mechanism for promoting self-esteem and self-organization among young people.

6.3 Kampong Cham

Capital: Kampong Cham

Population: 972 944

Poverty rate (IDPoor): 18.1%

Average farm size: 1.29 ha

6.3.1 Geography

Kampong Cham province is located in the central lowlands of the Mekong River and shares its borders with six other Cambodian provinces. Kampong Cham Province was divided into two provinces in December 2013: Kampong Cham and Tbong Khmum. Because much of the data on the province was published before that date (the most recent population census is from 2008), separate data is not always available for the two provinces. In 2008, the total number of people in the workforce was 970 868, of which 191 014 were 15–19 years old, and 283 734 aged 20–29 years and therefore included in the Cambodian definition of "youth" (NIS and MoP, 2008).

A total of 165 048 people (17 percent) were classified as level 1 or level 2 poor (MoP, 2015b). Before its division into two provinces, Kampong Cham was one of the top four regions sending migrants to Phnom Penh, due mainly to its proximity to Phnom Penh (MoP, 2012).

6.3.2 Economy

In 2008, enterprises along agricultural value chains in Kampong Cham Province operated in rubber processing, cashew processing, oil processing, tapioca starch, vegetable processing, electricity from biomass, animal feed and beverage production. Other employers include garment factories, textile factories and suppliers of agricultural machinery and fertilizers. The biggest employers (in terms of number) are in the garment and textile sector (> 1 000), followed by cashew processing (650) and beverage production (300). Small and microbusinesses operate in, among others, rice milling, machinery repair, power generation, wholesaling and retailing (USAID, 2008). More than half of the households in Kampong Cham engage in food-related activities such as processing, preserving, cooking and selling.

The Asian Development Bank funds the Tonle Sap Poverty Reduction and Smallholder Development Project (TSSD) which serves to strengthen agricultural policy, agricultural production and rural market infrastructure in three provinces in Cambodia, one of which is Kampong Cham (ADB, 2017a). TSSD focuses on the rehabilitation of rural roads and the construction and rehabilitation of irrigation structures; project subcomponents include increasing the availability of and access to quality seeds and increasing access to agricultural information and market data. The project was approved in 2009 and is due to end in 2018. Similarly, the Rural Road Improvement Project II concentrates on the rehabilitation of rural roads in the province (ADB, 2017b).

Most investment opportunities exist in the agricultural and tourism sectors. Rice fields, rubber plantations, and tapioca, sugar cane, coconut, palm fruit, cashew nut, durian, mung bean and corn cultivation all offered investment opportunities in the agro-industry (CDC, 2012b). Business activities are concentrated in rubber and tapioca; one operates in cashew, another in animal feed production (CDC, 2012b).

6.3.3 Agriculture and fisheries

In Kampong Cham Province, 169 499 ha of land are used in agricultural holdings, the majority of which are < 1 ha (not including home lots). More than 100 000 ha are under rice. Other major crops include cassava, maize, sugar cane, vegetables, rubber and cashew. Most of the land used for agriculture is covered by temporary crops. Of 557 500 agricultural households, 57 percent are engaged in forestry activities, 22 percent in fishing activities, 10 percent in handicrafts and 18 percent in small business activities. Of the 757 villages covered by the agricultural census of 2013 in Kampong Cham Province, 92.9 percent grow crops, 81.5 percent rear livestock (cattle, pigs) and/or poultry and 3 percent raise fish. Fish are primarily farmed for home consumption; only 2 810 households sell fish. Aquaculture plays a marginal role, with only 300 households breeding fish in pond culture (NIS and MoP, 2015).

Flooding is the most prevalent natural disaster the province is exposed to. More than 40 percent of the villages were affected by floods between 2008 and 2013. In the same period, villages also experienced typhoons (20 percent), droughts causing food insecurity (16 percent) and landslides (11 percent) (NIS and MoP, 2015). According to Buddhism for Social Development Action (BSDA), the Kampong Cham National School of Agriculture (KCNSA), the DAFF and the PSOD, the agricultural sector in Kampong Cham faces further challenges for employment: strong price fluctuations on agricultural products; lack of price information for farmers; lack of high-quality seedlings; limited availability of seeds; and a shortage of processing and packaging facilities, leading to the export of non-processed agricultural products.

6.3.4 Education, TVET and other trainings

The dropout rates for primary school are low, but they increase drastically for lower and upper secondary school. In 2015/16, only 2 331 students graduated successfully from Grade 12.

In 2013, almost 70 percent of the villages reported having access to a primary school, 19 percent to a middle school and only 7 percent to a high school (NIS and MoP, 2015).

KCNSA offers two degrees in agricultural subjects: an associated Bachelor's degree and a Bachelor's degree. The Agriculture School is one of three agricultural schools in Cambodia and it offers degrees in Fisheries, Agronomy, Animal Science/Veterinary Science, Economy and Rural Development, and Rubber Cultivation. Self-employment offers good potential for graduates, and marketing modules are therefore included in the degree courses. In 2017, no other TVET or other long-term agricultural training programmes were available in Kampong Cham Province. However, the PTC offers short agricultural courses throughout the province; they last about 1 week and cover a range of subjects. Although these informal training programmes are community-based, there were no youth participating. Given its limited teaching capacities, the PTC cooperates with the Agriculture School in Kampong Cham in order to offer the courses.

TABLE 9: School enrolment and average annual dropout rates, Kampong Cham Province

	Enrolment	Dropout	Female	Male
Primary school (Grade 1–6)	141 896	4.5 %	3.9%	5.1%
Lower secondary school (Grade 7–9)	41 233	17.5 %	15.7%	19.4%
Upper secondary school (Grade 10–12)	20 140	23.3 %	22.1%	24.7%

Source: MoEYS, 2017 (adapted).

TABLE 10: Short agricultural training programmes, Kampong Cham Province, 2016

	Enrolment		Complete	
	Total	**Female**	**Total**	**Female**
Chicken rearing	80	53	40	32
Pig rearing	60	34	40	25
Cow and buffalo rearing	80	28	60	21
Vegetable growing	80	25	60	16
Mushroom growing	20	7	20	7
Compost and fertilizer training	60	45	40	30
Total	**380**	**192**	**260**	**131**

Source: Interview with the PTC in Kampong Cham.

The PTC's short-term agricultural courses may be discontinued, as the Cambodian Government wants to focus on the provision of formal TVET. Formal, centre-based training courses lasting 1–2 years were offered on a range of subjects, such as electricity, civil engineering, machinery, administration, vehicle repair, information and communications technology (ICT), accounting and English literature.

The DAFF also offers short-term agricultural courses for farmers in the province. Longer-term training programmes entail meetings at demonstration fields once a week for the duration of a crop's life cycle (16 weeks for rice cultivation, 12 weeks for chicken rearing and vegetable production). Trainings are open to participants of all ages and school completion is not a requirement. However, most participants are older farmers, not youth. DAFF resource staff are available for other training providers (e.g. NGOs, development projects), should there be a need for experts to conduct or facilitate training.

Non-governmental training providers in Kampong Cham offer a wider range of training programmes, both long- and short-term, although there are no long-term agricultural training courses offered at present. Training providers target different groups, ranging from pre-school education, school education and in-school training (e.g. Kampuchean Action for Primary Education [KAPE]), to youth identified as especially vulnerable, i.e. disabled youth and school dropouts (e.g. BSDA, PSOD, Maryknoll Deaf Development Programme). PSOD offers a 3-month cashew nursery training for young people, comprising both theory and practice (apprenticeship), and including modules on soil treatment, land preparation, planting, packaging and grafting. The Women's Development Centre under the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) offers 6-month training courses for women on topics such as weaving, make-up artistry, tailoring and wedding preparation.

6.3.5 Youth job aspirations – barriers and enablers

Field research took place in four districts and seven villages within Kampong Cham province. IDPoor poverty levels vary between different field study districts and range from 15 percent in Prey Chhor District and 19.6 percent in Stueng Trang District to 21.3 percent in Batheay District (MoP, 2015b). In Kampong Cham, seven focus group discussions took place with youth and parents, and interviews were conducted with teachers, local authorities, employers, provincial departments, training providers and other research institutions. See Annex 5 for detailed information on the interviewees (youth and parents).

Of the 61 young people interviewed – primarily aged 15–17 years (19 male, 42 female) – more than half came from families where at least one parent worked as a farmer. Some parents worked part-time as farmers and/or in construction. Other jobs of parents included running a small business (e.g. a shop) and working as a taxi driver, in a garment factory or as a fisher. Only one father had migrated to find work outside Kampong Cham Province. Most youth helped at home when not in school, performing tasks such as cleaning, cooking or chopping wood; in contrast, only 10 young people helped with agricultural activities (i.e. rice cultivation, filed preparation, care of cattle and fishing).

Job aspirations of youth

When asked about their future employment hopes, the majority of youth (40 percent), expressed a desire to become teachers, while others wanted to be doctors, mechanics, nurses or police officers, or to work in the tourism sector (6–11 percent) (see Figure 11). The reasons given for choice of profession included a wish to help the community or contribute to the family income, job security, job status and the fact that agricultural work was considered more difficult than office work. Most youth wanted a job that allowed them to work in or close to their community. During the focus group discussions, it emerged that youth could imagine moving to the city (in particular, Phnom Penh) to study, but only two considered moving to the city for work to be a good option. Going abroad was only mentioned in two instances: moving to Malaysia to study, and following relatives to Korea to work as a fruit picker.

When asked about agriculture, youth in almost all villages considered the working conditions to be too difficult or hazardous, and they mentioned the low incomes. Youth were very aware of the

challenges their parents faced when working in agriculture, for example, low yield, bad soil quality, low prices when selling crops or livestock at farm gates or markets, lack of knowledge about growing/raising techniques, and unavailability of agricultural training. Some said that agriculture was a potentially attractive option – if training opportunities were made available to help them achieve a better income. In one of the seven villages, not one young person expressed an interest in working in agriculture – not even as a backup option. In the other villages, some youth considered working in agriculture, but only as a second best option. Interest in agriculture included selling and growing fruit and vegetables, and rearing livestock. In one district, youth were interested in taking over their parents' cashew plantations, with some intending to diversify the production to include vegetables and fruit. Only one girl named working in agriculture as her future dream job (specifically, growing fruit on a 50-ha farm). Agricultural topics were included in many school curricula (usually 1 hour per week); in contrast, youth affirmed that the training programmes on offer in their communities were not accessible to them.

In more than half of the villages, parents stated that youth had no interest in agricultural work and that they hoped their children would find better jobs in other sectors (e.g. as a teacher, doctor or accountant). According to parents, the agricultural sector was unattractive for many reasons: low incomes; difficult working conditions (e.g. poor soil quality, low agricultural productivity and high cost of inputs); prevalence of natural disasters; difficulty accessing land; small land tenure; and lack of new techniques used in agricultural businesses. The same challenges were highlighted by experts from the Agriculture School, provincial departments and NGOs.

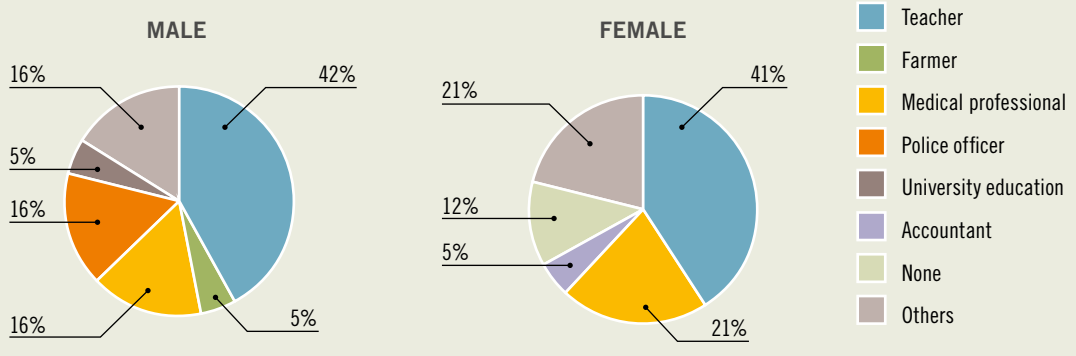
Barriers to decent rural employment

Barriers to accessing DRE can be narrowed down to three categories: limited access to education and training programmes; limited support for youth in decision making; and poor working conditions in the cases observed (not meeting DRE criteria).

