



Project Report

Poverty In Cambodia

Submitted by

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Abstract

Poverty is a complex issue that people all around the globe are working together to resolve. In attempting to combat poverty, it is of high importance to look at the potential causes of a poverty situation. Because no single place faces the exact same conditions as another, the origins of poverty differ from location to location. This requires poverty to be taken on through a localized approach, and for the purposes of this study, the chosen area of interest is Cambodia. The paper will first look at the historical background of Cambodia and how Cambodia is today. There are linkages between the two that makes them tied together very strongly in a way that can help guide the understanding of the poverty situation in Cambodia. Then, the focus will shift to factors that affect the quality of life, including health, education, and political freedom. Quality of life plays a key role in determining poverty because poverty is not affected by just income alone. Lastly, with an understanding of the prior mentioned topics, policy recommendations that could help alleviate poverty in Cambodia will be suggested.

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Introduction

Literature review

While doing research for our study, we looked at an academic journal publication titled “Poverty: Its Causes and Solutions.” We found the paper to be useful for the purpose of our study because it provides an example of a structure for researching poverty. The way that the paper is framed is that it reviews the definition of poverty, identifies some causes of poverty, and proposes solutions. According to the paper, some of the main causes of poverty are corruption, education, political instability, and ineffective local governance and government policies. Some of the suggestions include raising public awareness, strengthening democratic transparency, and increasing the poor’s ability to raise income (Faranda, Lim, Kan, Ng, Ting, 2013). While this provides a good framework for our study, the paper is very broad and it acknowledges that these solutions are highly dependent on the causes of poverty specific to a certain place.

The other research that we picked to review is “Strategies and Policies for Basic Education in Cambodia: Historical Perspectives” which showed the process of development and change in the state of education in Cambodia over four decades preceding the 1990. The importance of education is the main factor to develop people. According to this article, Cambodia suffered massive socio-cultural destruction, political turmoil, genocide, international isolation, and socio-economic crisis during the civil conflicts of the 1970s and 1980s. Political and economic problems during the above two decades were not isolated from the education structure, which was also seriously damaged during the civil conflicts. However, present-day Cambodians consider reforms in education during the 1990s as positive measures towards socio-economic development and improving freedom of lives.

Defining Poverty

The term poverty is multidimensional in that it is hard to define in a single definition. In regards to this paper, poverty will relate to the 'quality of life'. In this instance, poverty is defined as having a low quality of life. In order to live a fulfilling life, there are several things an individual may need to obtain just that. This may include sustenance and security, freedom and community, wealth and health, self-actualization and self-esteem, which are all contributors to the quality of a human's life. By focusing on quality of life, poverty can be witnessed under a more broad and holistic view, especially in regards to the development of Cambodia. The 'quality of life' perspective will help in the development of policies that directly and indirectly reflect the aspirations of Cambodians, which will then lead to powerful synergies within the social, political, and economic spheres.

Often times, poverty is measured off of income alone, but contrary to former popular belief, it entails a lot more. By assessing the quality of life, one is able to recognize how components such as health, education, political freedom, nutrition, gender equality, fertility, environmental quality, access to infrastructure, and access to information also contribute to poverty. Poverty in Cambodia, more specifically, is mostly due to the policies and historical implications surrounding health, education, and political freedom. These three factors are deeply interconnected with one another in a relatively complex schematic network. Educated individuals tend to be healthier due to the explicit knowledge they obtain about their health, while poor health often times keeps children out of school and slows their learning. The lack of political freedom results in disproportionate consequences for the poor in aspects of both education and health, because government officials divert funds intended for development and social services

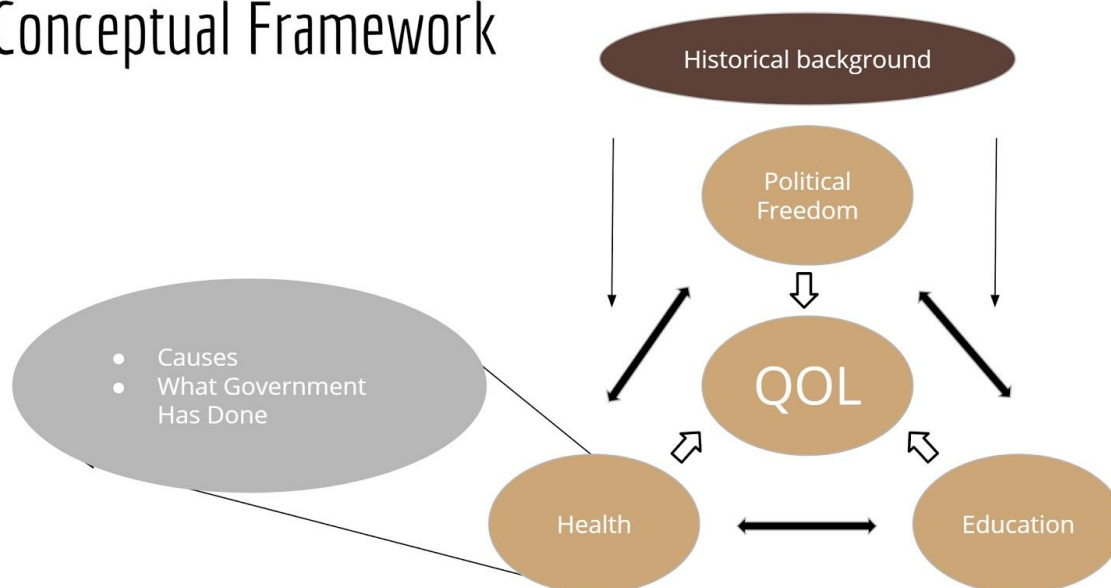
for their own personal gain. A lack of education and health makes it difficult for an individual to fight for their own political freedom and so on. The cycle is endless in how one affects the other.

While economic growth is one of the most known effective ways to reduce poverty, the benefits do not always reach everyone. Investment in human and social capital can provide even more profound benefits for the entirety of society in the long-run as opposed to just focusing on income and economic means alone. Essentially, quality of life is more than a synonym of well-being. It is intended to be a measure of it, which allows for the quantifying of how well-off individuals are as well as tracks down the changes in the levels of happiness over time. This paper attempts to consider poverty under this more broad and all-encompassing perspective surrounding the notion of quality of life, which raises difficulties due to the ambiguity of the terms and the integration of the components with one another. Taking all this into consideration, it becomes evident that this definition of poverty in terms of ‘quality of life’ is important when it comes to developing and implementing new policies that indirectly and directly result in poverty alleviation. An understanding of this interconnected network of the various dimensions of quality of life as well as a comprehensive awareness of the historical background and contemporary overview of Cambodia will further guide our understanding of the current situation of poverty in Cambodia.

Research Methods: Comprehension of Poverty in Cambodia

Conceptual Framework

Conceptual Framework



In order to understand the poverty situation in Cambodia, it is important to understand that the aspects concerning quality of life are quite integrated with one another. Since there are many components to evaluate, this paper highlights three key aspects that are extremely pertinent to the current poverty status in Cambodia. These include health, education and political freedom. By analyzing and understanding the causes and impacts of each of these components in Cambodia, one is able to gain a further understanding of the condition of poverty in the country. The conceptual framework of this paper will individually analyze each of these components by considering the causes of their current situation as well as the policies that have been put in place by the government to improve that situation. As mentioned previously, these three aspects

directly affect an individual's quality of life and in doing so indirectly affect one another, which will be more recognizable when considering feasible solutions. An understanding of the interconnectedness that exists within the quality of life components will further enhance the approaches being made towards effective and plausible poverty alleviation policies. This - along with a comprehensive understanding of the historical background and contemporary overview of Cambodia - will result in a better understanding of the current poverty situation in the country.

