

## Chapter 2 LITERACY

### 2.1 IMPROVEMENT IN LITERACY

As mentioned in the introduction, the information on literacy status in the 2008 census was recorded of each person, irrespective of age, but population aged 6 years and below has been grouped all as illiterate. Therefore, literate population in this analysis covers literate population aged 7 and above unless mentioned specifically.

Various measures are being taken in the country to raise literacy in the last decade. Government has made great efforts in keeping pace with the rapidly expanding school-age population, with the construction of schools across the country. The number of primary school increased from 5,026 in 1998 to 6,476 in 2008, and the annual growth rate was 2.5% during 1998-2008. Number of secondary schools also increased rapidly from 465 to 1321 during the decade, the annual growth rate is 10.4%. Number of enrolled students of primary school increased from 1,918,985 in 1998 to 2,461,135 in 2008, and the annual growth rate is 2.5% during the decade. The students of lower secondary school also increased from 265,895 to 626,005, and the annual growth rate is 8.6% during the decade. The students of upper secondary school increased from 61,671 to 222,271, the rate is 12.8% during the decade (*Statistical Yearbook of Cambodia, 2008*). The enrollment of upper secondary school shows the marked rise.

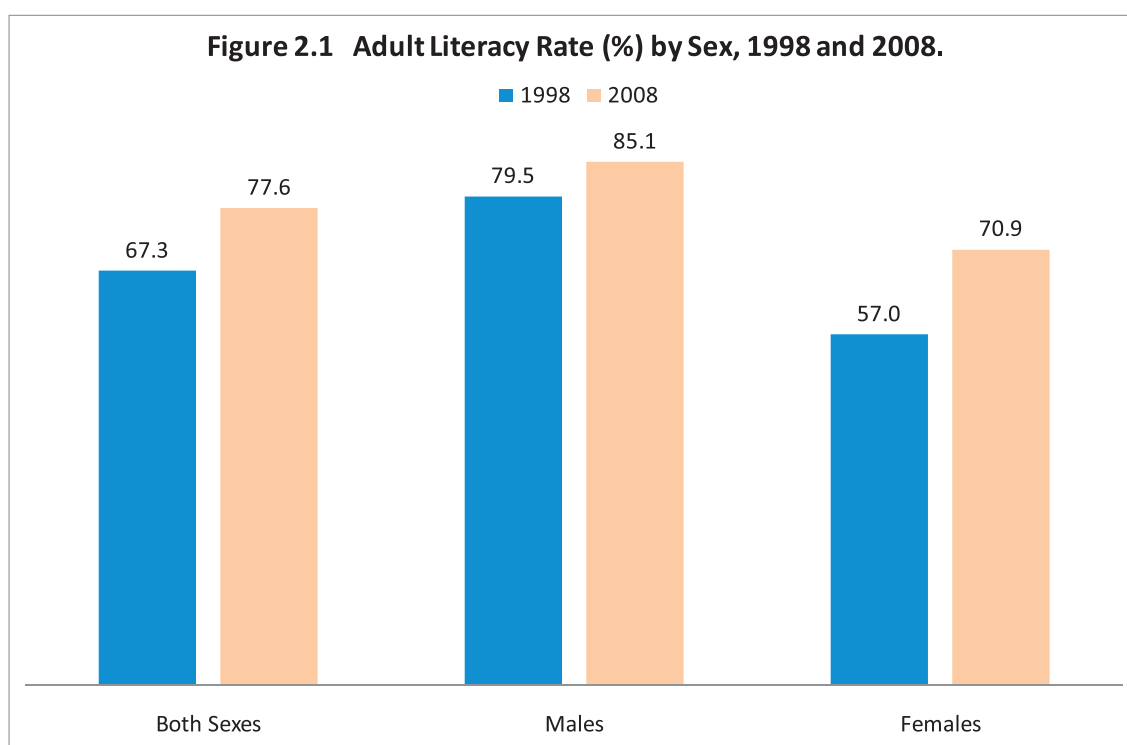
The expansion of basic education has resulted in a substantial rise in literacy level of the population of Cambodia during 1998-2008 as shown in Table 2.1. The general literacy rate, the percentage of total population aged 7 and over in literate population, rose during 1998-2008, particularly the female literacy rate has shown impressive progress. The difference of the general literacy rate between males and females has reduced 16% point in 1998 to 11% point in 2008. Adult literacy rate aged 15 and over has also shown considerable improvement, though the gender gap has been still not small (Figure 2.1).