Access to education

Youth cited access to education, training and financial resources as the principal constraints to achieving DRE. As most of the youth in the focus group discussions were still in school, they specified additional education-related barriers: long distances to school, lack of financial resources to continue studying at school, parents not supporting further school education, and insufficient time to study. Parents had similar views and saw education and access to decent/good employment as the primary barriers. Similarly, teachers and local authorities agreed that lack of education (or of access to education) were major problems faced by youth in their communities. Teachers, parents and local authorities also considered limited access to training programmes to be a problem. Information on available training programmes was not always accessible; only some schools provided it to their students.

FIGURE 11: Job aspirations of youth, Kampong Cham



Source: Authors.

Poverty

According to the local authorities, lack of skills and financial limitations to accessing training programmes were factors preventing youth from achieving their career goals. Experts considered poverty and limited financial resources to be the main barrier to young people finishing their school education in school and accessing further skill-building activities (e.g. training courses).

Lack of decent job opportunities

Many teachers added that a lack of job opportunities at local level, coupled with a lack of job counselling, made it difficult for youth to access jobs once they left school. Moreover, lack of skills made it harder for youth to access higher-skilled jobs, and they ended up working on plantations, on construction sites or in garment factories.

Enablers to decent rural employment

According to the youth interviewed, enabling factors for access to DRE were: a supportive family environment; an individual commitment to achieving stated goals; sufficient financial resources for school and further education, including scholarships; high-quality schools; and training opportunities. Other interviewed groups stressed the importance of funding and scholarships to allow youth to finish school and gain more job opportunities.

In Kampong Cham, the DAFF observed a training and skills gap among farmers, especially with regard to improved rice-growing techniques, use of fertilizers and chemical pesticides, disease control and application of modern technology. Such skills would enable young people to start their own farming businesses.

Demand for skills and working conditions in rural areas

Employment opportunities for rural youth were identified during the field study. However, employers needed mostly low-skilled workers for jobs that often lacked decent working conditions. With the exception of one animal feed enterprise employing over 100 people, businesses were either small or micro-enterprises (< 50 employees).

The small and micro-enterprises did not require employees to have specific skills; however, they sometimes provided on-the-job training. To work in the rice mills, strength (i.e. the ability to carry 50-kg rice bags) was the only criteria for employment. No contracts and insurance plans were provided, although some enterprises said they would provide financial help if medical assistance were needed. Salaries ranged from USD 100 to USD 160, with food and accommodation occasionally provided. Pay was on either a monthly or a daily basis. Working hours were usually 8 hours a day, 5–7 days a week. The minimum employment age was 18–20 years.

The animal feed enterprise, on the other hand, employed a small number of unskilled staff for simple tasks; it reported occasional difficulty finding adequately skilled employees in the provinces. Entry salaries were USD 240; employees were provided with insurance; and contracts stipulated 6 work-days per week and 18 days of holiday per year. The enterprise provided management and technical training to close the skills gaps among employees.

According to the local authorities and parents, local rural employment opportunities included working on rubber or cashew plantations and carrying out wage labour for bigger farms during the planting and harvesting seasons. These opportunities were highly seasonal and low-skilled (only requiring strength), and they offered no development perspectives or stability for the future of the people employed.

Agricultural cooperatives can generate employment possibilities for youth or support them to become farmers. According to the Kampong Cham DAFF, 12 agricultural cooperatives currently exist – fewer than the 16 in operation at the time of the 2013 agricultural census. The two cooperatives interviewed during the field visits were established in 2010; they had 94 and 205 members, respectively. One cooperative functioned mainly as a savings group and members could access loans. Both cooperatives cited benefits: easy access to loans; reduced interest rates on loans for members; the possibility to fix higher prices; easier access to agricultural and management trainings; improved channels to government and NGO support; and

access to high-quality inputs (rice seeds) that were previously hard to obtain. The smaller cooperative included young farmers, while the members of the larger cooperative stated that youth were not interested in working in the cooperative, but preferred to sell their labour elsewhere (e.g. on rubber plantations). Both cooperatives cited the need for more training.

Available support for rural youth

While a large number of trainings – in and outside the formal TVET system – are available in Kampong Cham Province, issues concerning accessibility and course completion rate persist.

According to the PTC, the main challenges faced by the TVET system are: its negative perception; the low value of training – as perceived by both potential training participants and the private sector; and poor dissemination among youth of information about available training. PTC training programmes were free of charge and accommodation was provided for some students; despite these advantages, financial limitations and physical distance from the home remain major barriers to youth's access to training, because they need to support their own families. This was the case for non-formal training programmes, as revealed through interviews with training participants. Non-formal training providers stated that many training programmes yielded poor results for a variety of reasons: they failed to offer initial preparatory classes (e.g. reading, writing, mathematics); no practical components were included; and students did not receive life skills training. Interviews with participants in non-agricultural training programmes made it clear that young people require support when they become self-employed. Challenges faced by prospective entrepreneurs included lack of money, the risk of having no customers and poor location.

To ease the school-to-work transition, the job centre in Kampong Cham registered jobseekers by taking their names, addresses, phone numbers and job titles. However, they did not gather information about the jobseeker's technical, business or soft skills. Job centre staff went to villages and secondary schools throughout the province to register jobseekers; they visited companies and researched public job announcements to gather information about job opportunities. Two-day courses of 25–30 participants were offered to develop relevant soft skills, such as how to present oneself in an interview, how to write a CV and how to communicate with customers. To support the job centre's efforts, universities, local authorities, youth and employers were invited to meeting forums, where employers were asked to state the skills they were looking for in new employees. A skills mismatch was only observed in relation to highly qualified young people in Kampong Cham Province. See Table 12 for a breakdown of the job centre's activities between December 2016 and June 2017.

BSDA mentioned a persistent lack of careers advice and subsequent lack of re-integration of training participants into the job market as major barriers to accessing jobs after training.

TABLE 11: Activities of job centre, Kampong Cham Province

Activity		Female	Male	Total
Jobseeker	Total	250	200	450
	Disabilities	1	0	1
Matching/Sending to employer	Total	162	146	308
	Disabilities	0	0	0
Job	Total	44	51	95
	Disabilities	0	0	0

Source: Job Centre Kampong Cham (adapted).

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Youth can engage in farmer organizations, but they can also be empowered at local level by organizing themselves in youth clubs. In Kampong Cham, youth have little opportunity to make their voices heard or participate in local decision-making processes. However, youth clubs run by NGOs in some villages enable youth to influence village and commune development plans.

Recommendations of local experts

Experts from PSOD, the Agriculture School, BSDA and the DAFF in Kampong Cham Province made the following recommendations to make employment in agriculture more attractive:

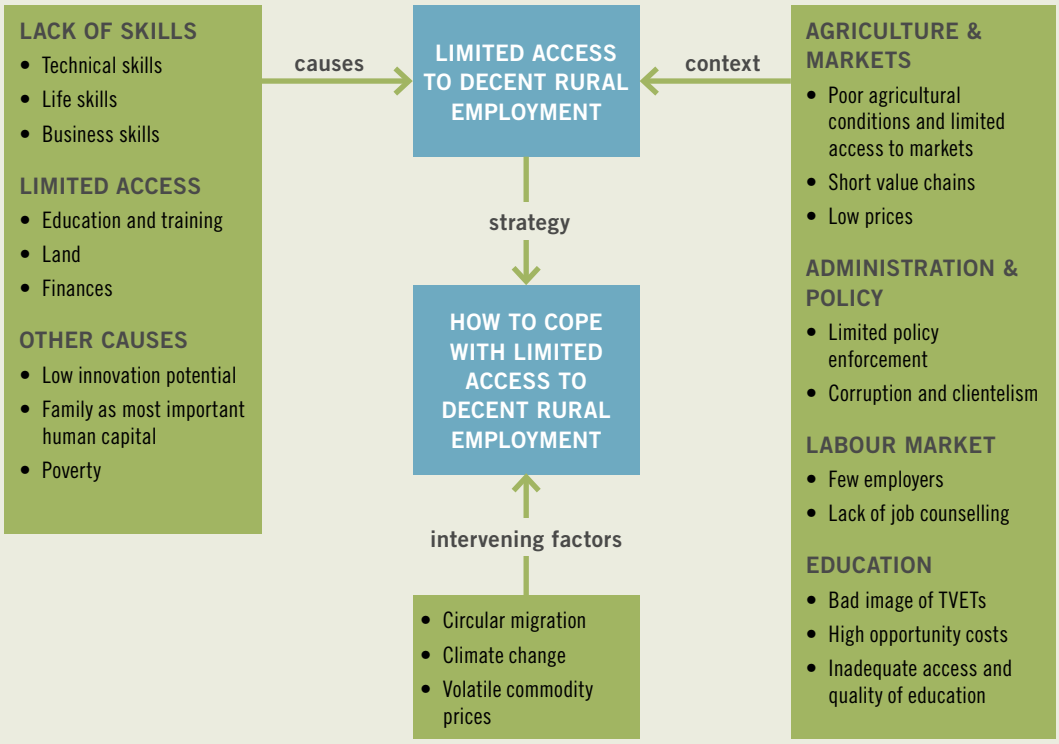
- Provide clear market information to farmers.
- Improve productivity/yields.
- Develop small and medium-sized enterprises for packaging and sales to reduce exports of unprocessed Cambodian agricultural products.
- Strengthen cooperatives because they can serve as a hub for knowledge and skills.
- Enable collaboration between the Government and NGOs to provide training in agriculture for cooperatives.
- Promote mechanization and the use of modern techniques to generate higher incomes and increase the attractiveness of the agricultural sector.
- Subsidize agricultural products to mitigate price fluctuations. (Price stability is key for farmers and leads to sustainable production; risk is high if there is too much fluctuation.)

6.4 Results from the case study provinces

Many of the barriers and enablers to young people accessing decent employment and training programmes are similar across case study sites (see Figure 12). Most youth participants in focus group discussions were still in school. Their daily lives evolve around school, supporting their parents at home or in the family business/farm and their hobbies, and it is sometimes difficult to begin thinking about the challenges in finding decent employment. For this reason, the challenges cited often related to continuing education (whether school or university) in relation to their job aspirations and eventual need for a university degree.

A key challenge faced by people engaged in agricultural activities in Cambodia is the very structure of the sector, which offers few possibilities for most people to access decent employment. In the three provinces, four key areas influencing the agricultural sector and limiting access to decent employment were identified, namely: agriculture and markets, administration and policy, the labour market, and education/training.

FIGURE 12: Factors influencing access to decent employment in the case study provinces



Source: Authors.

Agriculture is not a very popular career choice among rural youth in the three provinces. Only three of the interviewees named working in agriculture as a career aspiration; some saw agriculture as backup option. The limited financial resources available to most families have had a negative impact on school attendance: families cannot afford basic school supplies for their children (e.g. books and pens), and youth's labour is needed to maintain the family income.

Agricultural work is generally viewed in a negative light: the work is hard, the incomes are low. High input prices mean that farmers spend a disproportionate amount of their income on seeds, fertilizers and pesticides, while prices for agricultural products are often perceived as low and unstable. In Kampong Chhnang, when fishing and farming families were asked about good opportunities for their children, they excluded the agricultural sector; in fact, the province has higher poverty rates and more difficult agricultural conditions than the other two provinces. Limited access to infrastructure (e.g. roads, electricity and irrigation systems) contributes to low productivity and hampers access to markets, particularly in regions prone to flooding and being cut off for at least part of the year; this is the case for many communities close to the Tonle Sap or the Mekong and its subsidiary streams.

The establishment of local farmer associations has helped tackle issues related to poor market access and low prices for agricultural products. Together, farmers are empowered to achieve greater bargaining power, and self-organization can also be effective in influencing youth and others. While Cambodia's agriculture policy framework and strategy is designed to improve working conditions and diversify the sector, difficulties remain in terms of implementing regulations and providing the necessary support to people working in the sector. While policies such as the childhood policy developed by the MAFF are well intended, their implementation is limited due to lack of resources and capacities.

With regard to the rural labour market, there is limited information available about what jobs exist and the relative skills required. A limited number of enterprises engage in high-level processing or employ skilled workers on a permanent or regular basis, there are few employers along value chains, and employers tend to prefer unskilled and seasonal labourers. Hence, there is not actually a formal mismatch between employers' demands for skills and the skills provided by youth. There were few DRE opportunities: jobs did not pay decent incomes, lacked decent working conditions, and did not fulfil occupational safety standards.

However, it is important to consider that most youth contemplating work in agriculture will be self-employed. Youth working as farmers or as self-employed along the value chain need to have skills to understand basic market functions.

