

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

This report analyzes the 2008 General Population Census data in relation to gender issues in Cambodia. It does not attempt a comprehensive analysis of these issues – the census data on their own are not suited to that purpose – but it does aim to use the data to the fullest extent possible to update, broaden and deepen our understanding of these issues. To begin, some preliminary remarks on the 2008 Population Census and on gender issues in Cambodia are in order.

1.1 The 2008 General Population Census

After the civil war and Cambodia became a democratic country the Royal Government of Cambodia made a commitment to conduct a General Population Census once every 10 years, beginning in 1998, in accordance with UN recommendations and the country's Statistical Law.

The 2008 General Population Census is thus the second in this series. Enumeration was conducted in March 2008 on a *de facto* basis, with a reference date of 3 March (00.00 hours). The 2008 Census covers the whole country.¹ Full details on the methodology and operational procedures used are published elsewhere and will not be repeated here.² The General Population Census in Cambodia includes questions on housing conditions and facilities.

The *National Report on Final Census Results* was published by the National Institute of Statistics in August 2009 (NIS 2009a). The final population count is 13,395,682: 6,519,054 males (48.6 percent) and 6,879,628 females (51.4 percent). A selection of additional basic results, broken down by sex, is given in Table 1.1.

Various consistency checks which have been applied to the data and the Post-Enumeration Survey (NIS 2009b) verify the data are generally of good quality. The PES estimates the net undercount of persons at 2.8 percent (NIS 2009b: 8-9). On selected variables that were rerecorded by the PES the consistency with the original census results was high, suggesting minimal content error, with the partial exception of Secondary Activity (a new variable added to the 2008 census), for which the PES found moderate inconsistency between its own measures and those of the census.

Results from the 2008 Census are frequently compared in the present report with similar results from the 1998 Census. The 2008 Census uses a different definition of “urban area” than was used in 1998. In 1998 places were designated as urban based on administrative criteria applied at the level of province and district. A more refined definition was needed which would apply appropriate criteria to the commune level (or even below the commune). Following an intensive study by NIS during 2002-2004 a new definition of urban was agreed

¹ In 1998 four small areas were excluded from the enumeration for security reasons. The total estimated population of the excluded areas was 45,000 (an estimated 10,000 in Otdar Meanchey province, 2,000 in Banteay Meanchey, 23,000 in Battambang, and 10,000 in Pursat province).

² See NIS (2009a: 5-16).

Table 1.1 Selected basic statistics by sex, Cambodia 2008

	Both sexes	Males	Females
Population			
Population	13,395,682	6,516,054	6,879,628
Percent	100.0	48.6	51.4
Rural population	10,781,655	5,260,484	5,521,171
Percent	100.0	48.8	51.2
Urban population	2,614,027	1,255,570	1,358,457
Percent	100.0	48.0	52.0
Households			
Regular households by sex of head of household	2,817,637	2,096,518	721,119
Percent	100.0	74.4	25.6
Average (regular) household size by sex of household head			
Total	4.7	4.9	3.9
Rural	4.6	4.9	3.8
Urban	4.9	5.1	4.4
Marital status			
Percent of population 15 & over never married	32.7	37.0	28.9
Percent of population 15 & over currently married	60.2	60.8	59.6
Singulate mean age at marriage			
Total	2.4	25.6	23.3
Rural	26.7	24.8	22.5
Urban	23.7	28.0	25.5
Education			
Percent of population 15 & over who are literate			
Total	77.6	85.1	70.9
Rural	74.0	82.5	66.3
Urban	90.4	94.5	86.8
Percent of literate population 25 & over by highest level of educational attainment			
Primary completed or less			
Lower secondary	77.2	71.8	83.1
Higher secondary or higher	18.8	22.7	14.5
Total	4.0	5.5	2.4
	100.0	100.0	100.0
Percent of young people who are attending school or educational institution by age group			
6-14	80.2	80.0	80.4
15-19	51.3	56.5	46.9
20-24	14.4	18.5	10.4
Labour force			
Percent of population 15-64 economically active	80.0	81.6	78.5

and used in the 2008 Census. In the new definition a commune is designated urban if (i) its population density exceeds 200 per square kilometer; (ii) the percentage of male employment in agriculture is below 50 percent; and (iii) the total population of the commune exceeds 2,000 (see NIS 2004 for more details). In the present report, as in all similar NIS publications, whenever the 1998 census data relating to urban areas is used for comparison with 2008 data on urban areas, the 1998 census results are recalculated based on the new definition (NIS 2009a: 7-8).