Historical Background of Cambodia



To understand poverty in Cambodia, it's necessary to look at the country's history. Kingdom Cambodia gained independence in 1953 under the leadership of Norodom Sihanouk. Since independence, Cambodia's history has been marked by civil war, foreign invasions and bloody revolution. Historically, French protectorate was that it failed to educate Cambodian people, and allowed them no opportunities, before the 1940s, to participate in the political process. They prepared the country very poorly for independence. Until World War II there was only one high school in the kingdom, and no university. The years immediately following Cambodia's independence from France in 1953 were politically and militarily complex. The

leadership of Prince Norodom Sihanouk was unstable and often challenged, particularly by left leaning groups, and the response of the Prince and his government was often repressive. The education system provided by Sihanouk was biased towards the nation's large cities. Rural Cambodia did not benefit from the selective expansion strategies employed by the Prince built universities did not assist rural children and their family's poverty. Moreover, Many French medical personnel departed, and few trained Cambodians were left to replace them. In addition to a lack of personnel, a shortage of medical supplies and facilities threatened health care. Throughout the 1960s, Cambodian politics became separated. Opposition to the government grew within the middle class and left-wing including Paris-educated leaders like Son Sen, Ieng Sary, and Pol Pot, who led an insurgency under the underground Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK). Sihanouk called these insurgents the Khmer Rouge, literally the "Red Khmer".

The regime of Democratic Kampuchea, or the infamous Khmer Rouge, locally known as the Pol Pot regime which came into power in April 1975. The regime led Cambodia into revolutionary Maoist communism. Pol Pot's so-called 'great leap' revolutionary regime further ravaged Cambodia through

the mass destruction of individual property, schooling system, currency, and social culture by forcing the entire population either into the army camps or onto collective

Figure 1: Death Rates in Cambodia, 1975 - 1979

GROUP	1975 Pop.	Number of Deaths	Death Rate (%)
<i>New People:</i>			
Urban Khmer	2,000,000	500,000	25
Rural Khmer	600,000	150,000	25
Chinese (all urban)	430,000	215,000	50
Vietnamese (urban)	10,000	10,000	100
Lao (rural)	10,000	4,000	40
Total new people	3,050,000	879,000	29
<i>Base People:</i>			
Rural Khmer	4,500,000	675,000	15
Cham (all rural)	250,000	90,000	36
Vietnamese (rural)	10,000	10,000	100
Thai (rural)	20,000	8,000	40
upland minorities	60,000	9,000	15
Total base people	4,848,000	792,000	16
Total Cambodia	7,890,000	1,671,000	21

Source: Ben Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime*, p. 458

farms Cambodia also lost almost three-quarters of its educated population under the regime when teachers, students, professionals and intellectuals were killed, literacy education beyond the lowest grade was abolished and formal schooling of the Western kind was eradicated.. Food was constantly in short supply and rations for workers were inadequate. Disease and famine resulted.

According to Ben Kiernan's book *The Pol Pot Regime*, Kiernan estimates that 33% of the urban "new people" died, along with roughly 15% of the rural "base people." In both of these groups, roughly half the deaths were from executions, and half from starvation and disease.

"These data also point to a national toll of over 1.5 million, about 20% of the population. In order to calculate the total number of victims based on the death rates, it is necessary to estimate the 1975 population. Citing an estimate by demographer Jacques Migozzi, Kiernan believes that the population at the start of the 1970 civil war as 7.363 million; and by mid-1974 the U.N. estimated the population to be about 7.89 million. Kiernan suggests that the April 1975 population was probably around 7.894 million.the 1975-79 death toll was between 1.671 and 1.871 million people, 21 to 24 percent of Cambodia's 1975 population. Although allied with Vietnam during the American War, the Khmer Rouge had subsequently shifted towards China, and used the vilification of the Vietnamese as the historic enemies of the Khmers as the key explanation for the disastrous failures of their economic and agricultural policies.

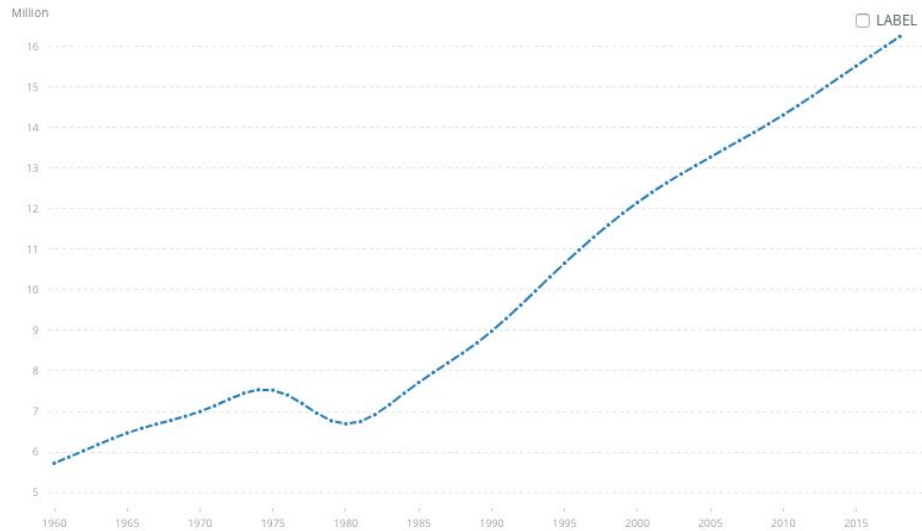
Since 1989 Cambodia has been relatively peaceful, but socioeconomic development has been slow and people still face widespread poverty, inadequate health care resources, and underdeveloped roads. Hun Sen serving as the Prime Minister of Cambodia since 1985. He's the world's second longest-serving prime minister. This consolidation of power in the hands of Hun Sen was viewed by international observers: it represents the deterioration of democracy into

populist electoral authoritarianism, and Hun Sen's dependence on patronage funded through corruption. However, the consolidation of power within Cambodia has permitted Cambodia's political institutions to become significantly better developed and more predictable now than ten years ago. The government and the ruling party have invested heavily in infrastructure, such as roads, schools, clinics, training centres, markets, bridges, irrigation schemes and temples, transforming the context within which economic activity is carried out. The rapid improvement in human development indicators and the decline in the rate of poverty may in part be attributable to investment in infrastructure, as a result of mass patronage by the CPP government and investment via initiatives of the ASEAN and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), intended to integrate mainland SouthEast Asia through new transport networks. The ADB's strategy of building a transport network to support what it calls "connectivity" in the Greater Mekong Subregion has led to increased economic activity and thus new prosperity in areas

Overview of Cambodia Today

Just as historians look to the past to decipher present situations, there are clear demographic indicators that strongly allude to how heavily affected Cambodia has been by its extreme past. As of 2017, Cambodia has a population of 16.01 million people. Figure 1.1 displays a graph of the population size from 1960 to present day. As you can see on the graph, the population for the most part has been increasing steadily.