TABLE 12: DRE indicators and findings

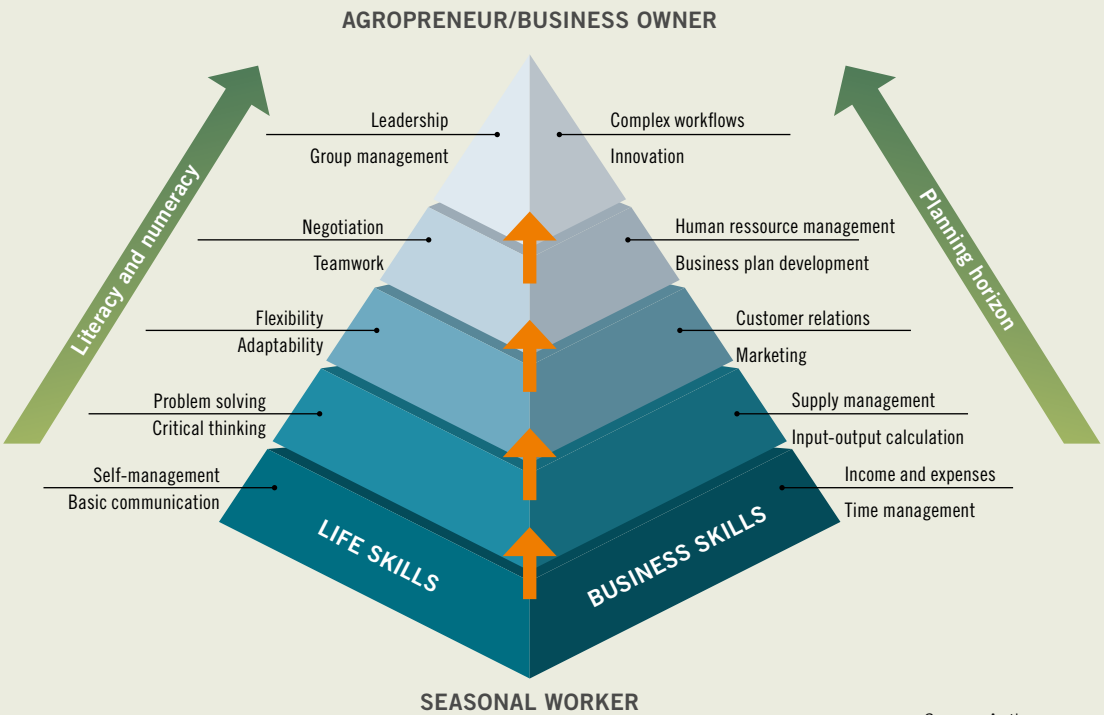
DRE indicator	Findings
Is not child labour	• Worst forms of child labour were not observed during field trips.
Is not forced labour	• Forced labour was not observed during field trips.
Does not entail discrimination at work	• Discrimination at work was not observed during field trips.
Guarantees freedom of association	• Freedom of association was not observed during field trips.
Provides an adequate living income	• Incomes are often below the poverty line. • Income varies depending on the profession. While smallholder farmers tend to be poor, employees of micro-enterprises earn incomes close to the minimum wage. • Some farmers and fishers who apply new techniques (e.g. aquaculture) earn higher incomes.
Entails an adequate degree of employment security and stability	• Limited forms of job/social security were observed during field trips. • There is almost no health insurance. Only one formal big factory pays health insurance to its employees; some SMEs claimed to pay medical bills for sick employees.
Adopts sector-specific minimum occupational safety and health measures	• Occupational safety standards were rarely observed in processing enterprises, especially rice mills. • Some employers have minimum safety mechanisms (e.g. fire extinguishers). • Breaches of heath standards were observed, especially with regard to usage of pesticides and fertilizers.
Avoids excessive working hours and allows sufficient time for rest	• SMEs in Kampong Cham and Battambang supposedly operate within labour law regulations. • Farmers: working hours exceed the regulation 48 hours per week. • Work hours on farms are excessive, especially in labour-intensive periods (sowing and harvest).
Promotes access to adapted technical and vocational training	• Training is often far away or does not meet local needs; few offer in-house training. • Some village-based short-term agricultural courses are offered by provincial departments and NGOs. • No cooperation between employers and training centres (TVET and non-formal) was mentioned/observed.

Figure 13 shows the business and life skills needed by self-employed people. The continuum of people not in formal employment ranges from people selling their labour daily to others running big enterprises. Every type of employment requires a specific skill set. When planning to develop capacities and skills (e.g. through training programmes) it is crucial to consider what type of self-employment is envisaged for the target group. For example, rural youth working as seasonal labourers on plantations must be able to weigh their expenses (i.e. transport costs) against their daily or monthly wages and quickly adapt to changing working environments if there is no contract securing long-term employment. On the other hand, a young person running a small processing company needs to have the skills to create an entire business plan, manage complex administrative and financial processes, and lead a team.

Migration is another challenge faced by the labour market. It is a central topic, especially in Battambang, where in some villages, up to 90 percent of youth migrate to Thailand. Young people tend to return from abroad to marry; many communities thus face the challenges associated with circular migration. When they marry, young people often receive a farming lot from the family farm and start working in agriculture. Additionally, no specific training programmes or mechanisms are in place to support this specific group of returned migrants.

In Battambang and Kampong Cham, there is little help available for the difficult school-to-job transition – guiding graduates and helping them to find suitable employment or training after school. Job centres exist but operate on a very low level, while schools rarely offer job counselling. It is usually the training centres themselves that provide information about TVETs and trainings at village level. The provincial departments for labour and vocational training oversee both the job centre and the governmental TVET institutions. However, TVET graduates are not automatically transferred to job centres.

FIGURE 13: Skills needs for different levels of self-employment



Source: Authors.

Despite impressive progress in terms of levels of primary enrolment, literacy rates, and the development of school and TVET curricula, the quality of education remains a concern. Teachers' capacities and school endowments are low, and this reflects negatively on the quality of teaching. The same applies to TVET and to short-term courses in Battambang and Kampong Cham, where most courses are perceived as low quality. Higher degree diplomas exist in both provinces, but enrolment rates have dropped over the past few years due in part to the negative image of TVETs, but also as a result of the high opportunity costs of training programmes, manifested through loss of income (caused by loss of labour in farming activities and costs incurred for accommodation and transportation).

Recommendations at provincial level focused on the design of training courses, financial support and post-training components. Financial support to participants was considered crucial to reduce dropout rates during training. Long-term training courses were considered preferable and offered more potential for improved job opportunities for youth. Establishing connections with the private sector was mentioned as an effective strategy for finding job placements. Furthermore, post-training financial support for starting one's own business, as well as follow-up with training graduates, including career advice and job counselling, were considered a necessary component of high-quality training courses.

In summary, interested potential trainees have difficulty accessing agricultural training, and employers disregard some training programmes as of too low quality. For graduates considering self-employment, there are few supporting mechanisms in place to help them start their own business and reduce the associated risks.

From the perspective of agricultural workers, two main elements restricting access to decent employment were observed: money and transport. At individual and household level, poverty is the main factor limiting the choices and opportunities available to youth. While many parents expressed the wish to support their children's endeavours to access better and longer education in and out of school, financial constraints remain a significant challenge. Children who dropped out of school to support the family income might face additional barriers in accessing TVET because of education requirements. The proximity and quality of secondary and TVET education are another challenge, especially in regions where roads flood during the rainy season and youth can only reach school by boat. Even in non-flood-prone areas, the secondary school may be over 15 km away, public and private means of transportation scarce or the roads dangerous with a high accident rate. Access to training is not easy, as some programmes are only offered in provincial capitals and the quality may be low. In addition, transport is not always available and road conditions are difficult.

Lack of access to responsible and inclusive financing remains a challenge, despite the abundance of microcredit organizations available in the provinces. High interest rates and short lending periods increase the risks of over indebtedness; following bad experiences, farmers are less inclined to take risks. Some farmers have difficulty accessing land, especially plots of sufficient size to sustain their livelihoods.

In conclusion, more efforts are needed to offer support and improve the existing support for youth to access decent rural employment. Youth must be empowered to follow their personal job aspirations. To achieve this, it is essential to promote better access to education and training programmes, in order to teach life and business skills and strengthen youth's role in decision-making processes.

7. Discussion of results and examples of good practices

The case study focuses on 15–17-year-olds and assesses their skills and training needs, as well as their ability to access decent rural employment. From 15 to 17 is a very brief period, characterized for many by the transition from school to work. While most young people in this age group are still in school (as is expected), education is not of high quality and there are few opportunities for in-school training incorporating practical components (e.g. internships). Youth who drop out of school are difficult to reintegrate into the formal education system, as they are often obliged to work on the family farm or to migrate to support their families financially. Some young people work in hazardous conditions and receive almost no support – for example, training providers do not take them into consideration.

Note that the recommendations for training design, support for school-to-work transition and youth empowerment apply to a broader age group, 15–24 years (i.e. in line with the UN definition of young persons); indeed, many of the difficulties faced by 15–17-year-olds are relevant for all youth. Nevertheless, the focus of the recommendations is on young people aged 15–17, since they require special attention.

The Royal Government of Cambodia aims to transform Cambodia's agricultural sector from an extensive stage of development into:

> *an intensive stage of development that primarily depends on the application of techniques, new technologies, R&D, mechanization and increased capacity of irrigation to improve productivity, and diversify into high value crops and other agricultural products, including livestock farming and aquaculture (RGC, 2013, p. 17).*

To make this happen, the Government needs to build on youth's potential and motivate them to venture into agriculture. This motivation must be based on the notion that agriculture has the potential to generate a competitive income capable of sustaining a decent lifestyle. However, the study highlights the tremendous **lack of decent employment opportunities along the agricultural value chain in rural Cambodia.**

The study confirms previous research into agriculture in Cambodia, which indicates that, to achieve the desired transformation, it is necessary to promote agribusiness enterprises and community-managed farmer organizations, support agropreneurs and facilitate investments in agricultural and rural development, particularly in infrastructure, energy, water, education and health.

It is recommended to **adopt best practices** and follow the suggestions below, including **interventions based on the models described and successfully implemented in other countries.**

YOUTH AND AGROPRENEURSHIP

To enable them to become successful agropreneurs, it is crucial to provide assistance to young people to establish productive ventures. They can then create jobs for themselves along agricultural value chains, as well as in agricultural production itself.

> *Enhancing farmers' entrepreneurial skills means developing managerial skills, including risk management, to start and run a profitable farm business, and foster the "entrepreneurial spirit" of farmers. Successful entrepreneurship requires also ensuring effective market access and gaining a better position for farmers in the value chain from production to final consumption (FAO, IFAD and WFP, 2016).*

7.1 Framework conditions

7.1.1 Access to land

Without access to land, there can be no agricultural work. It is especially difficult for rural youth to access land of sufficient size for farming. The study established that most farmers in the study area have relatively small land tenures. In most countries, youth gain access to land through heritage. However, the subdivision of land among siblings leads to its fragmentation. As a result, young people are becoming increasingly landless. While waiting for their inheritance, youth tend to work on the family land for little or no pay (FAO, IFAD and CTA, 2014), and parents usually pass the land on to the younger generation very late (IFAD, 2014b).

Access to land via the land market is seldom an option for young people. According to the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the **challenge of (late) access to land is a factor that forces young people to migrate.** Furthermore, inheritance systems in most societies discriminate against women (OHCHR and UN Women, 2013). In Cambodia, young people are not considered in arrangements for land tenure and distribution (IFAD, 2014a). It is therefore important to **facilitate the intergenerational transfer of land, by providing loans to help youth acquire land and creating youth-tailored land-leasing arrangements** (FAO, IFAD and CTA, 2014). For young people to establish their own farms, they must have a guarantee that their land rights are recognized.

A good example of youth-tailored land-leasing arrangements in Cambodia is the farmer organization, **Farmer and Nature Net (FNN)**. FNN obtains long-term land lease contracts, which they subcontract to young farmers. The farmers invest their labour in the land and use the income generated by selling their produce to gradually take over the land lease from FNN (FAO, IFAD and CTA, 2014).

7.1.2 Access to finances

Youth face tremendous difficulties accessing financial services, particularly in rural areas (IFAD, 2014b). The study revealed the need for finances to cover the costs of planting, raising animals and harvesting, and to invest in improved inputs to increase production. Thus, **lack of access to funds is a major concern in terms of access to decent rural employment**.