**Table 2.1 General and Adult Literacy Rates by Sex in Cambodia**

Year	General Literacy Rate (%)			Adult Literacy Rate (%)		
	Both Sexes	Males	Females	Both Sexes	Males	Females
1980	-	-	-	-	74	23
1995	-	-	-	-	80	57
1998	62.8	71.0	55.4	67.3	79.5	57.0
2004	74.4	82.1	67.4	73.6	84.7	64.1
2008	78.4	84.0	73.1	77.6	85.1	70.9

Note: 1. Percentage in literate persons calculated after excluding literacy not reported.  
 2. General literacy rate is the percentage of total population aged 7 and over in literate population aged 7 and over.  
 3. Adult literacy rate is the percentage of total population aged 15 and over in literate population aged 15 and over.

Source: 1. *Literacy and Education, General Population Census of Cambodia 1998, Analysis of Census Results*, Report 7, Table 2.1 in page 6.  
 2. *Cambodia Inter-Censal Population Survey, 2004*.



## 2.2 COMPARISONS IN LITERACY AMONG ASEAN COUNTRIES

Table 2.2 and Figure 2.2 indicate the level of adult literacy in ASEAN countries (Association of South-East Asian Nations). Cambodia has the second lowest adult

literacy rates among ASEAN countries, next to Lao People’s Democratic Republic. The gender gap of the level of literacy in Cambodia is also the greatest among ASEAN countries.

**Table 2.2 Adult Literacy Rate(%) by Sex in ASEAN Countries, Latest Year**

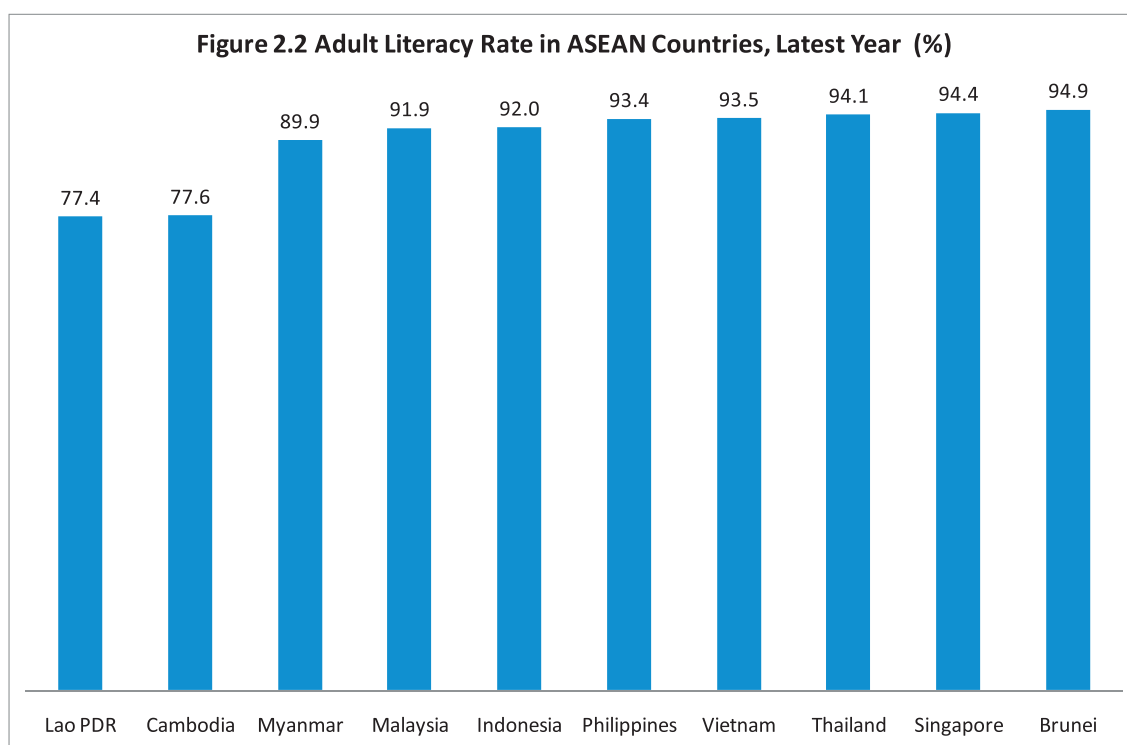
Country	Year	Both Sexes	Males	Females
Cambodia	2008	77.6	85.1	70.9
Brunei	2007	94.9	96.5	93.1
Indonesia	2006	92.0	95.2	88.8
Lao PDR	2005	77.4	82.5	72.7
Malaysia	2007	91.9	94.2	89.6
Myanmar	2004	89.9	95.6	93.2
Singapore	2007	94.4	97.3	91.6
Philippines	2007	93.4	93.1	93.7
Thailand	2007	94.1	95.9	92.6
Vietnam	2007	93.5	96.2	90.7