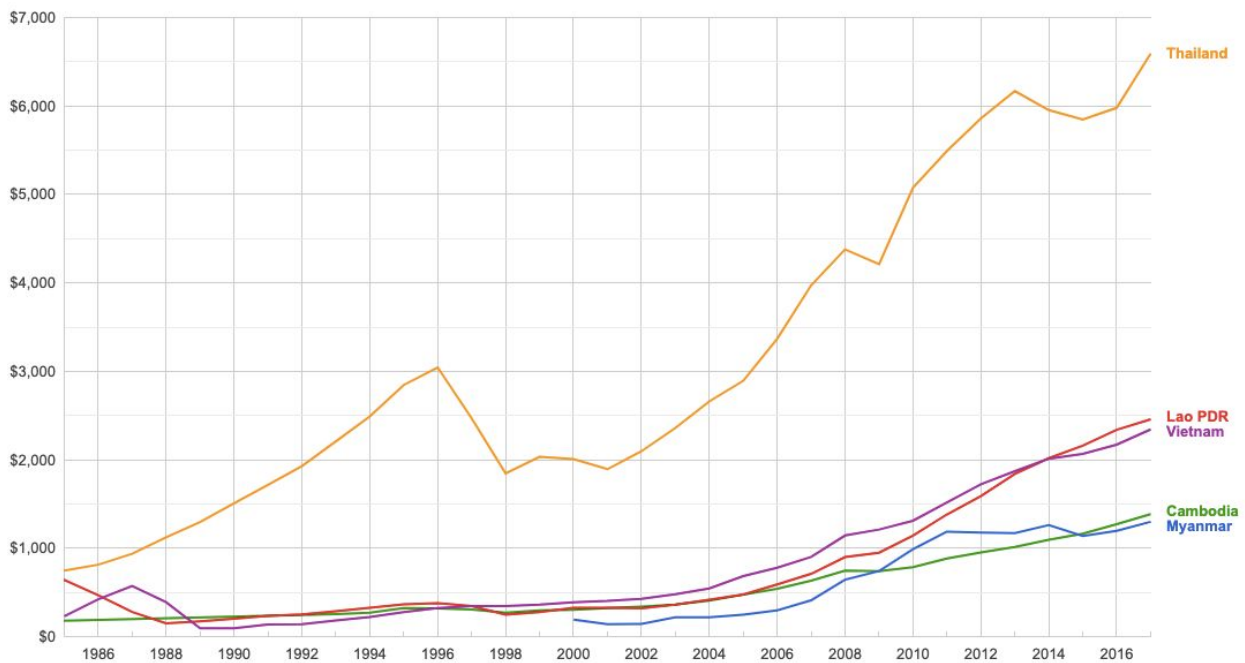
Figure 1.1: Cambodia's Population



Source: World Bank

One interesting thing to point out is the decreasing segment from around 1975-1980. This decline in population directly aligns with the years of the Khmer Rouge regime that was responsible for the genocide that took the lives of millions of Cambodians.

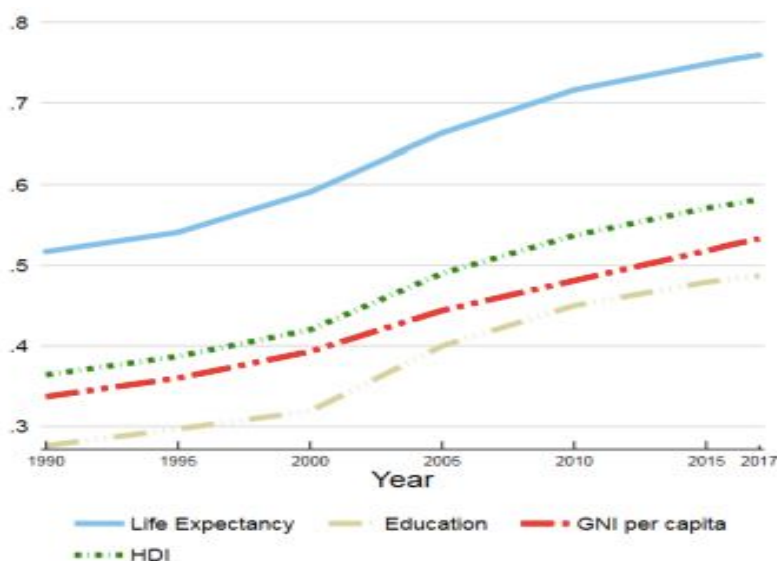
Figure 1.2: GDP Per Capita (USD)



Source: World Bank

In Figure 1.2, the line graph compares Cambodia's GDP per capita with the other CLMVT countries. As of recently, notice that Cambodia has progressed more than Myanmar, but only barely. Cambodia has had steady growth in GDP per capita over the past couple of decades, but the rate of growth has been relatively low, especially in comparison to Lao PDR, Vietnam, and Thailand. Even though there has been a general trend of increase, Cambodia trails behind these three countries. This lower GDP could be due to the unstable institutions and weak stability of government.

Figure 1.3: Human Development Index of Cambodia



Source: United Nations Development Programme

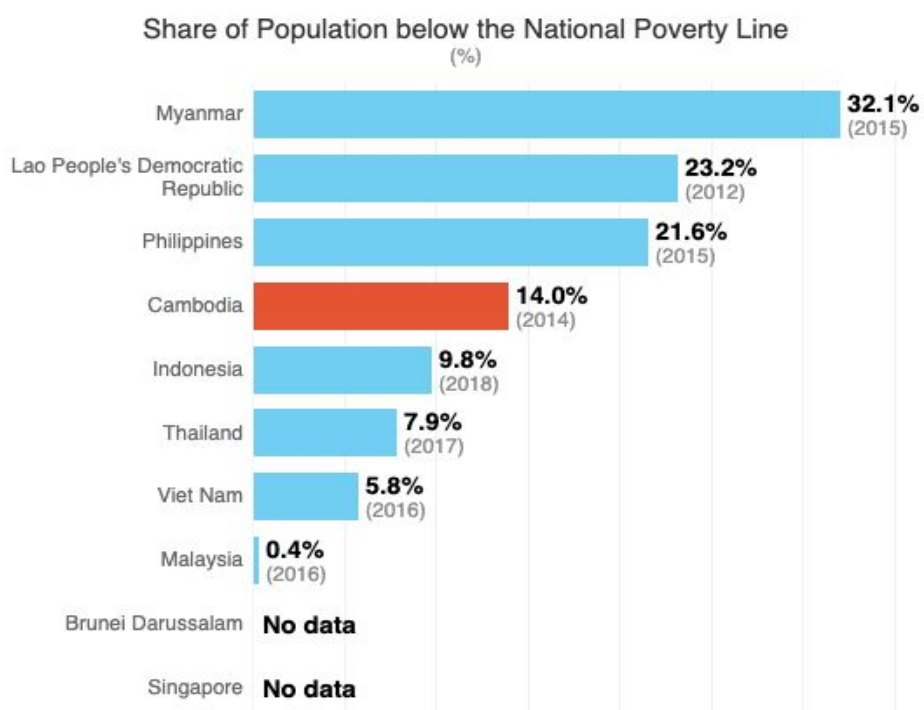
Figure 1.4: Cambodia's HDI and Component Indicators for 2017 Relative to Selected Countries and Groups