The high level of informality means that it is difficult to access formal financial systems; this in turn prevents young people from starting their own business. Young farmers require a range of financial services, including credit, savings products and services, insurance schemes, and training on financial literacy (IFAD, 2014b). Few financial products are tailored specifically to young people, and financial institutions often perceive young people as riskier clients than adult farmers, even though there is "now strong evidence that young people have higher reimbursement rates if properly supported" (IFAD, 2017). Therefore, youth often rely on informal sources – typically family and friends – to access financial services. This limits the growth potential of rural businesses operated by young people (Asomba and Rim, 2017; IFAD, 2014b). If the Government needs to **promote tailored and low-risk financial services and create start-up funding opportunities**, rural youth will be encouraged to engage in agriculture while avoiding risks of debt.

Despite the broad range of microcredit institutions present in Cambodia, many farmers interviewed said they would not consider taking out a loan because of the high interest rates charged and the risk of over-indebtedness. Local stakeholders preferred to set up savings associations that provided access to financing at a lower rate of interest.

Sierra Leone provides a successful example of strengthening and broadening the rural financial system and establishing stronger links with the agricultural sector. IFAD developed the **Rural Finance and Community Improvement Project**, which uses locally owned financial services associations (FSAs) to support the creation of community-owned and operated financial solutions. The project helps young people manage the FSAs, each of which has a manager and a cashier, who must be 21–29 years old. Hiring young people increases the sustainability of the FSAs and promotes the integration of young people in the community. To date, the project has created 46 FSAs, all of which are successfully managed and operated by young people (IFAD, 2013).

7.1.3 Access to ICT

The use of information and communications technology (ICT) is spreading rapidly among the Cambodian population. In 2016, over 96 percent of Cambodians claimed to own a mobile phone. According to a study by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Internet is now the most important channel (at 30 percent) via which Cambodians access information (Phong, Srou and Solá, 2016). Nevertheless, only half of Cambodians (48 percent) claimed to have access to the Internet. **Limited access to the Internet – even to electricity in some villages – is a major constraint for young people in rural areas.**

Given its diffusion, ICT is a potentially efficient means for farmers to receive information related to their agricultural activities. Agropreneurs can use ICT to improve access to information, inputs, finance and markets for agricultural products. Start-ups, such as "**Farmerline**",[7] provide information on the latest research or technological innovation – information that otherwise would not reach local communities (CTA, 2016). In Kenya, the youth-led start-up, "FarmDrive", uses data analytics and mobile phone technology to help predict the financial needs of smallholder farmers. FarmDrive consists of a simple digital record-keeping platform that enables farmers to keep track of their activities and help them better understand planting cycles, crop yields and trends in production. This helps them predict future revenue, timing of income and potential payment gaps (CGAP, 2016).

To ensure that Cambodia can compete and cooperate in an increasingly interconnected world, the MoEYS Masterplan supports ICT as a tool for learning, teaching, searching and sharing information (Nguon, 2015, p. 60). National policies require support at local level: for example, when improving infrastructures and facilities, locations should be chosen with a view to facilitating access for farmers. Moreover, more ICT training programmes for young farmers would increase their confidence and knowledge in the use of digital applications and contribute to "re-branding agriculture as a viable career for youth" (CTA, 2016, p. 85).

To foster the potential of digital technology in rural areas, and given that such technologies appeal to youth, the Government could **increase investments in ICT**, in order to improve efficiency in farm work, and facilitate access to markets, information and business opportunities.

7.1.4 Access to markets

In Cambodia, middlemen have more influence than smallholder farmers do over agricultural terms of trade (TOT). In general, **long marketing chains present a challenge**: they involve numerous intermediaries who diminish profits for farmers or supply credit for inputs at high interest rates. The situation is exacerbated by many **(young) farmers' lack of knowledge about how markets work**. There is increasing evidence that producer groups can help young people overcome market barriers (FAO, IFAD and CTA, 2014). Therefore, market-related development interventions have an important role: they can enhance market information, reduce risks and facilitate lower transaction costs to improve access to markets for rural farmers.

The promotion of agricultural value chains can improve the quantity and quality of agribusinesses and wage labour in the agricultural sector. At present, most value chains in Cambodia can barely be considered "chains", because the **links between producers and other actors are weak or non-existent**. Indeed, agricultural producers often export unprocessed products because there are so few local processors. The MAFF prepared the Agriculture Sector Strategic Development Plan 2014–18 (MAFF, 2015b) with the objective of strengthening agricultural value chains as a basis for downstream value-added processing.

Upstream development of value chains also faces various challenges in terms of availability (rural supply of inputs), access (farmers' ability to purchase inputs) and utilization (farmers' capacity

7 Farmerline works to bolster food security through better access to information. The initiative was established in 2012 and has helped connect some 200 000 farmers in ten countries using mobile technology. According to Farmerline, using the service for one season increases farmer income by 55.6 percent per acre (Norton Rose Fulbright LLP, 2015).

to apply inputs and optimize their benefits). In Cambodia, these challenges are particularly acute given the rudimentary nature of local input markets and the **limited technical capacity of the smallholder farming sector** (Chan, 2014). Various interviewees acknowledged that, to improve agricultural productivity and competitiveness, it is essential that smallholder farmers adopt more modern agro-inputs.

While there have been attempts to strengthen and diversify agricultural value chains at national level, little has been done at provincial and local level. The value chain and its linkages – if developed and improved – offer more potential than farming itself in terms of creating job opportunities and diminishing youth under- and unemployment. Therefore, **wider application of new technologies in agriculture and off-farm activities**, such as processing, storage and distribution, are indispensable (ILO, 2015).

According to various interview partners, for the creation of many jobs in the context of rapidly growing regional trade, it is vital to **develop linkages to new markets in high-potential sectors**, such as aquaculture, good agricultural practices (GAPs) and organic products, or in the food processing subsector. Target value chains should be chosen based on their potential for job creation and the accessibility and appropriateness of the jobs for youth (ILO, 2015). GAPs include: meeting food safety requirements; reducing environmental impact; complying with worker health, safety and welfare standards; and maintaining produce quality during the production, harvesting and post-harvest handling of fresh fruit and vegetables in the ASEAN region (ASEAN, 2006). New jobs created for young people could include farm manager, audit inspector (i.e. food safety), certifier and skilled worker in organic production.

Links between agriculture and the booming tourism sector offer great potential. According to FAO, it is necessary to **create synergies between agriculture and tourism** to facilitate sustained growth and poverty reduction (FAO, 2012). The direct supply to hotels of agricultural products could create agricultural employment opportunities for rural youth.

In Cambodia, the need for better linkages was referred to in the national Tourism Development Strategic Plan 2012–2020 (RGC, 2012); however, no indication is provided as to how the national strategy would be implemented (Mao *et al.*, 2014).

7.2 School education – quality and access

Access to school education is crucial for rural youth. This study found that income poverty and its implications had a high impact on both access to schools and staying in school.

A closer look at gender differences reveals a complicated picture: although several interviewees mentioned that accessing education is more difficult for girls, official numbers do not support this. Girls have more chance now than in the past of completing primary school; however, the situation varies between urban and rural areas (MOWA, 2014). In Battambang Province, for example, lower primary and secondary school dropout rates show that female students tend to stay longer in school than their male counterparts (MoEYS, 2017). In urban areas, boys have higher completion levels than girls in lower secondary school, while rural children generally lag behind their urban peers (MOWA, 2014).

While not playing a decisive role in accessing education, **gender continues to require special attention.** Moreover, according to the MOWA study, **rural and urban differences are more pronounced**.

In rural areas, going to school entails **high opportunity costs for low-income families** in the form of missing income, because the children could be working and support their families. It is recommended to **promote school feeding programmes and conditional cash transfer (CCT) programmes linked to school enrolment** and attendance to reduce the early school dropout rate. Successful programmes include **Program Keluarga Harapan in Indonesia and Bolsa Familia in Brazil**.

Furthermore, given the **entry barriers in the formal TVET system**, out-of-school rural youth face additional constraints accessing TVET.

The quality of education is poor, also because **many teachers are underqualified**. According to an ILO and ADB study from 2015, this is due to damage inflicted during the Khmer Rouge regime in the 1970s; the process of rehabilitation of the education system has only recently begun with the implementation of teacher development and training reforms. The newly adopted teacher policy and action plan aims to overcome the lack of quality education in Cambodia. To keep children in school and to improve the quality of education, KAPE and the MoEYS are implementing the **New Generation School (NGS)** initiative. NGS invites companies to invest in schools, and quality is thus improved without any increase in government expenditure. Companies participating in the public–private partnership raise teacher salaries and regularly evaluate staff. Under this initiative, education is generally free for children from poor families; wealthier families pay an annual fee up to USD 65. To date, three pilot schools have been set up; they provide e-libraries, counselling services, life skills education and software-based learning, and promote innovative thinking (KAPE, 2017). The NGS initiative is in operation in both urban areas (Phnom Penh and Kampong Cham City) and rural areas (Svay Rieng Province). KAPE and MoEYS plan to open at least one school in each province.

Finally, this study reveals a **lack of relevant practical skills training in formal school systems. It is vital to place more emphasis in the curriculum on life skills, business skills and adequate agricultural skills** – both theory and practice – and to this end, it is necessary to **revise secondary education**. Life skills (e.g. communication) or business skills (e.g. planning) could be integrated into formal school curricula. In rural areas, agriculture could be part of students' education, in addition to school gardens, which are already part of secondary education. That being said, the NGS initiative can be considered a successful model. A prototype for the integration of agricultural courses in the school curriculum was successfully implemented in Kampong Cham City. Children can select the agricultural topic they would like to study, choosing from a range of courses, including mushroom cultivation, aquaculture and vegetable production.

7.3 Training needs of rural youth

Moving agricultural training forwards for the young generation in Cambodia requires a comprehensive and context-specific approach. There are, however, numerous opportunities for improvement through the implementation of moderate changes. In general, youth-tailored agricultural trainings require higher-quality training, combined with easier access to adequate training content.

According to a Cambodian Research and Consultancy Center (CRCC) study on non-formal education in Cambodia, TVET has a wide user base:

> *vastly different clientele, including youths, those with low incomes, workers, women, disabled persons, unemployed persons, and migrants – each with their own characteristics, contexts, and constraints (CRCC, 2015, p. 42).*

This applies not only to TVET, but to any kind of agricultural training service. Therefore, it is important to differentiate between potential trainee groups and adapt the level of formality and the structure of skills development to their specific circumstances.

Training services provided by PTCs/CLCs, agricultural schools and MAFF extension services are just one means of helping youth build skills. Non-governmental and private training initiatives are also important for skill building, especially in remote areas. While it is imperative to strengthen institutionalized training provision to support the national vision of transforming Cambodia's agricultural sector, it is also essential to maintain the diverse nature of skills acquisition opportunities.

ACCESS TO TVET

The Government of Cambodia already assists vulnerable citizens, facilitating their access to TVET by supporting them in priority areas, such as accommodation, meals and transport. To further **encourage youth** to participate in TVET, **scholarship opportunities** should be increased. Moreover, **incentives for families** (e.g. CCTs) would enable parents to encourage children to participate in training programmes and could help reduce the high dropout rates among young training participants.

The participation of **young women**, in particular, must be fostered. Women tend to enrol mostly in "gender-stereotypical" classes, such as hairdressing and make-up. Additional effort is required to encourage young women to enrol in more technical TVET programmes, involving the use of machinery etc.

At present, a limited number of bridging programmes provide out-of-school youth with a second chance to complete secondary education and pursue TVET. Due to the country's rapid demographic shift and the associated demand for future skills, it is also important to promote TVET access for **young people already in the workforce** (ILO and ADB, 2015).

The general **perception of TVET is negative**: it is considered a second-rate education for poor children and school dropouts. It is, therefore, difficult to attract youth to new and existing agricultural training. **Awareness raising and information sharing are fundamental** to demonstrate the potential benefits of employment (especially self-employment) in agriculture and the possible positive impact of agricultural training on agricultural productivity and income generation. The media is a powerful tool for influencing youth's perceptions (Seangmean, Sokheng and Somonich, 2015).

The study highlighted the need for young people to attend long-term programmes. Findings suggest that long-term training programmes have a more sustainable impact on agricultural productivity and diversification than several short-term training offers.

Although a variety of institutions and organizations provide agricultural trainings for rural youth, according to several experts and other interviewees, **lack of access to community-based agricultural training programmes** remains an issue for youth in rural Cambodia.

7.3.1 Methodology of youth-tailored agricultural trainings

Trainings tailor-made for rural youth must cover a variety of topics, including basic business skills to enable youth to identify business opportunities and fully develop innovative ideas. Soft skills are also important to foster students' self-esteem and prepare them for the job market.