Note: Data for adult literacy is taken from UNESCO statistics, except Cambodia and Lao-PDR.

Source: 1. UNESCO Institute for Statistics: <http://www.uis.unesco.org/>

2. *General Population census of Cambodia, 2008.*

3. *Results from the Population Census 2005, Lao PDR.*



## 2.3 LITERACY BY URBAN AND RURAL AREAS

### 2.3.1 Main Languages in Literacy by Urban-Rural

Table 2.3 gives the distribution of the literate population by main languages and by urban and rural area. Those who are literate in Khmer language only, account for 92% of total literate population, 78.5% of urban and 96.1% in rural literate population. Those who are literate not only in Khmer but also in English account for 4.9% of total literate population. Urban dwellers have substantially higher percentage than rural dwellers in the literate population in Khmer and English: 14.8% versus 1.8%. Gender differentials in literate population by language are also clear. The sex ratio of literate population in Khmer and English is 154, as compared to that of literate population in Khmer language only (105). This means that more males than females can read and write both for Khmer and English.

**Table 2.3 Literate Population Aged 7 and over by Language and Sex: Urban/Rural, 2008**

Urban/ Rural	Sex	Total Litrate Population Aged 7 and over in any Language	Literate Population Aged 7 and over by Language			
			Khmer Language Only	Khmer and English	Khmer and Other Languages except English	Any Language Other than Khmer
Total	Both Sexes	8,959,383	8,243,244	435,930	194,122	86,087
	Males	4,629,702	4,213,380	264,468	111,939	39,915
	Females	4,329,681	4,029,864	171,462	82,183	46,172
Urban	Both Sexes	2,096,641	1,645,292	310,080	105,586	35,683
	Males	1,035,208	776,774	183,958	57,110	17,366
	Females	1,061,433	868,518	126,122	48,476	18,317
Rural	Both Sexes	6,862,742	6,597,952	125,850	88,536	50,404
	Males	3,594,494	3,436,606	80,510	54,829	22,549
	Females	3,268,248	3,161,346	45,340	33,707	27,855
Total	Both Sexes	100.0	92.0	4.9	2.2	1.0
	Males	100.0	91.0	5.7	2.4	0.9
	Females	100.0	93.1	4.0	1.9	1.1
Urban	Both Sexes	100.0	78.5	14.8	5.0	1.7
	Males	100.0	75.0	17.8	5.5	1.7
	Females	100.0	81.8	11.9	4.6	1.7
Rural	Both Sexes	100.0	96.1	1.8	1.3	0.7
	Males	100.0	95.6	2.2	1.5	0.6
	Females	100.0	96.7	1.4	1.0	0.9
Sex Ratio						
	Total	107	105	154	136	86
	Urban	98	89	146	118	95
	Rural	110	109	178	163	81

Note: Sex ratio is males per 100 females.

