

Chapter 8

Summary and Conclusions

The implementation of the welfare measures for the persons with disability depends on reliable data on their population size and characteristics. In the absence of administrative data the number of disabled persons with the types of their disabilities has to be estimated either by surveys or censuses. In Cambodia, persons with disability constitute one of the most vulnerable groups. A considerable section of the disabled population who are amputees or persons with mental disability is a constant and grim reminder of the legacy of war and internal conflicts in the past. The passing of the law on Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in July 2009 marked a milestone in the ceaseless efforts of the Royal Government of Cambodia to protect and promote the rights of persons with disabilities. There are several NGOs, national and international who have been taking longstanding interest in improving the lives and livelihoods of persons with disabilities in the country. Yet there are several challenges lying ahead in this regard.

At the 2008 Census, a disability question was included in the household schedule questionnaire. If any member of a household had any of the following types of disability, it was recorded; “in seeing”, “in speech”, “in hearing”, “in movement” and mental disability. It was also ascertained whether the disability reported was there since birth or it was acquired after birth. If a person had two or more types of disability only one of these was recorded by the enumerator. Due to differences in the definition of disability the number of disabled as per the census may differ from the estimates made by other surveys.

The number of persons with disability in Cambodia is 192,538 according to the census. This is based on the definitions adopted. It includes 108,468 males (56.3 percent) and 84,070 females (43.7 percent). The disabled population constitutes 1.44 percent of the country’s population (1.66 percent among males and 1.22 percent among females). The proportion of the disabled in the rural areas (1.52 percent) is higher than that in the urban areas (1.09 percent).

The proportion of persons disabled after birth is much higher than since birth. Hence a majority of the disabled population in Cambodia are those who became disabled after birth. Most of them may be victims of war, land mines and other accidents. Among the provinces, the proportion of congenitally disabled population ranges from 16.1 percent in Pailin to 40.76 percent in Phnom Penh.

The disability rate which gives the extent of disability in each area is the highest in Pailin province though this province accounts for less than one percent of the total disabled in the country. This is mainly due to the fact that Pailin was one of those provinces in the Northwest that were seriously affected by war and civil disturbances during the Khmer Rouge regime. For the same reason, perhaps, the disability rate is much higher than the national average in each of the provinces of

Bantey Meanchey, Battambang, Preah Vihear and Otdar Meanchey. The number of disabled persons and the percentage to total population in respect of each District/ Khan/ Krong in Cambodia are also presented as an Annex Table.

While the persons with disability “in seeing” form the highest proportion among those disabled since birth, disabled persons in movement predominate among the persons disabled after birth. This holds true for both males and females. In Cambodia as a whole, among the disabled population, females have a higher proportion than that of males in respect of each disability barring movement disability. This is observed both in the urban and rural areas.

The sex ratio of the disabled population at the national level is 129.0 as against 94.7 among the general population indicating a higher proportion of males among the disabled population in the country. The urban and rural sex ratios of the disabled population are 125.7 and 129.6 respectively. The sex ratio of the disabled population at province level varies over a wide range from 105.8 in Kampong Cham and Prey Veng to 315.6 in Pailin.

The working age group accounts for 70.37 percent of the disabled population whereas among the general population it constitutes 62 percent. The proportions of the elderly among the disabled population and the general population are 12 percent and 4.3 percent respectively. In the age group 30-34, a decline in the population may be observed (see Figure 4.1). This is due to decline in fertility and high mortality during the Khmer Rouge period.

The median age of the disabled population works out to 36.42 years as against 22.06 years for the population of Cambodia as a whole. The median ages of males and females among the disabled population are 36.32 and 36.60 respectively. The corresponding median ages among the general population are 20.81 and 23.26 respectively. The median ages of the disabled population in the urban and rural areas are calculated as 33.71 and 36.90 respectively.

In general, those who suffer from different physical handicaps are mostly in the age cohort 15-29 which represents people born during the troubled years 1979-1993 following the Khmer Rouge regime. In the case of vision disability since birth the incidence is the highest among children (36.34 percents). Disabilities in vision, hearing and in movement acquired after birth are more prevalent among the older age groups. Following the age group 15-29, children in the age group 0-14 have a high proportion of mentally disabled persons since birth.