One such example is the **Training for Rural Economic Empowerment (TREE) Programme**. Implemented in 11 countries, it addresses poverty and unemployment through community-based skills training and local institutional capacity building (ILO, 2005). Developed by the ILO, TREE focuses on the crucial role of skills development in the creation of employment opportunities at local level; more specifically, it develops training capacities in remote rural areas where participation in TVET is very low. TREE participants receive certificates at pre-vocational level and are eligible to enter the formal TVET system and pursue higher-level qualifications. TREE represents an important pathway for underprivileged people to access the formal TVET system.

In remote areas where training centres do not exist, arrangements for mobile training and blended e-learning[8] courses can foster the agricultural education of young people. Free online courses have the potential to reach a young audience in myriad ways and on a scale matched by no other teaching format. Studies show that computer-assisted learning (CAL) is most effective when used as an in-class tool or when students doing mandatory homework are supported by personalized tutoring (Escueta *et al.*, 2017). The **AfricaRice** initiative in Benin provides interesting insight into the opportunities offered by e-learning courses for

8 Blended learning involves a combination of learning via digital media and traditional on-site learning (in a classroom).

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vocational training in agriculture and agribusiness (Bernard, Tran and Fürst, 2017). There is a growing trend of providing youth with resources via mobile phones or other informal means, but it is not clear how effective this type of learning can be, and whether youth will become self-directed learners as a result of having free educational content readily available (Blumel, 2014, p. 23).

The Junior Farmer Field and Life School (JFFLS) approach, developed by FAO and implemented in many countries around the world, works well in agriculture-related face-to-face trainings and is suited to the Cambodian context. However, it requires substantial financial resources and has not yet been adopted in the country.

JUNIOR FARMER FIELD AND LIFE SCHOOLS

The **JFFLS after-school programme** teaches vulnerable children and youth about farming and how to take care of themselves. The JFFLS methodology and curriculum combine both **agricultural and life skills** and teach the value of cooperation and collaboration through the establishment of farmer associations and other organizations. JFFLS aims to:

- improve income;
- increase employment opportunities;
- facilitate access to markets; and
- strengthen organizational capacities.

Young people take part in training programmes that last 6–12 months and follow the **local cropping cycle**. They learn about local agro-ecological conditions, field preparation, sowing and transplanting, weeding, irrigation, integrated pest management, utilization and conservation of available resources, utilization and processing of food crops, harvesting, storage, and marketing skills (FAO, 2008, 2017b).

Young trainees are also encouraged to initiate good agricultural practices within their households. The hands-on programme is accompanied by a training of trainers programme. The JFFLS approach has led to **increased employment and self-employment opportunities** in many countries, and the approach has been adapted to suit many **different contexts**.

The implementation of JFFLS in Cambodia would offer considerable potential for rural youth.

7.3.2 Farm as a business – skills needed

Agricultural self-employment is often the only option for young people, but further development is hindered by their **limited knowledge base of business and entrepreneurial skills**. They lack basic business knowledge, which is essential to reduce the risks associated with self-employment.

According to an NIS, MOP and ILO study, many young people in Cambodia did not actively choose self-employment: either it was expected by the family (19.0 percent) or they were unable to find a wage or salaried job (17.5 percent). The most frequently stated challenges in running a business are **unavailability of financial resources** (51.6 percent) and **lack of business expertise** (14.8 percent) (NIS and MoP, 2015). Training needs to involve practice in planning and running a micro-enterprise and include coaching from people with business experience. Creativity is another essential element of entrepreneurship, and training programmes should encourage young people to reflect critically, assess options and think out of the box. It is important to **incorporate life skills training** components focusing on self-empowerment, problem solving and decision making – all key issues for young people.

Many successful international training services follow the same strategy. They **adopt a mixture of theory and practice** to provide not only technical skills, but also soft skills in business plan development, planning, marketing, entrepreneurship, business incubation and trading, motivation, conflict resolution, leadership and communication.

The **Farmer Business School (FBS)** concept promotes entrepreneurial and business skills for smallholder farmers. Launched in 2015 in 12 different countries in Africa, FBS covers 12 different target crops (e.g. cashew, coffee, cocoa, cotton, rice, tomato). The project was very successful in changing the "mind-sets of farmers by sensitising them to market opportunities and possibilities to improve productivity, family income and nutrition" (GIZ, 2015, p. 7). The programme adopts a balanced approach, incorporating a range of services useful to farmers, such as financial services and post-training support to transform knowledge and skills into practice (GIZ, 2015).

A national agricultural and entrepreneurial skills programme from Honduras, **Human Development for Youth: Overcoming the Challenges of Migration through Employment**, was successfully implemented by FAO. In the first phase, youth were guided in the analysis of local market opportunities and development of business plans. At the same time, young women and men were trained in the agricultural and entrepreneurial skills needed to launch and sustain their enterprises. Business plan in hand, they presented their proposed micro-enterprises to credit and seed capital funds. The programme ensured that youth were involved in the selection of products and planning of activities, and it worked with beneficiaries to form youth business associations with gender equality a primary issue. At national level, the project incentivized stakeholders to improve the legal, policy and institutional framework for youth employment. Over 1 500 youths successfully launched and continued to operate their micro-enterprises. Two youth-led interregional commercialization networks were launched to provide support to other prospective young agro-entrepreneurs (FAO, 2015b).

To improve career options for youth, the Government could also **increase the knowledge and skills of young famers related to promising agricultural products**, such as organic food. They require skills in different stages of the value chain, including agroprocessing, services and marketing – i.e. areas with higher returns than primary agricultural production. The selected topics should be integrated into the curriculum of agricultural training institutions.

Many potential training beneficiaries in Cambodia come from vulnerable backgrounds and often lack a basic education. Such trainees could benefit from learning modules that not only cover skills relevant to agricultural work and entrepreneurship, but also **offer an opportunity to catch up with the basic education** they missed (e.g. functional literacy and numeracy skills).

7.3.3 Post-training support

Young people who have completed agricultural training and wish to start their own agribusiness should be made aware of the pitfalls of self-employment. Since risks associated with entrepreneurship are particularly challenging for rural youth, it is crucial to establish support mechanisms. Post-training support – for example, mentoring – has the potential to eliminate some of these risks.

Within the scope of this study, most participants who had undergone some form of training received **no follow-up support** and they lacked the knowledge required to implement new agricultural techniques. The supporting mechanisms described below have been successful in other countries and could be transferred to the context of Cambodia.

One inspiring example is the agribusiness apprenticeship model of the **Faraja Latia Resource Center**, a Kenyan social enterprise established to provide training and business support services to farmers in Africa. The 6-month practical training programme targets youth who have graduated from high school and post-secondary training institutions. The practical training takes place on a model farm with the support of a diverse range of collaborating farms and agribusinesses. The course comprises two parts: 70 percent of students' time is spent working in the model agribusiness enterprises; the other 30 percent is spent in classrooms studying theoretical concepts (Latia Resource Center Ltd, 2015).

It is essential to **ensure post-training support** for all training programmes, public and private, and especially for young people; in particular, it is vital to **facilitate access to markets and credit**. Trainees also require regular post-training support to help them establish their businesses and tackle initial challenges. Aligned with the Skill India Mission and with support from Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation, Welthungerhilfe successfully developed a **Green College Programme** in India including appropriate post-training services. Trainees receive mentoring to help them establish their farms as business units, and they are encouraged to form producer organizations that provide economies of scale and access to the market (Welthungerhilfe, 2016).

7.4 School-to-job transition

The study revealed that school-to-job transition services are very limited in rural areas of Cambodia. Although job centres exist in the provinces, their visibility is low in the villages and they are of little relevance to rural youth. Schools do not offer job counselling and **youth often lack information about possible job opportunities**. Weak school-to-job transition is a problem for youth employment, not only in the provinces studied, but also at national and even international level.

In 2015, NIS, the MoP and the ILO published the school-to-work transition survey of youth aged 15–29 in Cambodia. The survey highlighted that for youth with higher education levels – i.e. those who had completed secondary schooling – it is easier to successfully transition from school to work. Other favourable conditions for a smooth transition into the labour market are high household income and urban residence. It is slightly easier for young men to find their first job than for young women (NIS and MoP, 2015). In a comparison of ILO school-to-work transition surveys carried out in different countries, Dachille *et al*. (2015)Manacorda, Ranzani, & Rosati, 2015 confirmed the Cambodia findings: highly educated youth have fewer difficulties than the less educated transiting from school to work. Furthermore, they found evidence that there is a persistent gender gap related to the transition from school to work. Women have more difficulties and face longer transition periods than men. As mentioned earlier, unemployment among youth was found to be low (2.1 percent), but the quality of employment or self-employment was often poor. However, the likelihood of becoming unemployed is highest among those without any education and those with university degrees; this suggests a mismatch between education and skills (NIS and MoP, 2015). A further factor contributing to not decent employment for youth is that **few companies in Cambodia are looking for skilled personnel.**

GENDER-SPECIFIC BARRIERS

Gender stereotypes influence job- and training-related decisions. For example, work in garment factories is considered a woman's job, while construction work is primarily done by men. In order to address gender stereotypes when selecting jobs, **girls can be sensitized for technical professions**; for example, companies can hold "girls' days". In agriculture, women's main task is transplanting seedlings, while men operate machinery, such as hand tractors. The agricultural sector is perceived as appropriate for both men and women, highlighted by the fact that there are an equal number of people of each gender enrolled in Battambang's TVET courses.

The fact that **female youth tend to help their parents more than their male siblings** do is a gender-specific barrier. In addition, according to FAO Bangkok, **women have less access than men to enabling factors,** such as land titles. Local authorities and national experts affirm that young mothers are a particularly vulnerable group due to their high workload, comprising house chores and family obligations, and they often do more than young fathers. This specific group needs the **opportunity to re-enter the education system or training programmes** after interruptions.

Transgender people were identified as a group subject to discrimination and harassment during training, due to gender stereotypes.

Students lack information about future job possibilities; qualified career advisors need to **provide early career counselling**, including the provision of information on current labour market trends in given local areas. Professional job counselling could be integrated into school curricula or at least promoted in schools. One successful example of an early career counselling service is **Vienna Daughters' Day** (*Töchtertag*) in Austria, where girls are invited to visit workplaces and observe occupations that are new to them. It was founded to provide insights into different working opportunities and to raise interest in technical vocational training (European Economic and Social Committee, 2014).

People with disabilities need special support when transitioning into the labour market. In Bangladesh, the **From Margin to Mainstream** programme combines vocational training with temporary wage subsidies, and entrepreneurial training with business start-up funding. It targets unemployed and low-skilled youth with disabilities living in households with an income of less than USD 50 per month (ILO, 2014c).

Apart from in-school and individual job counselling, job centres – also referred to as the public employment service (PES) – play a crucial role in disseminating information, providing counselling and organizing employment programmes (NIS and MoP, 2015). The PES provides counselling to young people, relating their job decisions to current labour market needs and matching them with employers seeking workers. In Cambodia, the NEA organizes mobile career fairs that recruit employees mainly for the garment and light electricity factories. The NEA also organizes a national fair with approximately

THE 2GetThere INITIATIVE

The Dutch youth employment initiative, **2GetThere**, is funded by the Ministry of Social Affairs. It takes place in four municipalities and has to date trained 25 coaches. In 2014, the programme won first prize in the ILO best practice contest. To successfully target vulnerable young people aged 16–27, 2GetThere **engages coaches of the same age** and **adopts a "friends to friends" approach**. Young coaches are able to inspire marginalized youth and share experiences about the transition to their first jobs, and they are generally able to communicate on a similar level. Each young person selects his own trainer and can set the time and place for coaching. The programme thus fosters a strong relationship between mentor and mentee, leading to **improved labour-related choices** (ILO, 2014b).

Short-term individual coaching has proved helpful for young people at risk of dropping out of the school system and could be adopted in Cambodia.

100 companies and 30 000 young people participating. Employment programmes connecting young people with companies, which then share the training costs with the PES, have proved successful in many other countries (e.g. Austria, France, Ireland, Portugal and Lithuania). An assessment of the employment programme in Austria reveals that 75 percent of participants were hired within 3 months of completing the programme (European Economic and Social Committee, 2014). Another successful model of a national school-to-work transition programme is **JobStart** in the Philippines; it includes life skills training, career guidance and coaching for unemployed youth (ADB, 2017c).

TVET centres have an important role in improving the school-to-job transition. They could be upgraded to become one-stop service institutions, providing employment services such as apprenticeship opportunities, job counselling and information about how to develop their own businesses.