	HDI value	HDI rank	Life expectancy at birth	Expected years of schooling	Mean years of schooling	GNI per capita (PPP US\$)
Cambodia	0.582	146	69.3	11.7	4.8	3,413
Lao People's Democratic Republic	0.601	139	67.0	11.2	5.2	6,070
Myanmar	0.578	148	66.7	10.0	4.9	5,567
East Asia and the Pacific	0.733	—	74.7	13.3	7.9	13,688
Medium HDI	0.645	—	69.1	12.0	6.7	6,849

Source: United Nations Development Programme

Another significant index is the Human Development Index, which considers various component indicators that reflect the quality of life. As shown in Figure 1.3, the general trends of Cambodia, which include life expectancy, education, GNI per capita, and HDI, have been increasing over the past few decades due to natural, global growth trends. However, when Cambodia is compared to other countries (Figure 1.4), Cambodia still has a lower HDI value than Laos but a higher value than Myanmar. When it comes to life expectancy at birth, expected years of schooling, and mean years of schooling, Cambodia has a higher score than Laos and Myanmar. However, Cambodia has the lowest GNI out of the three countries, which can be due to the historical implications of the military rule and its effects on the population.

Figure 1.5: Headcount Ratio



Source: Asian Development Bank (ADB)

The last aspect to consider when understanding Cambodia today in relation to poverty is the percentage of the population that fall below the national poverty line. Figure 1.5 shows the

headcount ratio of countries within ASEAN, excluding Brunei and Singapore. Cambodia has about 14% of the population living below the national poverty line. From 2007 to 2014, the poverty rate in Cambodia had decreased from 47.8% to 13.5% (ADB). This reduction of poverty is directly related to outside intervention, such as the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Cambodia successfully achieved the first Millennium Development Goal, which was halving the proportion of people whose income is less than the national poverty line. Even though poverty continues to fall in Cambodia, there is about 20% of the population only hovering above that national poverty line, making understanding poverty in Cambodia pertinent in order to alleviate poverty in the long-term rather than the short-term

By taking into account the historical background and overview of Cambodia today, the causes of poverty in Cambodia become a little easier to interpret, despite the ambiguity of the term poverty itself. As mentioned before, poverty entails a lot more than just income; it includes various aspects that relate to an individual's quality of life. The main components that affect the quality of life in Cambodia that are focused on in this paper are health, education, and political freedom. The lack of proper institutional and systemic functions and the inadequate polity of Cambodia deeply erodes the quality of life, especially in regards to these three aspects. Therefore, a deeper, individual analysis of health, education, and political freedom will be considered within the next portion of this paper in order to recognize the causes and implications they have on poverty in Cambodia.

Results: Looking at Components of Quality of Life

Health

Poverty is a major cause of poor health whilst poor health is also a major cause of poverty; they are inextricably linked with one another. The barriers that affect accessing health care today stem from the Khmer Rouge Regime, which despised the usage of Western medicine and eliminated any previously established proper health care system. It has been difficult to improve the health care situation ever since due to reasons like corruption. This relationship between poverty and health is often influenced by financial means, because the poor cannot always afford to purchase the necessities required for maintaining adequate health and the poor are also disproportionately hurt when government officials divert funds away from their health care services. Health also indirectly affects other factors of poverty, especially when individuals lack the education of what it takes to be involved in proper health promotion practices or when they lack the political freedom to vote and take a stand for certain social services that would benefit their health.

Figure 2.1

Statistics	
Total population (2016)	15,762,000
Gross national income per capita (PPP international \$, 2013)	2,890
Life expectancy at birth m/f (years, 2016)	67/71
Probability of dying under five (per 1 000 live births, 2017)	29
Probability of dying between 15 and 60 years m/f (per 1 000 population, 2016)	205/140
Total expenditure on health per capita (Intl \$, 2014)	183
Total expenditure on health as % of GDP (2014)	5.7

Source: World Health Organization

Figure 2.1 is a statistic which shows just how much the government in Cambodia spends on its expenditure in health. In comparison to other countries, Cambodia spends relatively less on expenditure than other ASEAN countries. According to the World Bank (2015), government funding in Cambodia accounted for only 23% of total expenditure on healthcare, while Thailand accounted for 77.1%. By looking closer at Figure 2.1 and considering past years of health in Cambodia, it becomes evident that while there has been an improvement over the years in Cambodia's health system, it is still not as efficient as it should be. With a higher population of sixteen million people and a lower gross national income per capita, it has become difficult to afford the proper payment needed for adequate healthcare services, especially due to the corruption that exists within Cambodia. Life expectancy at birth is average around 67-71 which is relatively high compared to some countries but could improve when compared to other countries like Thailand. That being said, while health has improved in general over the years in Cambodia, there is still a lot of room for improvement, especially when compared to other ASEAN countries.

Figure 2.2

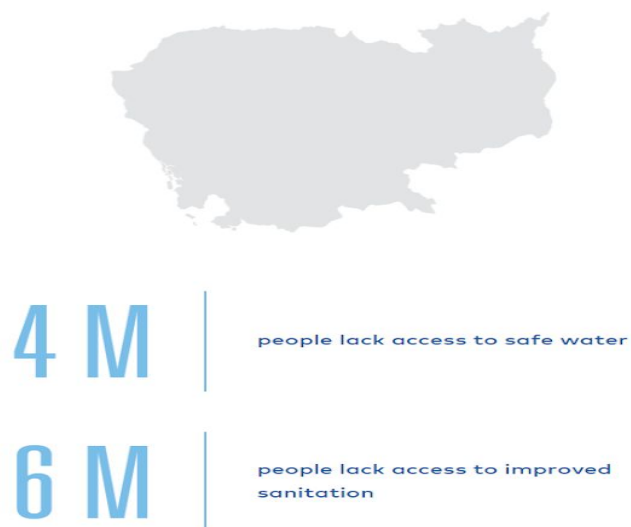


Source: Numbeo Healthcare

Figure 2.2 is the healthcare index satisfaction which demonstrates the effectiveness of government expenditure on health. By looking at the figure, one can see that the skill and competency of the medical staff has low satisfaction along with equipment for modern diagnosis and treatment and the accuracy and completeness in filling out reports. It is definitely noticeable that healthcare in Cambodia still highly inefficient according to this index. This low satisfaction could be due to the lack of funds or the diversion of funds from the health sector to another. While policies have been passed concerning health care, their lack of implementation could also result in lower satisfaction, especially in the areas that are particularly low in Cambodia.

Common health in Cambodia can be classified into two main diseases, which are infectious and chronic. In Cambodia, individuals are prone to having infectious diseases such as tuberculosis (64%), malaria (23,000 cases of malaria and one death in 2017), dengue fever (13,000 cases), and HIV/AIDS (71,000 adults and children living with HIV in Cambodia). In regards to chronic diseases, Cambodians can potentially have diabetes (2.9%), hypertension (11.2%) and injuries (67%). These diseases along with maternal and child healthcare are extremely pertinent to cure and emphasize when it comes to Cambodians, but many doctors and hospitals lack the proper knowledge and equipment to cure these diseases efficiently.

It is evident that the environment can affect healthcare in many ways, because the means of our health is affected by the environment we live in. In some cases this is more obvious – like being exposed to air pollution – in others less so, like with endocrine-disrupting chemicals (EDCs) and other toxic chemicals which are used in many consumer products in our daily lives. There are also other aspects to consider such as garbage disposal and clean water.