### 2.3.2 Literacy by Urban-Rural and Sex

Table 2.4 provides the literate status between urban and rural area by sex. General literacy rate has increased from 75.5% to 90.2% in urban area, 60.3% to 75.3% in rural area during 1998-2008. The literacy in urban area is higher than that in rural area by about 15% point in 2008 as well as in 1998. The literacy rates of females both for urban and rural areas have increased more than the counterparts during 1998-2008. However, a gender gap in the literacy status still exists both for urban and rural areas. The literacy rate of rural women is 69.5%, lower than that for rural men (81.6%) and that for urban women (87.2%). The result may reflect poor condition of educational facilities and gender culture in rural area.

The sex differentials by literacy are also found by sex ratios of literate population as well as that of illiterate population (Table 2.4). The sex ratios of literate population in 2008 are 98 in urban areas and 110 in rural areas. On the other hand sex ratios of illiterate population in 2008 are 46 and 56, in urban and rural areas, respectively. This means that more males than females for literate population in rural areas, and less males than females for illiterate population both for urban and rural areas are observed.

Table 2.4 Population Aged 7 and over by Literacy Status in any Language and Sex: Urban/Rural, 1998 and 2008

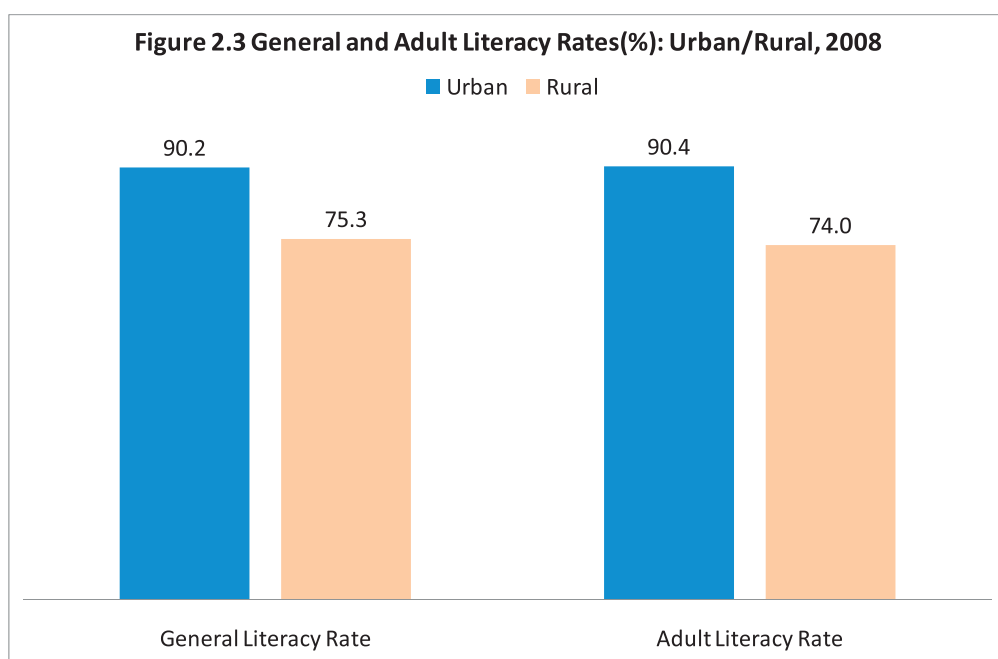
Residence Sex	1998*					2008					Change in Literacy during 1998-2008
	Population Aged 7 and over	Literate Population Aged 7 and over in any Languages	Illiterate Population Aged 7 and over	Literacy Not Reported	Percentage Literate in any Language	Population Aged 7 and over	Literate Population Aged 7 and over in any Languages	Illiterate Population Aged 7 and over	Literacy Not Reported	Percentage Literate in any Language	
<b>Total</b>											
Both Sexes	9,225,621	5,778,369	3,423,129	24,123	62.8	11,435,116	8,959,383	2,475,563	170	78.4	15.6
Males	4,384,569	3,104,889	1,266,606	13,074	71.0	5,512,476	4,629,702	882,686	88	84.0	13.0
Females	4,841,052	2,673,480	2,156,523	11,049	55.4	5,922,640	4,329,681	1,592,877	82	73.1	17.8
<b>Urban</b>											
Both Sexes	1,503,247	1,131,104	367,239	4,904	75.5	2,325,209	2,096,641	228,557	11	90.2	14.7
Males	728,516	595,706	130,020	2,790	82.1	1,107,608	1,035,208	72,394	6	93.5	11.4
Females	774,731	535,398	237,219	2,114	69.3	1,217,601	1,061,433	156,163	5	87.2	17.9
<b>Rural</b>											
Both Sexes	7,722,374	4,647,265	3,055,890	19,219	60.3	9,109,907	6,862,742	2,247,006	159	75.3	15.0
Males	3,656,053	2,509,183	1,136,586	10,284	68.8	4,404,868	3,594,494	810,292	82	81.6	12.8
Females	4,066,321	2,138,082	1,919,304	8,935	52.7	4,705,039	3,268,248	1,436,714	77	69.5	16.8
<b>Sex Ratio</b>											
Cambodia	91	116	59	118	-	93	107	55	107	-	-
Urban	94	111	55	132	-	91	98	46	120	-	-
Rural	90	117	59	115	-	94	110	56	106	-	-