Employer involvement is an important cornerstone of successful school-to-job transition. Incentives need to be created to **increase employers' engagement in youth employment.** The **Finnish *Sanssi* card** certifies unemployed persons under 30, allowing employers to apply for a wage subsidy for the first 10 months of employment (European Economic and Social Committee, 2014). Kanol, Khemarin and Elder (2013) discuss the feasibility of a subsidiary approach in the Cambodian context and suggest another strategy: **highlight the potential that young people have to increase companies' competitiveness**. Companies need support to invest in young people and provide training in a thriving area of their company. Moreover, employers need to be made aware of youth's reality and their specific needs. For example, young people are sometimes needed to work on the family farm, depending on the agricultural season, and employers must therefore be ready to adapt to the cycles of rural work.

According to UNESCO, governments should **help companies strengthen skills development to enable them to identify what skills their employees need**. Regular monitoring processes, such as ILO labour force and employer surveys, are useful for gathering comprehensive data on employer needs and labour turnover; in addition, regular surveys on the performance of TVET graduates should be carried out. It is important to provide the private sector with concrete assessment results to ensure its continued participation (UNESCO, 2013b). This study includes a qualitative STNA for each province and provides initial results that must be complemented by a large-scale statistical study.

In addition to official TVETs, many alternative training programmes exist in Cambodia and it is essential to **recognize informally acquired skills**. This is especially relevant for migrants who return with skills acquired abroad. Non-formal or informal learning sometimes provides additional skills that are seldom found in formal trainings (Chea and Huijsmans, 2014)"event":"Youthful Futures? Aspirations, Education and Employment in Asia","event-place":"Singapore","abstract":"The policy phrase Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET. The official validation of skills could enhance employability and mobility, and motivate lifelong learning, especially for socio-economically disadvantaged and low-skilled persons (European Economic and Social Committee, 2014).

At the first workshop, experts proposed to **establish a network of relevant stakeholders to strengthen cooperation and foster youth employment**, especially related to the school-to-work transition. Such a network should include: the MAFF, MoLVT (and NEA) and MoWA; local authorities; the private sector; agricultural development cooperatives; provincial working groups on education; agricultural education institutions; teachers; NGOs and experts working with youth; parents; and youth clubs. The network could be organized as a technical working group and could stage regular consultation workshops, meetings or public debates and forums. Furthermore, existing groups, such as provincial technical working groups, could be strengthened.

7.5 Youth empowerment

Political participation and representation of young people is fundamental if youth are to raise their concerns and aspirations. When drafting specific policies for youth, it is essential to consider the opinions of young people themselves; likewise, when devising employment policies for youth, the voices of

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young people must be heard. The study highlighted how youth participation in any form is scarce in Cambodia. In the provinces, there are very few youth clubs, and those that do exist are supported by NGOs (e.g. PSOD, World Vision and Youth Star). In these clubs, youth receive wide-ranging information about basic social, environmental and hygiene topics and can discuss issues related to the development agenda in the communes. Clubs have an important function in strengthening youth networks, promoting cooperation, increasing self-confidence and enabling youth to gain the attention of local authorities. The NGOs' input is crucial, as youth do not tend to organize themselves in communes or villages otherwise. Youth have little influence; nevertheless, in some of the cases studied, youth clubs did influence decision-making at local level. Empowerment strategies are therefore critical in supporting youth participation in rural areas. Several experts noted that the strong **hierarchical society** in Cambodia complicates political participation and representation for youth. This is especially true for young girls and youth under the age of 18 (FAO, IFAD and CTA, 2014). Likewise, access to other organizational forms, such as agricultural cooperatives and producer organizations, is often limited due to **minimum age restrictions** (FAO, 2017a).

An assessment by KAPE revealed that Cambodian youth are afraid to voice their political opinions, even among their peers. Around one-third have no political convictions or interest in politics, with young women even less likely to be interested. Although youth's rights are anchored in Cambodian policies, very little is known about them and the degree of organization in youth clubs and organizations remains low. At local level, NGOs found that only half of teachers and a similar proportion of local authority members were aware of youth policies. Youth themselves have even less awareness: only one-third of those surveyed claimed to be aware of youth policies. This lack of knowledge is compounded by the overall perception that youth policy implementation is weak (KAPE, 2014). Internationally, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN/DESA) acknowledges the fact that compared with older citizens, the participation of youth in formal, institutional and political processes is relatively low across the globe (UN/DESA, 2012). Information on youth participation specifically related to agriculture and rural development policies is scarce. According to a joint study by FAO, Mouvement Internationale de la Jeunesse Agricole et Rurale Catholique (MIJARC) and IFAD, rural youth rarely participate in designing policies concerning them (FAO, IFAD and CTA, 2014). Consequently, the **lack of political participation of youth is not a Cambodian, but a worldwide issue**.

To address these issues, it is useful to examine measures that have been instrumental in other countries. In order to foster youth empowerment, a culture of participation among youth needs to be created at schools and training institutions.

Denmark's **The Dropouts** programme was funded by the Youth in Action National Agency of Denmark. Implemented in 2014, it brought together 20 young people aged 15–20, and published personal stories of youth that dropped out of school, including facts, figures, analyses and statistical data. The project aimed to **engage youth** and **help policymakers understand why students leave school**. In addition, it highlighted the fact that in order to improve education policies, it is important to consider youth outside of schools (European Commission, 2015).

Given the high dropout rates in the rural areas of Cambodia, this is an appropriate approach.

Furthermore, young people need to be involved in political decision making, whether through exchanges with decision makers or through participation in meetings of (local) authorities. However, authorities and parents must first be made aware of the importance of youth involvement (FAO, 2017a). It is possible to **promote political participation** through government engagement, NGOs, volunteering or the media.

Italy's **Tests of Democracy** project was implemented in the Marche, a region comprising many disadvantaged rural areas. Developed by the regional Office for Youth Policies with the support of the Ministry of Youth Policies and Sports Activities, it aimed to **raise political interest among youth.** The project encouraged political participation of youth by allowing them to h**elp draft new laws** and **engage in other decision-making activities.** In addition, school curricula included lessons on democracy and students could obtain information about politics via a website and in a newspaper available at universities, libraries and colleges (European Commission Education and Culture DG, 2007).

There are already some good examples of youth empowerment projects promoting political participation in Cambodia. For example, the NGO, **Youth Star Cambodia**, sends university graduates who have carried out short training programmes to volunteer in rural areas and help initiate youth clubs and networks. Another NGO, the **Youth Resource Development Program**, helps young people to become active and critical citizens by focusing on citizens' rights during trainings. In addition to government and NGO engagement, the media can also foster youth participation by broadcasting targeted programmes on television and running awareness campaigns via the TV or social media (European Commission Education and Culture DG, 2007).

Finally, it is crucial to **provide support to youth for self-organization**, for which they require training in organizational skills and public speaking (FAO, IFAD and CTA, 2014). A possible next step is to **create a network for youth organizations** that allows them to exchange ideas with their peers. Through peer learning, youth can be encouraged to voice their opinions publicly.

7.6 Strengthening farmer organizations

Farmer organizations aim to provide support to their members but face many constraints: legal and policy framework gaps, limited technical and financial assistance from the Government, weak institutional capacity, lack of technical capacities and lack of a broad provincial/national union network (FAO, 2011).

However, the MAFF supports farmer organizations as they have the potential to lower producer transaction costs, increase market bargaining power and increase access to agricultural support services. With the Department of Agricultural Cooperative Promotion (DACP) and 25 provincial offices of agricultural cooperative promotion under the provincial Departments of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF), the Government set up an institutional structure to promote agricultural cooperatives. In the context of agricultural training services, the agricultural cooperatives provide support services to farmers; this critical role was highlighted in a stakeholder consultation workshop on agricultural cooperative promotion (DACP, 2016). It is essential to **involve young people in cooperatives and support them to form their own young farmer associations** in order to empower youth, enhance

peer learning and help minimize the risks associated with running their own farm businesses.

In Mozambique, FAO has actively and successfully supported youth producer associations since 2008. A thorough evaluation of the activities carried out at the end of 2011 showed that most youth managed to develop their businesses and invest in further activities while increasing the size of their land and gaining access to local and district markets. Opportunities for seasonal employment were also generated at district level. The revenues generated were reinvested in the business and used to enhance the livelihoods of the family, allowing younger siblings to remain in school. Findings from the evaluation confirmed that the associations' collective powers were crucial to their success. This allowed them to enhance their access to markets, which improved food security and enabled them to cope with food price volatility (FAO, 2014).

7.7 Safe migration

The agricultural sector in Cambodia is not able to absorb the quantity of young people looking for work. Hence, many young people look for work abroad or in urban centres. The study showed that migration, especially irregular migration, is high in Cambodia, especially among youth in rural areas. It is, therefore, important to inform them of their rights and of opportunities for legal migration to improve their access to decent working conditions.

Several stakeholders stressed the importance of education-related projects on safe migration, since **young people are especially vulnerable to exploitation and unsafe working conditions**. The purpose of these trainings is to **teach potential young migrants about their options and how to migrate safely**. In contrast to the terms "regular migration" and "orderly migration", which are normative concepts, "safe migration" deals with the migrant's well-being (IOM, 2017).

Various actors already deal with migration in Cambodia. **Youth on the Move** is a regional initiative in Prey Veng Province aimed at reducing the risks that drive young migrants to trafficking, exploitation and abuse. It addresses vulnerable youth (before they drop out of upper primary and lower secondary schools to migrate), dropouts and migrant youth, and provides them with basic life skills, practical skills and knowledge about how to protect themselves from exploitation abroad (World Education, 2015). Similarly, the NGO, **Phare Ponleu Selpak**, in Battambang Province supports disadvantaged youth through an arts-initiated awareness-raising programme on safe migration. It provides information about document requirements and gives examples based on personal experiences in abusive circumstances in order to help youth recognize alternatives. As mentioned earlier, the NEA provides information on safe migration through Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs) in various provinces.

According to the IOM and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (IOM, 2017), states should adopt the Migration Governance Framework as a structure for migration policies. They should use the Migration Governance Index to assess national policies, and SDG 10.7[9] to measure progress on safe, orderly and regular migration. States should also foster dialogue, coherence and coordination between relevant ministries and other national stakeholders, and promote inclusive dialogue among other countries that pertains to facilitating safe and orderly migration (IOM, 2017). The MoUs adopted in different countries also contribute to safer migration for Cambodian nationals.

As noted previously, circular migration is common practice for rural youth in Cambodia. Returned migrants are a potentially important source for country development, thanks to the knowledge and experience gained abroad. The Government, in particular the MoLVT, should **encourage return migration** by providing employment services that are tailor-made for returning migrants and recognizing skills acquired abroad. A prerequisite is improved collection of data on (return) migration (Tunon and Rim, 2013).

9 SDG10 "Reduce Inequality Within and Between Countries" includes Target 7 "Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies".

8. Recommendations

While acknowledging the Policy and Strategic Framework on Childhood Development Protection in the Agriculture Sector 2016–2020, the MAFF does not currently address youth in its Agricultural Extension Policy and its Agricultural Sector Strategic Development Plan. By **addressing the crucial needs of rural youth, the MAFF could facilitate the integration of youth in national policies and applicable programmes**. Consequently, it could recognize the potential of youth in agriculture and design programmes and better serve the needs of young farmers.

Education

1. To reduce high dropout rates – while acknowledging the considerable progress made in providing education – the **MoYES** could design, implement and assess interventions. Such interventions include dispensing cash transfers conditional on school enrolment, providing scholarships for secondary school children, and implementing practices based on the USAID School Dropout Prevention Pilot Program or the WFP Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF) programme.
2. To underscore life skills and business skills – both theory and practice – in the school curriculum, the **MoYES** could work on closing implementation gaps and promoting the realization of Local Life Skills Programmes (LLSP) focused on the specific livelihood needs of youth. Particular attention needs to be paid to funding, the lack of teacher training opportunities, and the shortage of teaching and learning materials. To promote agricultural skills, the **MAFF** could coordinate its interventions in accordance with the life skills programmes of line ministries.
3. To raise awareness about opportunities to work in agriculture, the **MoLVT** and **MAFF** could provide a job orientation service for Grades 9 and 10.
4. To ensure that Cambodian rural youth learn crucial digital skills for the future, the **MoYES** could work on closing implementation gaps and promoting the realization of the Master Plan for ICT in Education.
5. To support young people in school, training programmes on entrepreneurship could be offered. Young people could gain practical experience in how to build their own enterprises through project-based teaching.