Figure 2.3

Source: Water.org

Figure 2.3 shows that many Cambodians still lack access to clean water, which will eventually result in the escalation of diseases due to the consumption of unclean water and bad sanitation. The lack of access to clean water makes people more vulnerable to diseases and thus makes it easier to spread around diseases. Approximately, four million people out of the total population in Cambodia lack access to safe water, and six million lack access to improved sanitation. With approximately 80 percent of Cambodians living in rural areas, poor access to safe water and sanitation disproportionately affects its rural communities.

Another main factor that makes Cambodians easily prone to disease involves the garbage disposal problem. Cambodia has a drastic problem with rubbish. One does not have to travel far before seeing a big pile of trash on the side of the road or plastic bottles and bags washed up by a river. This is the harsh reality of Cambodia. The further issue is that there are not many solutions being put in place to eradicate the garbage problem. For example, there are absolutely no

recycling facilities in Cambodia and recyclable goods barely get sorted are often sent to neighboring countries, expanding the problem further into the rest of Southeast Asia. Then there is the issue of trash collection. It is expensive to have one's trash collected and poorer communities and individuals simply cannot afford to get their trash collected. As landfills become too full, the country is struggling to find a solution to the overflowing waste situation which only accentuates poor health in those who are more exposed to poor sanitation areas.

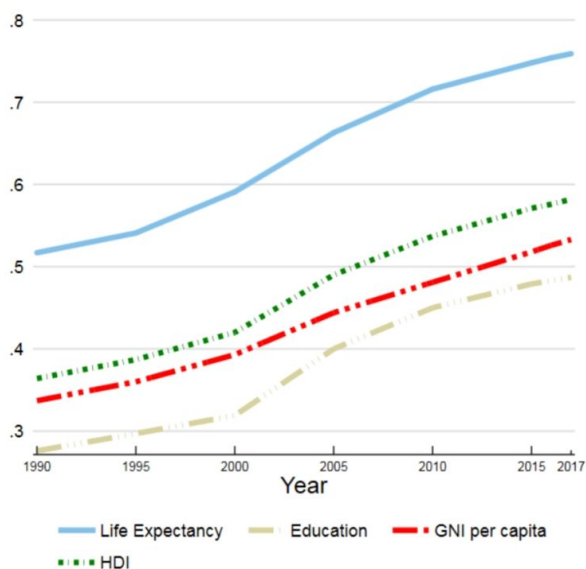
Education

Education is one of the most important factors when it comes to the development of a country. If the education system is good, then the country will develop faster; however, if it is bad, the country will decline. After the end of Pol Pot regime and the Cambodian genocide, the government attempted to develop the country, but Cambodia continues to maintain an inadequate educational system for many reasons, such as corruption and negligence towards the education system. Despite Cambodia's efforts, the improvement of education has faced several problems, in which the government has still failed to solve.

Looking at HDI in Cambodia (Figure 1) Cambodia's HDI was scored at 0.582. By analyzing the three measurements, it is evident that life expectancy scored the highest while education scored the lowest. The question becomes what caused such little improvement.

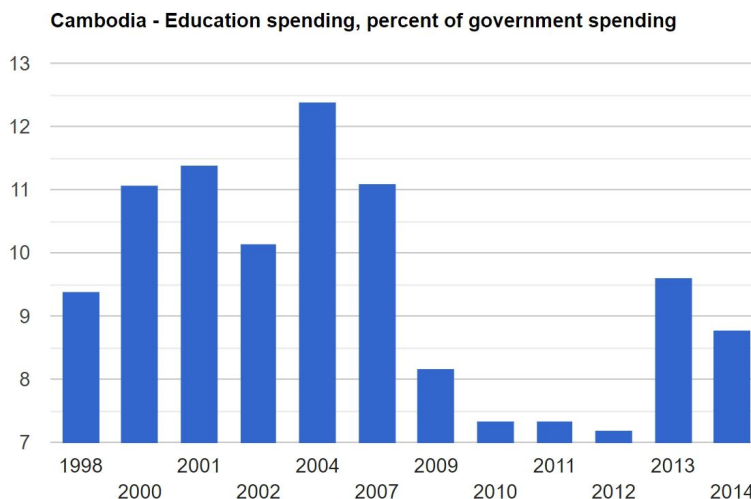
Figure 1 below shows the contribution of each component index to Cambodia's HDI since 1990.

Figure 1: Trends in Cambodia's HDI component indices 1990-2017



Source: United Nations Development Programme

By looking at the graph on the government's educational spending (below), there is a jump in subsidies on education in 2000, which is also shown in the previous graph (Figure 1) as a consequence since education increases as well. This portrays the effect of government spending on education to be substantial when it comes to its improvement and development. After 2007, one can recognize a distinct decrease in educational spending in Cambodia, which could result in the weak educational system that exists within Cambodia today.



	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Government expenditure on education										
as % of GDP	1.67	1.53	1.51	1.56	2.05	1.91	...	...	...	...
as % of total government expenditure	8.17	7.34	7.34	7.2	9.6	8.79	...	...	...	...
Government expenditure per student (in PPP\$)										
Primary education	117.03	119.27	129.43	147.95	168.14	175.18	...	...	...	...
Secondary education	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Tertiary education	205.96	162.52	139.68	...	...	...	...	...	...	...

Source: Global Economy

The causes of educational failure in Cambodia could stem from several components, such as poor policy implementation and little to no educational funding. It could also be due to the historical aspects of the Khmer Rouge regime and their negativity towards Westerners and their education system. During that period, many of the schools were closed and children were not allowed to go to school. This has deeply slowed the progression of an adequate educational system in contemporary Cambodia. That being said, there are three main challenges that the

educational system of Cambodia face today, which include private tutoring, corruption, and lack of technology and teaching resources.

In the case of private tutoring, lecturers have additional lessons to teach students since they do not have enough time to teach them in the lessons in accordance to the governmental regulations. Therefore, teachers in some subjects - like mathematics, chemistry, physics, biology and Khmer literature - open additional classrooms so as to focus on more exercises and expand their curriculum. All while concentrating on students more individually than in normal classroom settings. Nonetheless, public school still has more students than private tutoring does. This is due to the financial means of having a private lesson. Students pay around \$5-\$7 per month for one subject if they wish to study extra lectures, which means the teachers receive more pay. This could cause issues for students who cannot afford to pay, giving them an educational disadvantage to children who are better off financially. This results in a lack of hope and confidence within the students who do not attend private tutoring, which connects to a lessened quality of life.

In the case of corruption, students who had rather more absences in school or the yearly average showed that they fail based on the regulation of the college they are not able to go up to the higher grade however some students can bribe teachers to help them advance to the next grade. In the examination, students sometimes give 500R (12.5 cents) to teachers for the price of the test sheets in some subject. Moreover, students can pay cash to teachers in some subjects if they don't want to take the exams and just obtain the complete mark. In the classroom teachers

don't seem to be permitted in selling something like books or lesson sheets however some of the teachers try and sell it and do business in school.

