

Cambodia Voluntary National Review (VNR) Key Messages

Introduction

Under the motto, “*Nation, Religion, King*”, the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) has over the last 20 years, pursued a progressive development agenda. This period has seen recovery from a protracted conflict and genocide, the rebuilding of infrastructure and human resources, and above all, the rebirth of the spirit of the Khmer people. Carrying this forward and continuing our MDG achievements, Cambodia enthusiastically supports the Sustainable Development Agenda.

Progress to date

Along with other member states, the RGC endorsed the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the UN General Assembly in 2015, working since then to adapt the goals to Cambodia’s context to craft a fully nationalized framework – the Cambodian SDGs (CSDGs).

Cambodia’s highly consultative VNR process began in late 2018, led by the Ministry of Planning. It adopted a *whole of government* approach – drawing in ministries and local administrations; and a *whole of society* approach – fully open to civil society and business actors. The VNR reports on efforts to: adapt and deliver the CSDGs through the establishment of institutions and mechanisms; their integration within the *National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) 2019-2023* and public budgeting; and SDG advocacy and citizen engagement.

The VNR also reviews progress to date of all Cambodian SDGs, with an in-depth review of the six prioritized SDGs (Education, Decent Work and Growth, Reduced Inequalities, Climate Action, Peace and Institutions, and SDG Partnerships). Moreover, these six each figure within the RGC’s strategic planning priorities, as set out in the *Rectangular Strategy IV (RS IV)* and the *NSDP*. RGC recognizes that it is early in the implementation process, that sustained efforts are needed, and has set out concrete delivery proposals on management oversight, monitoring & evaluation (M&E) and resourcing.

Opportunities and challenges

Going forward Cambodia faces both opportunities and challenges. Here, we highlight three major issues.

The first is the resourcing and economic underpinning of the CSDGs. Cambodia’s economy remains buoyant – growth, investment and public revenues are strong, and provides a solid basis. Driving these trends are deeper changes in the economy towards high value-added, and the emergence of a young and dynamic population. Yet, maintaining this path also presents challenges – including how to finance the ambitious CSDG agenda and growing public expectations, alongside declining overseas aid.

Second is the overarching threat posed by climate change, which has implications for many CSDGs. While RGC has sought to both mitigate and adapt to climate change, Cambodia remains highly exposed to the severe weather events and ongoing global warming. This and the need to combat environmental degradation in a rapidly developing country, is a key priority.

Finally, there are several governance dimensions to be addressed. Cambodia has made significant investments in public management reform and systems strengthening. Through various instruments, RGC is building effective tools for oversight and delivery, but it is acknowledged that gaps remain, particularly in relation to data and M&E. Moreover, given that CSDG delivery must be the business of all actors, RGC will seek to reach out to civil society, enterprises, and citizens, to inform, educate and engage meaningfully.

Key messages

RGC re-iterates its support for the SDGs, and its ambition to maintain rapid development by carrying through necessary reforms. The *CSDG Framework* offers a strong starting point – providing baseline, milestones and end line data, and arrangements for delivery at the strategic level. This is coupled with a commitment to the framework’s consolidation and regular updating.

The CSDGs fully reflect Cambodia's longer-term *Visions*, which seeks progression to Upper Middle-Income in 2030 and then High-Income Country in 2050, while *leaving no one behind*, and preserving Cambodia's natural resource endowment. The CSDGs have been fully integrated within planning and policymaking via the *NSDP*, and most innovatively within *Budget Strategic Plans*, where the CSDG targets provide key performance measures.

In closing, the RGC recognizes that much remains to be done if the ambitions of the CSDGs are to be fully realized. In coming years, we will seek to sharpen the focus on implementation, through prioritization of actions, enhancing governance, effective resourcing, and building genuine partnerships.