Note: 1. (\*) In the 1998 census, literacy by language in which literate was not ascertained.

2. Percentage in literate persons calculated after excluding literacy not reported.

Adult literacy rates also increased from 79.1% to 90.4% in urban area, and 64.9% to 74.0% in rural area during 1998-2008 (Table 2.5). The literacy status of persons improved remarkably both for urban and rural areas, however the difference of literacy

rates between urban and rural areas is still not small (Figure 2.3). The female literacy also rose both for urban and rural areas as well as males', however the gender difference still exists in urban and rural areas.



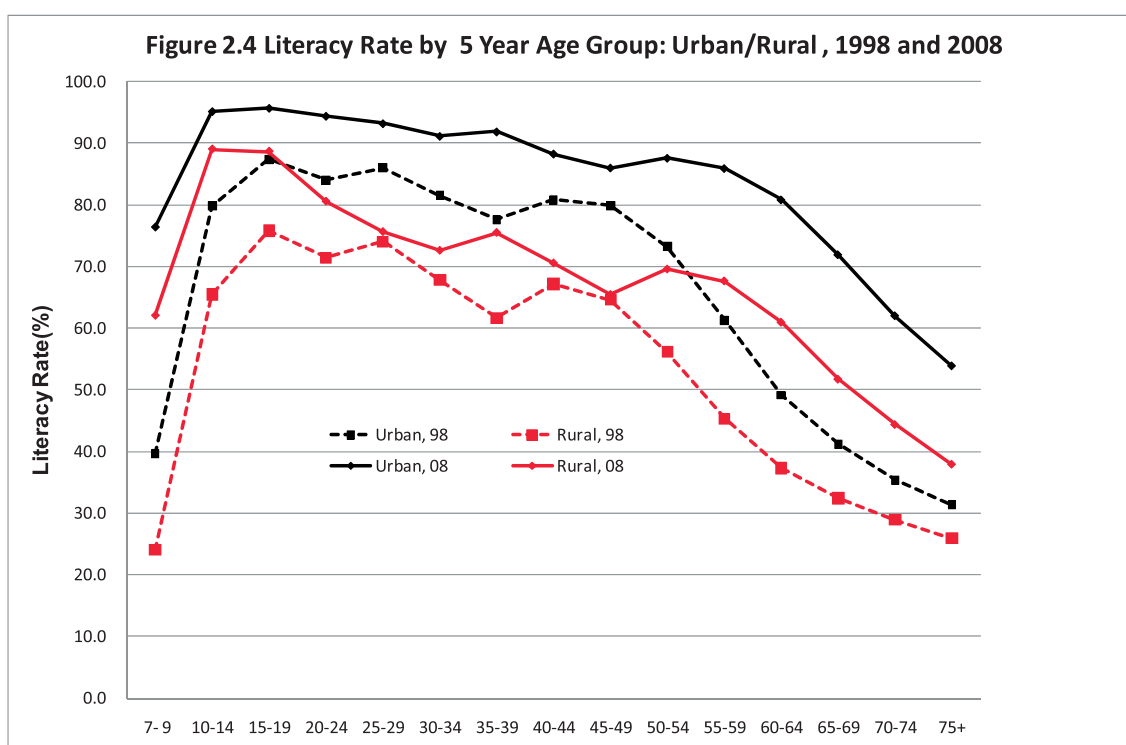
**Table 2.5 Population Aged 15 and over by Literacy Status and Sex: Urban/Rural, 1998 and 2008**

