

Summary and Conclusions

Education is a crucial factor not only in national social and economic development but also in individual development and fulfillment. Particularly, a literate, well-educated labor force is essential for sustainable economic development (*DHS Comparative Studies No.29*, 1998). Cambodia has made great efforts for rehabilitation and reconstruction to rebuild the Cambodian educational system, after the education setback by the political, social and economic instability in the 1970s and 1980s.

Various measures are being taken in the country to raise the literacy rate. The expansion of primary education is the major contributing factor in raising the literacy rate. Besides, various Government and non-governmental agencies are carrying out adult education activities. The Government put efforts to achieve “universal nine-year basic education by 2015,” one of 9 goals in the Cambodia Millennium Development Goals (CMDGs). Priorities related to education for the next five years prepared as the Education Sector Strategic Plan (2006-2010) include the following various items: ensuring easy and equitable access to basic education by increasing number of schools, facilitating attendance of girls at lower secondary and higher levels by increasing dormitories, reducing the financial burden on poor students by scholarships and so on. Concerns for improving quality at all levels however continue and have to be addressed (*National Strategic Development Plan 2006-10*). Literacy level has been improved a great deal in recent decades, particularly among young peoples. However, the condition of basic education in Cambodia is still poor in terms of school facilities, a qualification of teachers, and quality of learning.

Education is a priority target in human development and capacity building. Government has made great efforts to achieve the basic education for all, particularly for female education and to narrow the gender gap in basic education. The expansion of basic education has resulted in a substantial improvement in the status of literacy, educational attainment and school attendance since the 2000s. However, Cambodia is still belonging to groups with low literacy, educational attainment and school attendance among ASEAN countries. The main findings of the Cambodia Inter-Censal Population Survey 2013 are summarized below.

1. The majority of population speaks Khmer (97.1% of total population), followed by Minority languages (2.3%), Vietnamese (0.4%) and Lao (0.2%). About minority languages, Chaam language is spoken among 45% of minority groups. Languages

other than Khmer and Minority languages spoken in Cambodia are Vietnamese, Lao, Chinese, Thai, English, Korean, French and Japanese. The persons speak these language are mostly foreigners who live in Phnom Penh or the province near border.

2. Not only the general literacy rates but also the adult literacy rates rose for each sex during 2008-2013. Both the general and adult literacy rates improved remarkably, particularly those for females, however there still exists a gender gap in literacy rates. In CIPS 2013, a question on literacy is added the literacy status of both Khmer and other language as well as in 2008 population census. Those who are literate not only in Khmer but also in English account for 8.0% of total literate population, as compared with 4.9% in 2008. Urban dwellers have substantially higher percentage in literacy than rural dwellers.
3. All the educational attainment of population improved during 2008-2013. The proportions of persons with no education and primary not completed decreased, and those with primary and above educational attainment increased. The difference between males and females in the primary education attainment decreased, however there exists a great gender gap in secondary and above educational attainment. The educational attainment between urban and rural areas has a great difference in the educational attainment of lower secondary and above. The proportions of educational attainment with primary and above of population aged 15 and over are 71.5% in urban area, as compared with 45.8% in rural area in 2013.
4. The free primary and secondary education system established by the law accelerated to up the school attendance rate. The school attendance rate at younger age groups and that for females rose remarkably during 2008-2013. The attendance rate at ages of 6-9 for females is higher than the counterpart in 2013. The attendance rate in rural area improved significantly in 2013. Although the official age for entry into elementary school grade 1 is 6 years old, the proportion of attending at 6 years old remains at around half (56% for both sexes, 54% for males, 57% for females). The school attendance rates decrease with age, particularly, a bigger drop for females than the counterparts.

The findings from the CIPS 2013 data analysis pose keen challenges to policy makers:

Serious disparities between capital and remote provinces, urban and rural areas in literacy, school attendance and educational attainment status exist not less, Government should make every effort to the area where suffer from a lack of infrastructure for the basic education. An attention should be given to regulating processes of decentralization of the quality of education to all provinces. The sex disparity in educational level might be affected by the traditional value in gender system in Cambodia. The need to promote secondary education with particular focus on females and peoples residing in rural area.