Among the persons with disability aged 15 and more as a whole, 31.78 percent is never married as against the corresponding percentage of 32.71 among the general population. The percentage of widowed (9.24) among the disabled population (aged 15+) is much higher than that of the general population (4.99). This is mainly because the disabled population is an “old population” whereas the

general population is comparatively younger. The percentage of divorced among disabled women (5.06 percent) is also higher than in the general population (3.1 percent).

In the higher age for women, from the age group 55-59 upwards, the proportion of widowed is substantially high and it increases with age. These old and physically challenged widows constitute the most vulnerable group who need assistance and support. In the higher age groups males marry much younger women either for the first time or as remarriage once they are widowed, divorced or separated. This tendency does not exist among older women. In all the age groups the proportion of widows is higher, with its rise being faster compared to that of widowers. This is due to the following reasons: (i) wives are generally younger than their husbands (ii) the expectation of life is higher for women than men (iii) men tend to remarry at a proportion very much higher than that of women. The Singulate Mean Age at Marriage (SMAM) of the disabled population is much higher than that of the general population. Marriage among the disabled population seems to be relatively delayed.

The general literacy rate among the disabled population is 62.24 percent (70.53 percent for males and 51.47 percent for females). These rates are much lower than the corresponding rates for the general population (78.35 percent for both sexes, 83.99 percent for males and 73.10 percent for females). Moreover the gap between the male and female literacy rates is much higher in the case of the disabled population.

The literacy rates vary from province to province. The lowest rates are recorded in Ratanak Kiri province and the highest in Phnom Penh Municipality for total, males and females. The literacy levels in the following provinces are each above the national average of 62.24: Battambang, Kampong Chhnang, Kandal, Koh Kong, Phnom Penh, Prey Veng, Pursat, Preah Sihanouk and Pailin. In each of the remaining provinces the literacy level is lower than the national level.

Barring older people, the adult literacy rate is at its lowest level in the age group 30-34 which contains persons born during the Khmer Rouge period. The highest level of adult literacy is seen the age group 50-54 followed by the age group 55-59. The persons belonging to these age groups are those born during the year 1951-56. Presumably progressive measures were taken to improve education after the country became independent during this period.

Among the total literate population with disability, the proportions of those who have completed Primary level of education (21.84 percent) and Lower secondary level (15.56) percent are lower than the corresponding proportions of the general population, namely, 29 percent and 17 percent respectively. Those who have the qualification of Secondary School/Baccalaureate level and beyond constitute hardly 2 percent as against about 3 percent among the general population. The literacy and educational levels of female disabled persons are generally lower than those of male disabled population. In each of the educational level categories of “None” and Primary not completed the percentage of females is higher than that of males.

The rural proportions for primary not completed and primary completed are higher than the corresponding urban proportions. In the higher educational levels, however, the trend is reversed as expected. It is possible that in the urban areas a portion of primary completed persons might have moved to Lower Secondary whereas their counterparts in the rural areas might have stopped with Primary completed level without pursuing higher education.

With an average of 24.05 percent at the national level, the proportion of males who have completed the primary level of education ranges from 16.81 in Mondul Kiri province to 30.4 in Takeo province. In respect of Lower Secondary level the proportion of persons ranges from 9.87 in Preah Vihear to 27.66 in Phnom Penh Municipality. The proportion of persons who have completed Secondary/Technical Diploma varies from nil in Mondul Kiri province to 3.50 in Phnom Penh Municipality. In Ratanak Kiri, Stung Treng and Pailin provinces there are no females among the disabled with Secondary/Technical Diploma level qualification. The proportions of disabled persons who have completed a level of education beyond Secondary/Technical Diploma like under graduate and graduate, are very poor in all the provinces with nil in the provinces of Mondul Kiri, Ratanak Kiri, Stung Treng and Kep, and with Phnom Penh Municipality recording 3.87 percent at the other end.

The literacy levels of persons with disabilities in seeing and in movement are higher than the national average of 62.4 for the total disabled population. The literacy rate of disabled in hearing is only marginally less than the national average. The literacy rates of those disabled in speech (54.67) and the literacy rate of persons mentally disabled (42.33) are much below the national average. There is a general increase in the number of drop -outs with increase in educational level, especially in the case of females.