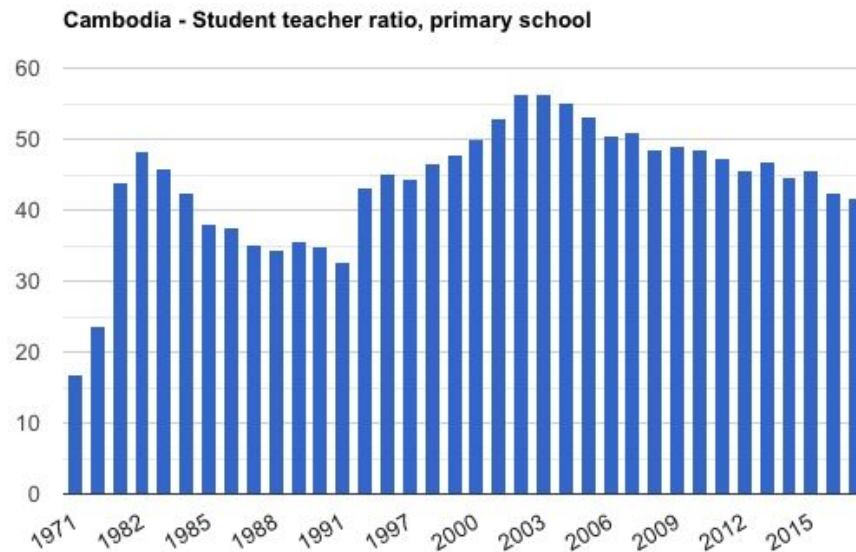
In regards to the lack of technology and teaching resources, almost all the lecturers simply come to school with markers, books and a laptop. In some subjects especially sciences the school has got to offer some teaching materials like telescopes, some chemical components and alternative things that students could use to experiment which facilitate them to understand well. however it's not the schools' fault it's as a result of nevertheless the education system is not developed. Not only that but the school building and school atmosphere also are unhealthy and unpleasant.

"Nobody is happy to teach or to learn in a school with no roof, no walls or no chairs,"

- Anne Dykstra, Education Manager of UNICEF.

As Cambodia is facing with poverty that caused the educational problem. Many students do not have school supplies and proper education that will cause the ineffective skilled labor in the future. So, The Royal Government of Cambodia has the ambition to transform from a lower-middle income country to being an upper-middle income country by 2030 and a developed country by 2050. The future economic growth and competitiveness of the nation to realize the ambitions depends on our people having the right knowledge and relevant skills, reflecting our cultural and ethical heritage and the education sector plays an important role in the national development. The children, youth and adults will receive education and lifelong learning services with high quality, which are relevant and responsive to the labor market demand. In order to

realize in full the benefits of Cambodia's demographic dividend there has to be a focus on building skills for learning and providing opportunities for access to technical and specialized skills for all.



Source: TheGlobalEconomy.com, UNESCO

Cambodia's government is trying to solve the illiteracy problem and the ineffective study lessons within the country. For instance, the student-to-teacher ratio is very high compared to other nearby countries - as seen on the above graph - which means that one teacher has to take care of many students and is still not paid well enough to support themselves. The government, thus, formulated an 'Education Strategic Plan' set in place to improve the education system and subsequently stimulate the economy. The plan focuses on equal access to education, increasing the quality of the school curriculum, and encouraging teachers and school faculty towards

excellence in their roles as educators. So, the 2014-2018 Education Strategic Plan (ESP) was appraised and endorsed in 2013. The mid-term review (MTR) of the sector plan was conducted in 2016, and serves as the updated ESP. The MTR includes updated strategies, actions, indicator targets, and a financial projection until 2020. A full education sector analysis is planned for this year and the next ESP will be launched in 2019.

The local education group called the Joint Technical Working Group for Education is comprised of the ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and the development partners like the Asian Development Bank. There have been many educational policies that have been aimed for or implemented. These include things like:

- 1) Increased number of children and youth that have access to all education levels with a focused attention on equity and access for the most disadvantaged areas and groups of children,
- 2) Increased study hours for primary and secondary education,
- 3) Increased number of schools and classrooms in rural area,
- 4) Scholarship program for poor kids in rural area,
- 5) And an increase in the quality of teachers, which will be set forth by the Teacher Performance Management Program, especially for secondary education with the higher salary (3-5 percent/ year).

However, even after all of these policies have been imposed, the problem of education in Cambodia has still not been alleviated. This could be due to the Cambodian government implementing policies inaccurately. Increasing the salary of teachers does not mean that they will improve their teaching methods. This can actually even lead to more incentive to corrupt the

education system and the amount of money subsidized per capita, which means that the small, ruralized schools with less students will also gain less subsidies compared to bigger, urbanized schools. Therefore, the small schools will never be able to keep up with the big schools in terms of their educational readiness. They should invest in more school supplies and adequate facilities in order to create a better environment for the students. This will eventually create incentive in both students and teachers to come to study place with their will in teaching and learning. Leading to the better education standard which results in more educated people in the country. Not only the educated could do better at work and earn better incomes, they are even known as an important factor in the development of Cambodia and hopefully solve poverty problem in the long run.

Political Freedom

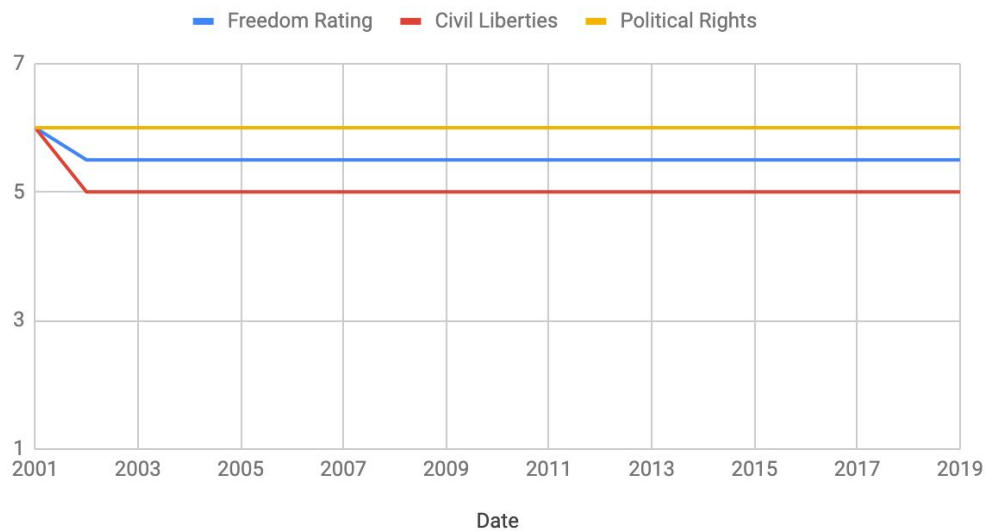
The third and last component of quality of life that this paper will look at is political freedom. For the purposes of this study, political freedom is defined as the idea that an individual should be able to have political rights (Neumann, 1953). Furthermore, political rights enable people to participate freely in the political process. Some examples of especially important political rights include freedom of speech, the right to free and fair elections, and the establishment of just executive and judicial branches (Tully, 1990). As mentioned before, there is not a certain way to prove whether or not political freedom, or lack thereof, causes poverty or if it is the other way around, but they both influence each other significantly.

Having fair access to civil liberties and political rights is paramount when it comes to improving the quality of life. Political freedom allows people to use their voice to express their

opinions and grievances to those in power, which should be received and responded to justly and swiftly. This would mean that the poor could have a proper way to get out of poverty because they would have a direct say in matters that concern them. The Cambodian citizens would be left less defenseless or susceptible to being forgotten and overlooked by the government.