Access to finance, markets and ICT

6. To supplement the Financial Development Strategy 2016–2025, which aims to include financial literacy in the national school curriculum, **training providers** could identify suitable non-financial services need by youth, for example, capacity building in financial literacy and the establishment of mentoring programmes.
7. To further facilitate high-potential value chains – while acknowledging the Agricultural Sector Strategic Development Plan 2014–18 and its positive impact to date – the **MAFF** could continue implementing its well-conceived measures, including training in processing techniques, safety and quality standards, contract farming systems, post-harvesting techniques, GAP and organic farming.
8. To help young farmers access the Internet, the **RGC** could improve infrastructural ICT facilities in rural areas, following the Community Innovation Center model provided by Oxfam and its partners.
9. To help people learn how to use the Internet to access market prices for crops and learn about agricultural technologies, **agricultural training providers** could provide digital resources such as apps and homepages in the Khmer language. Acknowledging the Agricultural Extension Policy, the **MAFF** and

other line ministries could provide greater support for innovative training approaches and methods for delivering agricultural information.

Training needs of rural youth

Formal and non-formal agricultural technical and vocational education and training (ATVET) often provides skills trainings that are disconnected from the needs of youth in remote areas who have often worked on family farms since childhood. ATVETs prepare young people for professional careers in formal employment, such as in the public or non-governmental sector, but are of little relevance or not easily accessible to young farmers.

Considering current and future needs, long-term training programmes at local level could be expanded to prepare young people to professionalize the family farm and successfully run their own farm. Viable types of vocational training include innovative (self-) employment-oriented skill-building initiatives, such as non-formal field and problem-based agricultural education offerings (e.g. JFFLS developed by FAO).

In line with the motto "Picking up people where they are", the recommendations below intend to contribute to viable, action-orientated and youth-tailored development of a diversified agricultural education system targeting specific groups (e.g. out-of-school youth, youth prone to migration and youth with high-school education).

Access to trainings

10. To create high-quality TVET courses for underprivileged youth – and building on the positive experiences of the TVET Academy Pilot Project – the **MoLVT** could scale up from pilot mobile training and e-learning courses to national policy and implementation of blended learning services at provincial level.
11. To increase access to TVET programmes for vulnerable groups – and building on the ADB-funded Technical Vocational Education and Training Sector Development Program (TVETSDP) – the **MoLVT** could enhance the construction of dormitories for women and other vulnerable youth in public training centres.
12. To counter the gender imbalance in technical TVET – given the trends in current TVET enrolment rates – more effort could be made encourage young women to enrol, for example, by running awareness-raising campaigns in secondary schools.
13. To change the mindset of parents and youth who consider ATVET a last resort in terms of education options, the **RGC** could enhance long-term campaigns to demonstrate the potential of employment in agriculture and the positive impact of agricultural trainings.
14. To be in line with the national vision of transforming Cambodia's agricultural industry, the **MAFF**, **MoLVT** and other line ministries could extend public agricultural training services to provinces where there is a lack of such programmes.
15. To facilitate participation, **training providers** could provide stronger support to IDPoor and other vulnerable youth via training vouchers, allowances for travel, food and accommodation if needed, along the lines of the World Bank's successful Livelihood Enhancement and Association of the Poor Project (LEAP).
16. To enable participation in and facilitate completion of training, efforts could be made to deliver agricultural training in communities during the periods in which young people are available. For example, training calendars could be adapted to the seasonality of agriculture and related migration patterns, or the curriculum could be modular to increase flexibility and allow youth to stop and start training programmes.

Quality of trainings

17. To draw young people back into education and skills development programmes – acknowledging the National Technical Vocational Education and Training Policy 2017–2025 – the **MoLVT** could provide skill-bridging programmes in TVET centres already offering certificate vocational programmes to ensure that young people who have dropped out of school before completing Grade 9 can receive the necessary qualifications to embark on their career.

18. To adapt training to the specific needs and requirements of rural youth, **training providers** could design learning modules that cover skills relevant to agricultural work and entrepreneurship while offering opportunities for trainees to catch-up with the basic education they missed, such as functional literacy and numeracy skills.
19. To build on the experience of government and NGO partners in terms of good practices, and to ensure that future training programmes build on this knowledge, the **RGC** could further address the questions, "what works?", "how does it work?" and "why does it work?". To minimize overlap and shortcomings, the **MAFF**, **MoLVT** and other line ministries could increase direct consultations at national and provincial level with key NGOs working on agricultural training programmes (possibly through working groups).
20. To maximize outcome by having different ministries collaborate together (not necessarily for financial reasons but also for broader reach and to optimize the capacity of the different ministries), the National Training Board (**NTB**) could integrate an interministerial committee on rural skill building (involving the MoLVT, MoYES, MAFF and MoWA).
21. To ensure that all training providers are aware of the work carried out in agricultural training at each level and in every province, they could report to the relative departments and share information on their training interventions (in particular, good practices), achievements and youth involved.
22. To provide youth-tailored training content, instructional methodologies and learning materials, the **MAFF**, **MoLVT** and its partners could build on the positive experiences of the JFFLS, adopting and expending the problem-based learning approach to all kinds of agricultural training services.
23. To supplement the national agricultural education system, the **MAFF** could identify pilot farms and agricultural companies for apprenticeships to equip youth with the right tools and skills to start or manage a farm, and help them gain experience and the necessary qualifications.
24. To tailor training to youth's needs – following the example of JFFLS – agricultural trainings could incorporate practice in planning and running a micro-enterprise into new and existing skill-building initiatives, including coaching by trainers with business experience. By adopting a mixture of theoretical and practical learning, appropriate training services can provide life and business skills training (e.g. business plan development, marketing, entrepreneurship, self-empowerment, problem solving, decision making and communication skills).
25. To optimize and build on a range of positive practices, long-term post-training support could be incorporated into new and existing skill-building initiatives. For example, follow-up support could be provided to youth entrepreneurs (e.g. facilitating access to markets and credit) and assistance could be given to tackle initial challenges (e.g. providing technical and managerial support).
26. To supplement the Rectangular Strategy for Growth, Employment, Equity and Efficiency Phase III, the **MoLVT**, **MAFF** and other line ministries could continue to encourage the provision of training in sustainable and organic agriculture at local level, including marketing and sales skills, to ensure that young farmers and green entrepreneurs can develop their businesses.
27. To attract young people to agricultural work, the **MAFF** and its partners could concentrate on skill-building initiatives for high-value agricultural products (e.g. vegetables, spices and fruits) and agroprocessing.
28. To raise awareness among farmers – building on programmes such as the IFAD-supported ROUTASIA II Learning Routes Programme – the **MAFF** and its partners could promote knowledge sharing on innovation within the Asia-Pacific Region and peer-to-peer training (including farmer-to-farmer internships).

School-to-Work Transition / Training-to-Work Transition

29. To increase accessibility to job-related services – in accordance with the National Technical Vocational Education and Training Policy 2015–17 – the **MoLVT** could upgrade TVET centres to make them one-stop service institutions, providing trainees with convenient employment services, such as apprenticeship opportunities, individual job counselling and information about financial services.
30. To emulate the example of the World Bank's Livelihood Enhancement and Association of the Poor Project (LEAP), **schools, agricultural training providers and job centres** could incorporate the following elements into new and existing skill-building initiatives: information on local labour markets, information about how to prepare individual development plans, employability skills (e.g. how to find a job), and one-on-one career counselling by qualified career advisers.
31. To support young people's entry into the labour market – building on the peer-to-peer mentoring approach that has proven effective – **schools and training providers** could integrate job coaching performed by people of the same age.
32. To address gender stereotypes with regard to youth's choice of jobs, girls' days could be held in **companies** specialized in technical fields in order to sensitize girls for technical professions.
33. To encourage private agricultural businesses to invest in and train young people, the **RGC** could provide incentives and carry out awareness raising.
34. To generate the information needed to formulate and implement appropriate measures to create decent employment opportunities for youth – acknowledging the Labour Force and Child Labour Survey 2012 and the Employers Skills Needs Survey 2015 – the **NIS** and the **NEA**, with help from partners, could conduct regular skills needs and labour force surveys focused on the agricultural sector.
35. To improve decent job creation for youth along agricultural value chains, the **RGC** could create a network of relevant stakeholders by establishing technical working groups with regular consultation workshops, meetings or public debates to address the questions, "what works?", "how does it work?" and "why does it work?".

Youth empowerment

36. To create a culture of participation among youth at schools and in training institutions – acknowledging the National Policy on Cambodia Youth Development (NPCYD) – the **RGC** and its partners could encourage youth to actively participate in learning and training, supporting vulnerable youth, including youth with disabilities.
37. To enable young farmers to become active members of agriculture cooperatives – acknowledging the Agricultural Sector Strategic Development Plan 2014–18 – the **MAFF** could facilitate youth-sensitive agriculture cooperatives by providing mentoring, guidance and advisory services to young members.
38. To supplement the National Policy on Cambodia Youth Development (NPCYD), the **RGC** could make authorities and parents more aware of the importance of youth participation, by holding information meetings organized in association with regional and local authorities.
39. To promote youth participation and involvement, the **RGC** could provide greater support to training programmes related to organizational skills that facilitate young farmer organizations.

Safe migration

40. To protect and empower migrants throughout the migration cycle – in line with the Policy on Labour Migration for Cambodia from 2014 – the **MoLVT** could extend the Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs) to different provinces, as they are a key instrument at local level for providing safe migration.

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41. To help young people acquire working skills abroad – in line with the ASEAN Agreement on the Movement of Natural Persons from 2012, which allows temporary movement of skilled workers from one country to another within the AEC, and according to the MoLVT Labour Migration Policy – the **RGC** could foster programmes for labour mobility focusing on young people. The EU could be integrated through the exchange programme to provide information on best practices and lessons learned.

42. To reap the benefits of knowledge acquired abroad. – acknowledging the Labour Migration Policy – the **MoLVT** could facilitate the productive return and reintegration of migrants by providing tailor-made employment services and recognizing skills acquired abroad. An important prerequisite is the expansion of data collection on migration and, more specifically, return migration.

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Annex 1
Expert interviews

Organization/Person interviewed	No. of people interviewed	Place	Date
FAO	5	Bangkok	01.08.2017
ILO	2	Bangkok	01.08.2017
FAO	4	Phnom Penh	03.08.2017
FiA/MAFF	2	Phnom Penh	04.08.2017
MAFF	2	Phnom Penh	07.08.2017
World Vision International	1	Phnom Penh	07.08.2017
Agile Development Group	1	Phnom Penh	10.08.2017
FiA/MAFF	1	Phnom Penh	10.08.2017
Swisscontact	1	Phnom Penh	10.08.2017
GIZ	1	Phnom Penh	11.08.2017
UNESCO ECOVOC	1	Phnom Penh	15.08.2017
CEDAC	1	Phnom Penh	15.08.2017
MoEYS	1	Phnom Penh	16.08.2017
Save the Children	2	Phnom Penh	16.08.2017
Cambodian Youth Network	2	Phnom Penh	17.08.2017
FAO	1	Phnom Penh	17.08.2017
Handicap International	1	Phnom Penh	17.08.2017
MoLVT	4	Phnom Penh	17.08.2017
Independent consultant	1	Phnom Penh	17.08.2017
MAFF, Technical Advisor for GIZ	1	Phnom Penh	17.08.2017
YRDP	1	Phnom Penh	17.08.2017
UNFPA	1	Phnom Penh	18.08.2017
DGRV	1	Phnom Penh	18.08.2017
FASMEC	1	Phnom Penh	18.08.2017
Ministry of Industry and Handicraft	1	Phnom Penh	18.08.2017
Youth Star	3	Phnom Penh	18.08.2017
Eco-Agri Co. Ltd	2	Phnom Penh	24.08.2017
Centre for Policy Studies	1	Phnom Penh	24.08.2017
MoWA	2	Phnom Penh	25.08.2017
NEA	1	Phnom Penh	13.09.2017
ILO	1	Phnom Penh	27.09.2017

Annex 2
Sampling criteria

Villages (5–8 per province, selected in agreement with the MAFF and FAO)	• Provinces selected by the MAFF (Siem Reap and Batambang) • Accessibility (physical and social – via contact person)
Focus group participants (6–8 per focus group)	• Youth aged 15–17, additionally some aged 18–24 (separate groups) • Living in rural areas (in selected villages) • In training / not in training • Possible categories: gender, ethnicities, youth with disabilities • Selection criteria established with experts (youth organizations, NGOs etc.)
Agropreneurs	If possible: • Along different agricultural value chains • Different age groups and ethnic backgrounds • Male and female • People with disabilities
ATVET providers	All those relevant for rural youth in Cambodia: • In the two provinces • In Phnom Penh (national level)
ATVET participants	• Access feasible • From all agricultural training institutions at national level and in the two selected provinces (if possible) *Note:* Training providers asked to establish contact with training participants.
Value chains (rural employers, in Battambang and Siem Reap)	• Existing in predefined provinces • Vegetable plantation, industrial crop production, animal raising and fisheries including aquaculture (as requested by the MAFF)