Residence Sex	1998					2008					Change in Literacy during 1998- 2008
	Population Aged 15 and over	Literate Population Aged 15 and over in any Languages	Illiterate Population Aged 15 and over	Literacy Not Reported	Percentage Literate	Population Aged 15 and over	Literate Population Aged 15 and over in any Languages	Illiterate Population Aged 15 and over	Literacy Not Reported	Percentage Literate	
<b>Cambodia</b>											
Both Sexes	6,539,848	4390755	2130004	19089	67.3	8,881,890	6,891,035	1,990,705	150	77.6	10.3
Males	3,009,001	2383479	615280	10242	79.5	4,201,248	3,574,466	626,702	80	85.1	5.6
Females	3,530,847	2007276	1514724	8847	57.0	4,680,642	3,316,569	1,364,003	70	70.9	13.9
<b>Urban</b>											
Both Sexes	1,115,094	878,492	232,382	4,220	79.1	1,949,676	1,762,852	186,813	11	90.4	11.3
Males	530,089	465,692	61,993	2,404	88.3	915,814	865,304	50,504	6	94.5	6.2
Females	585,005	412,800	170,389	1,816	70.8	1,033,862	897,548	136,309	5	86.8	16.0
<b>Rural</b>											
Both Sexes	5,424,754	3,512,263	1,897,622	14,869	64.9	6,932,214	5,128,183	1,803,892	139	74.0	9.1
Males	2,478,912	1,917,787	553,287	7,838	77.6	3,285,434	2,709,162	576,198	74	82.5	4.9
Females	2,945,842	1,594,476	1,344,335	7,031	54.3	3,646,780	2,419,021	1,227,694	65	66.3	12.1
<b>Sex Ratio</b>											
Cambodia	85	119	41	116	-	90	108	46	114	-	-
Urban	91	113	36	132	-	89	96	37	120	-	-
Rural	84	120	41	111	-	90	112	47	114	-	-

Note: Same as Table 2.4.

### 2.3.3 Literacy by Urban-Rural and Age

Urban area indicates higher literacy than rural area at each age group during the decade (Figure 2.4). The literacy rates in urban area rose especially among the child, middle aged and older population. The same tendency was observed in rural area. The difference of literacy rates between urban and rural areas reduced at ages between 7 and 19, however it expanded at ages 20 and over.



### 2.4 LITERACY BY AGE AND SEX

Table 2.6 and Figure 2.5 indicate the literacy rates by sex and age group. It is found that the literacy rates increase at each age groups, particularly in the child, middle-aged and older population remarkably during the period for 1998-2008. The expansion of basic education and adult education activities led to the improvement of literacy.