Figure 3.1

Freedom in the World Index, Cambodia



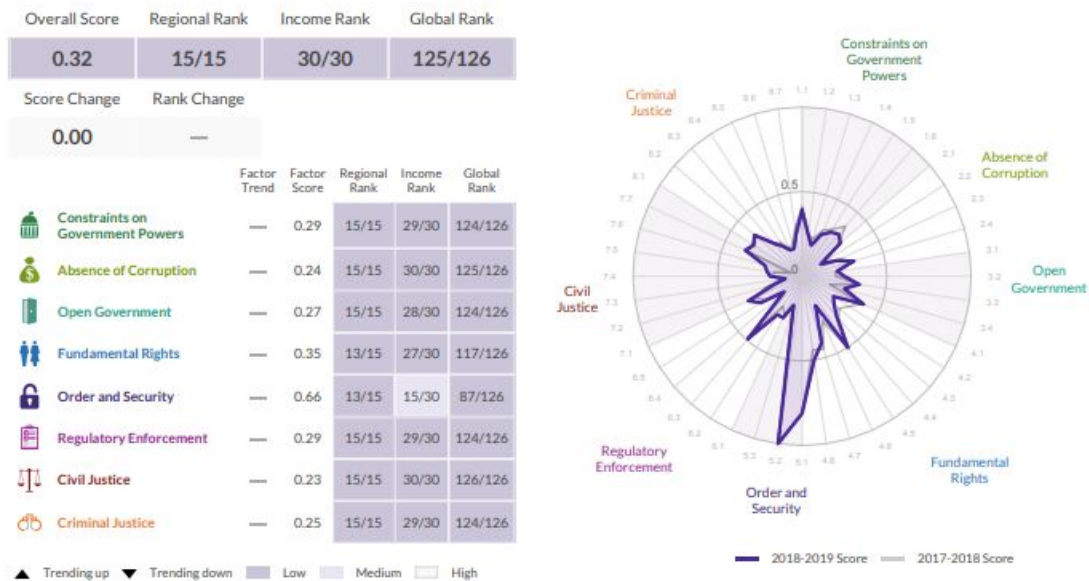
Source: Freedom House

Figure 3.1 is a graph of Cambodia's Freedom in the World index scores from 2001-2019. The index gives three different ratings for civil liberties, political rights, and overall freedom. As you can see from the graph, Cambodia has remained stagnant when it comes to civil liberties and political rights - neither increasing nor decreasing over the years. As of 2019, Cambodia's Freedom Rating was a 5.5 out of 7, with 7 being the smallest degree of freedom. By looking at the political context, we can see that this stagnation might be due to the domination of Prime Minister Hun Sen and the Cambodian People's Party over the past three decades. For instance, the 2018 elections were held in a severely repressive environment that offered voters no

meaningful choice; the main opposition party was banned and many of the leaders were jailed and exiled. There have also been very few and extremely weak policies that have set in place to improve Cambodia's political rights and civil liberties. The implementation of insufficient policies also demonstrates the enigmatic standstill of political freedom and the reason there has been no improvement over the years.

By considering the stagnation of freedom in Cambodia, the establishment of just laws becomes fundamental to assess in order to recognize the restricting powers and inadequate institutions that impede on an individual's political freedom. That being said, the following figures (Figure 3.2, 3.3, 3.4) portray the rule of law index, which focuses on the system of laws and the institutions put in place. This index is based on eight factors: constraints of government powers, absence of corruption, open government, fundamental rights, order and security, regulatory enforcement, civil justice, and criminal justice. As of 2019, Cambodia is the last ranked regionally, except when it comes to certain factors such as order and security and fundamental rights. While Cambodia still ranks relatively low in these aspects, their better scores could be directly related to the power of the military as a force of stability throughout the country. By further breaking down Cambodia's rule of law index, the lowest ranked factor becomes extremely significant. Cambodia ranks lowest in the absence of corruption and civil justice components. Due to the extremity of low-ranked corruption in Cambodia, it becomes pertinent to analyze the means and causes of such corruption.

Figure 3.2: Rule of Law Index

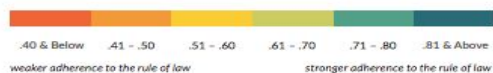


Source: World Justice Project (2019)

Figure 3.3: Rule of Law Index

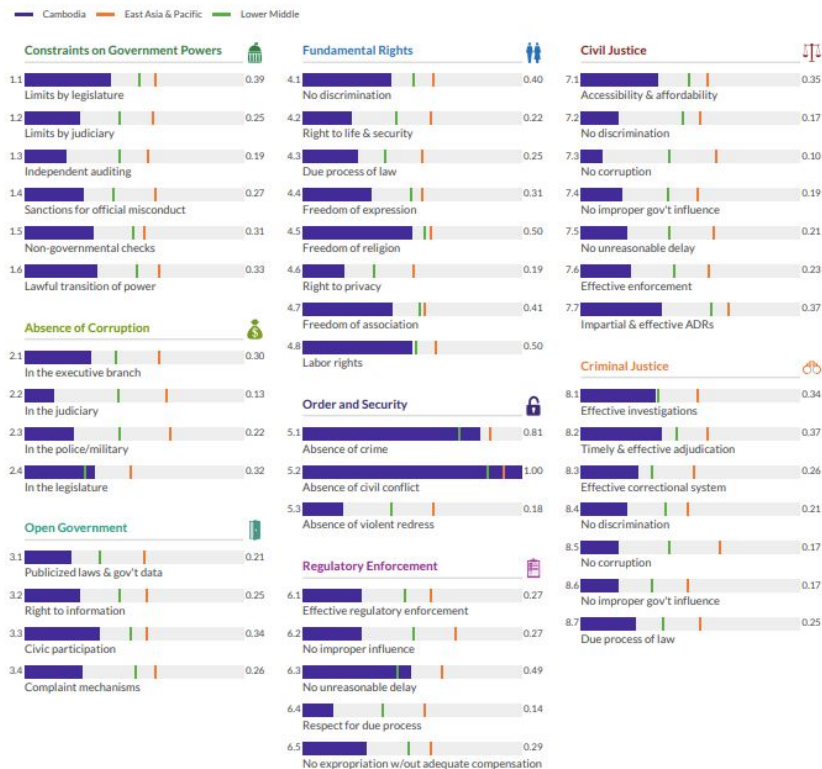
East Asia & Pacific

Country/Jurisdiction	Regional Rank	Overall Score*	Global Rank	Change in Global Rank	Change in Overall Score*
New Zealand	1/15	0.83	7/113	▲ 1	0.00
Australia	2/15	0.81	10/113	▲ 1	0.00
Singapore	3/15	0.80	13/113	▼ 4	- 0.02
Japan	4/15	0.79	14/113	▲ 1	0.01
Hong Kong SAR, China	5/15	0.77	16/113	-	0.00
Republic of Korea	6/15	0.72	20/113	▼ 1	- 0.01
Mongolia	7/15	0.54	51/113	▲ 4	0.00
Malaysia	8/15	0.54	53/113	▲ 3	0.00
Indonesia	9/15	0.52	63/113	▼ 2	0.00
Thailand	10/15	0.50	71/113	▼ 7	- 0.01
Vietnam	11/15	0.50	74/113	▼ 7	- 0.01
China	12/15	0.50	75/113	▲ 5	0.02
Philippines	13/15	0.47	88/113	▼ 18	- 0.04
Myanmar	14/15	0.42	100/113	▼ 2	- 0.01
Cambodia	15/15	0.32	112/113	-	0.00



