

## Chapter 8

### CONCLUSIONS

#### 8.1 Demographic Outcomes and Gender Assessment

This report has used the 2008 General Population Census to identify demographic outcomes and trends which are relevant both to understanding how gender relations are changing in the country on the one hand, and to designing policy interventions to improve gender equity on the other. Table 8.1 summarizes some of the key outcomes and the ways they are relevant.

**Table 8.1 Summary gender assessment of key demographic outcomes, Cambodia 2008**

Demographic outcome	Gender assessment
<p><b><i>Declining fertility</i></b></p> <p>The 2008 Census confirms that fertility is declining in Cambodia. The data suggest (using indirect estimation techniques) that TFR is around 3.1 live births per woman for the country as a whole (down from about 5.3 ten years earlier), and about 2.1 (i.e. around replacement level) for urban areas (section 3.4).</p>	<p>On balance the decline in fertility is a positive outcome not only for economic development and population health, but also for women's empowerment: giving women control over their own fertility is empowering in itself, and it gives women more time to pursue other opportunities aside from reproduction and child-rearing (including education and paid employment) if they choose. Further policy analysis is needed to study how low-parity women may be pursuing these opportunities and whether further interventions are needed to overcome any discriminatory barriers. There is significant local variation in fertility behavior and outcomes (section 3.7), which implies a "one-size-fits-all" policy approach is not optimal.</p>
<p><b><i>Sex differences in health and mortality</i></b></p> <p>Using the 2008 Census data for estimating mortality rates (including maternal mortality) has proved problematic (section 4.2). Nonetheless the data do suggest that males have higher mortality than females from many diseases and are more prone to death by accident (section 4.3). Males also suffer from higher rates of disability in movement, while other disability categories are more evenly distributed between the sexes (section 4.4).</p>	<p>The census also presents valuable population-based data on birth attendant and place of death in the case of maternal deaths (section 4.2): these data need to be analyzed in more depth (based on further tabulations undertaken by NIS).</p>
<p><b><i>Declining dependency ratios</i></b></p> <p>The total dependency ratio has declined by 25 percentage points since 1998, due entirely to a decline in the child dependency ratio (section 2.4).</p>	<p>On balance this is a positive outcome from the perspective of gender relations: in a society where informal care for dependents is assigned overwhelmingly to females a decline in the relative number of dependents can facilitate a transformation of gender roles away from the traditional pattern. This outcome is a necessary but not sufficient condition for women to enter the paid workforce or pursue other opportunities outside the household.</p>

Demographic outcome	Gender assessment
	As the population age structure becomes more conducive to rapid economic growth it is important that policies be in place to take advantage of this “demographic dividend” and to ensure that opportunities are afforded equitably for both women and men.
<p><b><i>Sex ratio closer to parity</i></b></p> <p>The sex ratio in 2008 is 94.7, compared to 93.0 in 1998 (section 2.3).</p>	<p>The sex ratio in the recent past was uncommonly low due to the effects of civil war. This probably contributed to the large imbalance, still seen in the 2008 data, between the numbers of males and females over 30 currently not married (section 3.2). The trend towards greater parity in the sex ratio is a positive outcome if it means older unmarried women (especially widows) have equal chances to remarry if they wish and are not barred from this choice by a marriage squeeze.</p>
<p><b><i>Increasing age at marriage</i></b></p> <p>The singulate mean age at marriage in 2008 is 25.6 years for males and 23.3 years for females (section 3.2). The increase since 1998 is 1.4 years for males and 0.8 years for females.</p>	<p>The increase in SMAM is a positive outcome for gender equity since it is associated with more young women free to complete secondary school and a reduction in teenage pregnancies (with their accompanying health risks and opportunity costs).</p>
<p><b><i>Changes in household size and structure</i></b></p> <p>Average household size in 2008 is down to 4.6 persons for rural areas and 4.9 for urban (section 3.5). 25.6 percent of regular households are headed by females, a figure virtually unchanged since the 1998 census.</p>	<p>Changing household size and structure, and how these changes relate to changes in family size and structure, need much more research. Evidence from other studies on the economic and social status of female-headed households is inconclusive and suggests a more detailed analysis distinguishing different subtypes of household structure is needed. The 2008 Census finding that the percent of households that are female-headed is unchanged since 1998 suggests there may be trends for different subtypes pointing in different directions. It is important that the implications of changes in household size, structure, and diversity for gender relations be uncovered in more detail.</p>
<p><b><i>Narrowing gender gap in literacy and educational attainment rates</i></b></p> <p>Literacy rates and levels of educational attainment have increased impressively since 1998 for both sexes and the gender gap has narrowed (sections 5.2 and 5.3). This is mostly a cohort effect, i.e., the result of expanded educational services for the young.</p>	<p>These are obviously positive outcomes from the gender equity point of view. It will take several decades before the impacts reach all age groups in the population. For further advances in gender equity it is important to monitor the impacts for both women and men on their health and social status, and to make sure women are able to convert their educational qualifications into income from employment on an equal footing with men if they</p>

Demographic outcome	Gender assessment
	wish. It is also important that the literacy and educational attainment gaps between rural and urban populations be lessened quickly.
<p><i>Sex differentials in economic activity rates</i></p> <p>Economic activity rates are high for both sexes in rural areas, but they are about 15 percentage points lower for the 15-65 age group in urban areas, and in the latter areas the rate for females is about 12 percentage points lower than for males (section 6.2).</p>	<p>The association of a gender gap in economic activity rates with urbanization needs further study: it could reflect transitional issues associated with a mobile population or it could reflect deeper structural problems which require intervention. Additional research is also needed to clarify whether “economically inactive” often really means in practice “unemployed,” especially in the case of females.</p>
<p><i>Sex differentials in migration</i></p> <p>There are as many female internal migrants as male but females are more likely to report migrating because the family moved and males are more likely to report migrating for work or for marriage (section 7.2). Female migrants are less likely to be employed than males and more likely to be recorded as economically inactive (section 7.3).</p>	<p>These outcomes need more analysis. Economic development requires internal migration (especially to urban areas) and it is important to monitor the situation to ensure new bases of discrimination do not emerge and become entrenched.</p>

## 8.2 Final Remarks

The 2008 General Population Census results are highly informative for the on-going discussion of gender issues in Cambodia. The outcomes listed in Table 8.1 are especially relevant for the first two of the Ministry of Women’s Affairs’ six priority areas, namely economic empowerment of women and enhancing women’s and girls’ education (see section 1.2). The results certainly confirm progress regarding female (and male) education. While there has also undoubtedly been impressive economic development during 1998-2008 as well, the full impact of this on gender roles and gender relations is more complex.

In summarizing how gender inequality operates in countries with high poverty rates Kabeer (1996: 19) wrote that women “are less able than men to translate labour into income, income into choice and choice into personal well-being” (cited in Ministry of Planning 2002: 26). The Census is an invaluable instrument for monitoring progress in overcoming these barriers to gender equity.