Annex 3
Kampong Chhnang

Youth focus group participants, Kampong Chhnang Province

Village	Participants	Female	Male	Dropouts
Kanleng Phe, Koak Banteay Commune, Rolear B'ier District	8	4	4	3 (2M/1F)
Kampong Ous	10	6	4	4 (1M/3F)
Total	**18**	**10**	**8**	**7**

Parents focus group participants, Kampong Chhnang Province

Village	Participants	Female	Male	Occupation	Migration of children
Kanleng Phe, Koak Banteay Commune, Rolear B'ier District	7	5 (1 widow)	2	Fishing, rice, other products for consumption	
Kampong Ous	10 (including 3 grandparents)	10	0	Fishing, rice, chilli, bananas, watermelon	1 construction worker to Phnom Penh, children to Thailand
Total	**17**	**15**	**2**		

Annex 4
Battambang

Youth focus group participants, Battambang Province

Village	Participants	Female	Male	School dropouts
Ampil Village, Bavel District	9	6	3	4 (3F/1M)
Boeng Pring Village, Thma Koul District	8	5	3	3 (1F/2M)
Talors Village, Moung Roussei District	7	3	4	0
Sdao Village, Ratanak Mondol District	8	6	2	0
Prey Tralach Village, Rukh Kiri District	7	5	2	1 (1F/0M)
Tuol Korkir Village, Rukh Kiri District I	9	7	2	0
Tuol Korkir Village, Rukh Kiri District II	7	2	5	0
Mukh Reah Village, Rukh Kiri District	16	13	3	0
Total	**71**	**47**	**24**	**8**

Age distribution of youth focus group participants, Battambang Province

Age	Participants	Female	Male
<14	8	5	3
15	23	18	5
16	11	6	5
17	13	8	5
>18	16	10	6
Total	**71**	**47**	**24**

Parents focus group participants, Battambang Province

Village	Participants	F	M	Occupation	Migration of children
Ampil Pram Daeum Village, Bavel District	2	1	1	Farmer (rice)/small business owner, teacher	Few migrate to Thailand or Phnom Penh
Boeng Pring Village, Thma Koul District	7	3	4	Farmer (rice, vegetables, fruits), labourer on rice farm, rice distiller, housewife, retired	Most migrate to Thailand
Talors Village, Moung Roussei District	8	8	0	Mostly farmer (rice), tailor, retired	Many migrate to Thailand
Sdao Village, Ratanak Mondol District	7	4	3	Farmer (rice, fruits), soldier, housewife, retired	Not their children but others from village migrate to Thailand
Total	**24**	**16**	**8**		

Annex 5
Kampong Cham

Youth focus group participants, Kampong Cham Province

Village	Participants	Female	Male	School dropouts
Preaek Kak Village, Stueng Trang District	8	8	0	0
Thnot Tasay Village, Stueng Trang District	11	6	5	0
Tuol Ampil Village, Prey Chhor District	9	7	2	3 (2F/1M)
Daiy Buon Village, Prey Chhor District	8	5	3	1 (0F/1M)
Thual Bek Village, Chamkar Leu District	8	4	4	0
Tumprong Village, Batheay District	8	5	3	0
Svay Prey Village, Batheay District	9	7	2	2 (2F/0M)
Total	**61**	**42**	**19**	**(6)**

Age distribution of youth focus group participants, Kampong Cham Province

Age	Participants	Female	Male
<14	5	3	2
15	28	6	22
16	14	3	11
17	8	4	4
>18	5	2	3
Total	**61**	**42**	**19**

Parents focus group participants, Kampong Cham Province

Village	Participants	F	M	Occupation	Migration of children
Preaek Kak Village, Stueng Trang District	8	6	2	Part-time farmer (rice, cashew), part-time fisher, construction worker, plantation worker	Few migrate to Thailand or Phnom Penh
Thnot Tasay Village, Stueng Trang District	11	10	1	Farmer (rice, cashew), jeweller, motorbike repairer, seller, government staff	Some migrate to Thailand
Tuol Ampil Village, Prey Chhor District	9	7	2	Mostly farmer (rice, other crops for home consumption), one teacher	Some migrate to Phnom Penh, Thailand and Korea
Daiy Buon Village, Prey Chhor District	8	7	1	Part-time farmer (rice), making mortar for a company	Many 18+ youths migrate to Phnom Penh (e.g. work in a garment factory)

Village	Participants	F	M	Occupation	Migration of children
Thual Bek Village, Chamkar Leu District	7	5	2	Farmer, seller	Some older children migrate to Phnom Penh
Tumprong Village, Batheay District	7	6	1	Part-time farmer (rice, chicken, vegetables), selling labour	Some migrate to Thailand
Svay Prey Village, Batheay District	7	2	5	Farmer (rice)	Some migrate to Thailand
Total	**57**	**43**	**14**		

Glossary

Agropreneur: Agropreneurs run their activities as a business along the agricultural value chain; they produce to meet market needs and increase profits. Activities encompass the agricultural sector and include crops, livestock, fisheries, marketing, technology and innovation, as well as special projects, such as agrotourism and agro-based processing.

Circular migration: Circular migration refers to all forms of a temporary, recurrent movement by the same person between two or more countries or between rural and urban areas, mainly for purposes of work or study.

Decent employment: Based on the four pillars of the ILO Decent Work Agenda – employment creation, social protection, rights at work and social dialogue – which became integral elements of the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, decent employment refers to work that provides a living income and reasonable working conditions. Work should be remunerative and dignified. It should enable people – whether through self-employment or wage labour – to provide for themselves and their families. Workers should be able to perform their work under safe and healthy conditions and have a voice in the workplace.

Employability: Employability encompasses a set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that make individuals more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations. It requires the ability to acquire new skills, identify and evaluate options, understand rights at work, including the right to a safe and healthy work environment, and adapt successfully to changing situations; and the courage to innovate.

Employer: An employer is a person, business or organization that controls and directs one or more people and pays him or her a salary or wages in exchange for ongoing work.

Farmer organization: Farmer organizations, such as farmer unions, farmer cooperatives, farmer groups and farmer associations, are independent associations of women and men, united voluntarily to meet their common agricultural needs and aspirations – such as collective action for the marketing and processing of agricultural products and/or for the purchase and production of farm inputs – through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise.

Labour force: Labour force comprises all persons of working age who furnish the supply of labour for the production of goods and services during the specified time reference period. It refers to the sum of all persons of working age who are employed and those who are unemployed, but available for the labour market.

Marginalized youth: Marginalized youth refers to young people who are most at risk. Thereby, marginalization is both an acute condition and a persistent process that prevents youth from full participation in social, economic and political life.

Marginalized youth include young people with disabilities, women, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex youths, members of minority groups, indigenous people, internally displaced persons, youths from poor families and non-national, including refugees, asylum seekers and young migrant workers.

Matching institutions: A matching institution is an institutionalized facilitator that provides information and services to match jobseekers with vacant jobs by comparing the knowledge, skills and competences of the candidate with the requirements of the employer.

Safe migration: The concept of safe migration refers to the prevention of irregular movement taking place outside the regulatory norms of the sending, transit and receiving countries, and during which a migrant suffers from or risks suffering from severe physical, mental or emotional harm.

Self-employment: Self-employment is the simplest form of business organization comprising in its most basic form a one-person firm. Self-employment may be seen either as a survival strategy for those who cannot find any other means of earning an income or as evidence of entrepreneurial spirit and a desire to be one's own boss.

The ILO distinguishes different types of self-employment according to the type of authority they have over the productive unit they present or for which they work:

Employers are persons or businesses that engage on a continuous basis one or more persons to work for them as employees.

Own-account workers work on their own account and did not engage on a continuous basis any employees to work for them during the reference period.

Members of producer cooperatives take part on an equal footing with other members to determine the organization of production etc.

Family workers cannot be regarded as partners in the operation of the productive unit, because their degree of commitment to the operation of the unit, in terms of working time or other factors, is not at a level comparable with that of the head of the enterprise.

Skills: Skills refer to the ability to apply knowledge, use know-how to complete tasks, solve problems and carry out the tasks that comprise a particular job. In the context of the present study, skills relevant for agricultural work can be grouped into three types: technical skills, life skills and business skills.

Skills and training needs assessment (STNA): A skills and training needs assessment is a systematic analysis of present and future skills needs of the labour market against the skills available in the labour force in the target area. In addition, it is a method to identify what training needs exist and what training is required to fill the skills gaps and to help individuals and organizations accomplish their goals and objectives.

A skills and training needs assessments can take place at national, regional, local or sectoral level. It may be carried out quantitatively (e.g. with reference to the changing number of people with a certain level of qualification or enrolled in different training activities) or qualitatively (e.g. with reference to descriptive information about the changing skills and training profiles).

Skills mismatch: Skills mismatch refers to a situation of imbalance in which the level or type of skills that individuals possess does not correspond to the needs of the labour market. Mismatches may be one of the following:

Vertical – the level of skills is more or less than the level of skills required to perform a job.

Horizontal – the type of skills is not appropriate for the current job, but the level of skills matches the requirements of the job.

Geographical – the workers with the types and levels of skills required are based in a region different from that where the skills are needed.

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET): Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) refers to aspects of the education process involving, in addition to general education, the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge relating to occupation in various sectors of economic life. TVET thus equips people not only with vocational skills, but also with a broad range of knowledge, skills and attitudes that are now recognized as indispensable for meaningful participation in work and life.

TVET, as part of lifelong learning, can take place at secondary, post-secondary and tertiary level and includes work-based learning and continuing training and professional development, which may lead to qualifications. TVET also includes a wide range of skills development opportunities attuned to national and local contexts.

Any establishment providing TVET programmes, including some universities, agricultural colleges, institutes, centres, schools and private providers, can be referred to as a TVET institution or TVET provider.

Training: Training is an umbrella term used to refer to short- and long-term individual acquisition of work-related information, knowledge, understanding, attitudes, values, skills, competencies and behaviours through experience, practice, study and/or teaching and instruction. It encompasses many forms of education and learning through non-formal or formal, public or private, off-the-job or on-the-job activities.

As such, it is linked inextricably to the cultural, social, environmental and institutional contexts in which it takes place.

TVET Cambodia: The Cambodian TVET system includes all forms of officially recognized and managed education with a major technical or vocational component. It comprises formal technical or vocational education provision, whether in schools, colleges or polytechnic institutes, and formal and non-formal training programmes in Provincial Training Centres (PTCs) and Vocational Training Centres (VTCs).

Underemployment: Underemployment reflects the underutilization of the productive capacity of the employed population. Persons in underemployment are all those who worked or had a job during the reference period but were willing and available to work more adequately.

Unemployment: The unemployed comprise all persons above a specified age who during the reference period belonged to one of the following categories:

Without work – were not in paid employment or self-employment during the reference period.

Currently available for work – were available for paid employment or self-employment during the reference period.

Seeking work – had taken specific steps in a specified recent period to seek paid employment or self-employment.

Value chain: Value chain refers to all the processes or activities by which a person or a company increases the value of a product, including production, marketing and the provision of after-sales services.

Youth: The UN defines youth as persons between the ages of 15 and 24. This definition is without prejudice to other definitions by member states, which may vary significantly. For example, in the case of Cambodia, youth is defined as persons between the ages of 15 and 30.

The case study explores which skills and training opportunities young people need in order to gain access to decent employment in rural areas. The research was undertaken in order to develop recommendations to support the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) and FAO Cambodia in developing appropriate recommendations to support rural young people, especially those of the 15 to 17 age cohort.

The study highlights the limited decent employment opportunities that currently exist along various agricultural value chains in rural Cambodia. Poverty and the structural problems of the agricultural sector are the main barriers for youth in accessing decent rural employment. A substantial enhancement of the education system, as well as the provision of appropriate training services to ensure successful school-to-work transition is seen as necessary to tackle these challenges. A well-balanced policy mix reflecting national and local circumstances can encourage employment opportunities and create an environment that enables rural youth. Building on previous research on agriculture in Cambodia, agricultural transformation requires promotion of agribusiness enterprises, support to community-managed organizations of farmers, promotion of agropreneurs, and investments in agricultural and rural development, particularly in infrastructure, energy, water, education and health. Moreover, most youth entering agriculture are self-employed and work as small-scale farmers. Therefore, the provision of skills and training in rural areas should focus on the skills required to be self-employed.

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