Source: World Justice Project (2019)

Figure 3.4: Rule of Law Index



Source: World Justice Project (2019)

With that in mind, Figure 3.5 exhibits the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) of Cambodia from 2009 to 2018. This index is used as a means to measure corruption in public sectors and has been credited to pressuring the issue of corruption onto the agenda of the international sphere. Cambodia has scored 20 out of 100 on the 2018 Corruption Perception Index, which ranks Cambodia 161 out of 180 countries. Essentially, this means that Cambodia is one of the most corrupt countries in the world, maintaining the lowest CPI score out of all ASEAN countries. This level of corruption could persist for numerous reasons, including the dominance of the CPP, institutional weaknesses, and gaps in current reform agendas. In

particular, Cambodia suffers from a highly corrupt judicial system, in which many Cambodians believe judges to be corrupt for taking bribes to influence their judicial decisions. Even though there are constitutional laws that enforce an independent judiciary, the government often times disregards such principles, creating institutional weakness and unreliability.

Figure 3.5: Corruption Perception Index



Source: Tradingeconomics.com | Transparency International

Taking into account the relationship of political freedom and corruption, it becomes evident that it is of the utmost importance to make corruption the main issue to address in order to effectively undertake the alleviation of poverty. Economic underperformance and the erosion of quality of life are consequently manifested when corruption levels are as high as they are in Cambodia. That being said, the corruption that exists throughout the political, economic, and social spheres has delayed the efforts put in place to accelerate poverty alleviation and economic development in Cambodia. Any solution to this deep-rooted issue would require a robust and comprehensive strategy that encompasses the entirety of the corruption system (Transparency

International).

The Cambodian state system is based on patronage relationships, meaning that state authorities are able to manipulate the system for their own private gains. This systematic corruption that exists within the bureaucracy undermines the political freedom needed to eventually alleviate poverty. When those in power are able to divert funds from the poor disproportionately for their own personal gain, it results in less social services concerning aspects of poverty like health and education. Since there has been a decrease in the government's legitimacy with the rise of the younger generation, the regime has responded with several "reform" tactics and repressive strategies as of 2013. This repression of the CPP's opposition party has resulted in less international support when it comes to financing certain services due to the fear of the democracy potentially deteriorating. Cambodia's international support has often times helped substantially in implementing policy reforms in many areas. The corruption, however, has made it difficult to enforce policies that the government officials did not find beneficial for their own personal gains. For instance, laws on anti-corruption are not adopted unless they are seen by political executives as strengthening their authority. This means that solving corruption in Cambodia is extremely problematic because anti-corruption policies and institutions are always subject to political apprehension.

The apparent presence of corruption may undeniably be one of the biggest contributors to the fact that Cambodians in poverty have great difficulties getting out of poverty and staying out of it. With a corrupt government, the people are unable to fight for themselves in a setting of equal and fair representation, and the cycle of poverty remains perpetual and unchanging.

Conclusion

Limitations

Some limitations of this paper include the fact that there are many other components that affect the quality of life. It is not just education, health, and political freedom that comes into play when determining the status of one's quality of life. Other factors, such as the quality of infrastructure and the environment are also worth considering in determining what a person's quality of life realistically looks like. Similarly, in the specific components that were detailed, the paper was selective on only the main indicators or policies related to each. Due to physical time constraints, it was not possible to look at every policy associated with each component, although it is understood that each has its own importance and contributes to the holistic overview of what the quality of life and current poverty situation in Cambodia looks like. Moreover, poverty encompasses several different aspects and is multidimensional in its definitions, which makes it extremely challenging to simplify into three different components of quality of life. The alleviation of poverty is going to entail a lot more than the potential solutions suggested in this paper.

Policy Recommendations and Conclusion

The quality of life is an important indicator to consider when understanding the causes and viable solutions for poverty. In recapitulation of this paper specifically, poverty in Cambodia is deeply ingrained with the three quality of life components - health, education, and political freedom - which are also fundamental to consider when trying to alleviate poverty. These three components along with the other components that were not reviewed in this paper, such as food

security, water safety, and so on are interconnected with one another in a way that makes it difficult to find an adequate solution. Cambodia is still facing huge impacts from poverty so analyzing the problem by these three aspects is extremely pertinent in understanding the current situation. Also, it will help guide our understanding of the causes and impact of poverty in a way that will aid in the enhancement and reformation of policies. This greater understanding will thus aid in the reduction of the current problem in Cambodia by granting Cambodians a higher and better quality of life.

That being said, potential solutions will be given that directly affect each of the three previously mentioned components of quality of life, starting with health. As mentioned previously, the effectiveness of former health policies has been low and for the most part, detrimental in achieving the goal of alleviating poverty. With that in mind, Cambodia needs to consider policies that directly affect the management of their garbage situation with an emphasis on wastewater treatment. By focusing on this, the country will not only be able to help prevent diseases, but will also be able to improve the malnutrition problem. There should also be efforts in minimizing the cost of health care so that the poor can have access to basic physical needs. This would also entail providing health services to areas that are rural and have less access but need it the most. By encouraging and actually implementing the already established solutions, like universal healthcare and insurance cards, the health of Cambodia can strengthen further and thus result in an upsurge of poverty alleviation.

In terms of education, the best viable solutions include subsidizing on school facilities and materials rather than the teacher's salaries, which is what the government has attempted to

do in the past. It has not appeared effective due to the corruption culture of Cambodia's society. By building a better school environment and subsidizing teaching resources, there would be an incentive to both study and teach. Better infrastructure and equipment are uplifting for individuals, especially when it comes to the learning environment. In order to avoid the corruption that exists, subsidies should not be in the form of money but in materials and resources. The problem becomes finding a way to make this beneficial for government officials' own personal gain so that the solution is actually feasible.

The last solution to consider out of the three quality of life components is political freedom. Essentially, the policies that we have considered in the alleviation of poverty for education and health would be extremely difficult to carry out due to the immense corruption that exists in Cambodia. The government will fail or elongate the process of such policies, unless there was personal incentive to institute such solutions for poverty alleviation. Such solutions and policies may need to be altered to look attractive for government officials in order to implement policies and enhance components like health and education in Cambodia today. In order to truly attempt to combat corruption in the long-run, Cambodia would need a robust and comprehensive strategy that focuses on the entire anti-corruption system, such as legal infrastructure and punishment, the proper enforcement of rules, and civil engagement. This may be guided with the help of the non-government organizations in Cambodia as well as the international donor community. These organizations could aid in ways that avoid the corruption aspect of the government; this could include providing funds to improve education and healthcare. In the end,

the ability to not worry about one's survival as well as an educational awareness of the political climate will benefit Cambodians and empower them to fight for their own political rights.

Ultimately, poverty is multifaceted and requires an understanding of situations revolving around more than just income alone. It is an issue that is personalized from environment to environment, which is the main reason why poverty is such a difficult topic to address. Although the focus of the paper was on poverty in Cambodia, it also contributes to the development of an understanding of the universal problem of poverty as well, in order to better equip us to combat poverty for future generations.

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