The crude economic activity rates (the percentage of the economically active population to the total population) for the general population of Cambodia and the disabled population are 52.65 and 55.26 respectively. Women with disability participate in economic activity on a lesser scale than their counterparts in the general population. This trend is reversed in respect of males. As in the case of the general population the economic activity rates of the disabled population are higher in the rural areas when compared to urban areas.

The economic activity rate varies over a wide range among the provinces. It ranges from 47.96 in Phnom Penh Municipality to 76.96 in Pailin province for both sexes, from 52.80 in Phnom Penh Municipality to 83.91 in Pailin province for males and from 40.53 in Kratie province to 57.46 in Mondul Kiri province for females.

Dependents constitute fifty-nine percent of the economically inactive population among the disabled. About 24.5 percent are students. Home makers form only about 12 percent. Among the economically inactive disabled males, dependents, students and home makers form respectively 57.6 percent, 30.0 percent and 7.7 percent. Among the economically inactive disabled females, these proportions are respectively 61.0 percent, 19.1 percent and 15.5 percent.

For the general population of Cambodia in the age group 15-64, the economic activity rates are 79.95 for total, 81.57 for males and 78.47 for females. The economic activity rates for the disabled population in the same age group are lower than those of the general population. While the economic activity rate for males is lower by 5.81 points the economic activity rate for females is lower by 13.54 points. The urban economic activity rates are lower than the corresponding rural rates as in the case of the general population. The gap between the economic activity rates of males (75.76) and females (64.93) among the disabled population is much greater than the gap between the two rates among the general population (81.57 for the males and 78.47 for the females). The unemployment rate of the disabled population is much higher than that of the general population both by sex and residence.

Like the crude economic activity rate, the economic activity rate of the disabled population aged 15-64 also varies over a wide range among the provinces. It ranges from 60.54 in Phnom Penh Municipality to 86.59 in Pailin province for both sexes, from 65.03 in Phnom Penh Municipality to 91.22 in Pailin province for males and from 55.04 in Phnom Penh Municipality to 75.64 in Mondul Kiri province.

The proportion of children in the labour force is slightly higher among the disabled population (about 5 percent) compared to general population (about 3 percent). Special efforts are needed to mainstream the disabled children of varying disabilities so as to eradicate child labour. It is also noticed that in both the age groups 15-59 and 60+ the participation of women in economic activity is at a lower rate than their male counterparts, the difference being higher in the older age group.

A large majority of the employed disabled persons, work in agriculture, forestry and fishing. The proportion of workers in this sector (78.93 percent) is higher than that of the general population (72.29) by 6.6 percentage points.

In terms of industrial sectors 78.93 percent of the employed disabled persons are in the Primary Sector, 5.31 percent in the Secondary Sector and 15.76 percent in the Tertiary Sector. The corresponding proportions of the employed among the general population are: 72.30 percent, 8.54 percent and 19.16 percent respectively.

Among the disabled, the participation of women in the primary sector (81.36 percent) is higher than that of men (77.45 percent). The shift from agriculture to industry and services has taken place at a lesser pace among the employed persons who are disabled compared to the general population.

Adopting the indirect method of estimation used in the Analytical Report 1 on Fertility and Mortality in Cambodia the TFR of disabled women in Cambodia is estimated at 1.83 (1.68 for urban and 1.86 for rural). These results confirm that the fertility level of disabled women is much lower than the fertility level of women in Cambodia as a whole.

The migration rate is higher for the disabled population (31.78 percent) compared to the general population (26.52 percent). In both the populations the migration rate of the urbanites is very much higher than that of the rural residents. A little more than one third of the persons with disability never had a residence other than the place where they were enumerated. Most of the migrants have moved within the province of enumeration. Among the general population also this is the position with 51.34 percent among them having their previous residence within the province of enumeration.

One among three disabled persons is heading a household. About 46.1 percent among males and 16.3 percent among females are heads of households. The highest percentage of male heads of household is found in the age group 45-49. The corresponding age group for females is 55-59. The heads of household with disability, especially women among them are one of the vulnerable groups who need support.