There were also some changes in the designation and boundaries of administrative areas made during the period 1998-2008, including many which were made law around the time of the Census.³ In the 2008 Census, Cambodia is divided into 23 Provinces and 1 Municipality (Phnom Penh). The provinces are made up of 159 Districts and 26 Krong (cities). Phnom Penh, at this level of administration, has 8 Khans. The 159 Districts in turn are made up of 1417 Communes, and the 26 Krong and 8 Khans are made up of 204 Sangkats. Communes and Sangkats are both divided up into Villages, of which there are a total of 14,073. A total of 29 communes and 133 sangkats are designated urban. All tables in NIS publications showing data from the 2008 census are generated in terms of the new administrative frame; and when making comparisons with the 1998 census the 1998 data have been recoded using the new frame to allow more meaningful comparison.

NIS, in consultation with data users, decided to produce 70 “priority tables.” A list of the headings, together with the NIS identification code, is included in Annex I. Each table includes a number of component tables, giving breakdowns and cross-tabulations of the statistics by administrative area, urban-rural residence, etc., so the total number of tables in the priority list is actually, by one count, 73,151 (NIS 2009a: 12). NIS has made many of these tables available on CD. Unless otherwise stated, the census data included in this report are taken from the 1998 and 2008 priority tables.⁴

1.2 Gender Issues in Cambodia

The present report is one in a series of special reports presenting in-depth analysis of the 2008 census data in relation to specific issues of strategic relevance to the country’s development efforts. The provisional list of issues to be addressed is as follows (NIS 2009a: 12-13):

- Fertility and mortality
- Population growth and change in spatial distribution
- Nuptiality
- Gender and age composition
- Disability
- Migration
- Literacy and educational attainment
- Economic activity and employment
- Commuting
- Housing amenity
- Family and households
- Population projections
- Women in Cambodia
- Urban development.

Some reports in this series have already been published.⁵ The present report addresses the second to last issue in the above list but has been renamed as *Gender in Cambodia 2008*.

What are the key gender issues in Cambodia today? The Ministry of Women’s Affairs identifies 6 priority areas in *Neary Rattanak II*, its Strategic Plan for 2004-2008:

- Economic empowerment of women;
- Enhancing women’s and girls’ education;

³ By Royal Sub-Decree No 18 ANKR BK of 12 January 2008. See NIS (2009a: 8, 271-280).

⁴ In 1998 there were 11,513 priority tables.

⁵ See (i) *Report 1: Fertility and Mortality in Cambodia* (NIS 2010a); (ii) *Report 2: Spatial Distribution and Growth of Population in Cambodia* (NIS 2009c); (iii) *Report 10: Housing and Household Amenities* (NIS 2010b). In addition, (iv) *Report 3: Sex and Age Structure* (NIS 2010c) became available just as work on the present report was completed.

- Legal protection of women and girls;
- Promotion of health of women and girls;
- Promotion of women in decision-making; and
- Gender mainstreaming in national policies and programs (see MOWA 2008: 175).

Neary Rattanak III, the Ministry's Strategic Plan for 2009-2013 for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women employs the same list of priority areas (MOWA 2009).⁶

1.3 Aims and Organization of this Report

Clearly Cambodian census data are not equally relevant to all the gender issues identified by MOWA. If particular issues the Ministry says are important are not discussed in this report it is because analysis of the census data does not add to our understanding of these particular issues. The report's final chapter does, however, attempt to summarize the findings in a way that makes their implications for the MOWA's list of priorities as clear and as explicit as possible.

The present report is organized in the following sequence of chapters:

1. Introduction;
2. Age and Sex;
3. Marriage, Fertility, and Household Structure;
4. Health, Mortality, and Disability;
5. Literacy and Education;
6. Economic Activity;
7. Migration and Urbanization;
8. Conclusions.

In what follows we analyze the census results to describe the relevant *population outcomes*, and discuss the *implications* of these outcomes for attaining gender equality. We also, where we can, identify the underlying *causes and constraints* which produce the observed outcomes, and comment briefly on the kinds of *policy interventions* which could influence these population processes in future so as to produce more favorable gender outcomes.

The main focus in this report is on gender statistics at the national level. Regional- and provincial-level data are introduced to illustrate the amount of variation in some of these statistics, but a systematic analysis at the provincial level is beyond the scope of this report.

⁶ Other informative assessments of gender issues in Cambodia today which have been used in the present report include Gorman (1999) and DevTechSystems (2006).