

The report on the demographic and Socio-economic Situations of Indigenous Peoples: Update 2024



Background

The National Report on the Demographic and Socio-Economic Situation of Indigenous Peoples in Cambodia: Update in 2024 by Ministry of Planning is prepared based on existing data from national census in 2019 for the purpose of providing comprehensive data and information for targeted planning data and information for targeted planning and activities for the protection, conservation and development of indigenous peoples in Cambodia, and for sharing widely the information about indigenous peoples in Cambodia with stakeholders and the general public in order to raising awareness of the traditions, customs and way of life of the indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples in Cambodia are defined by their self-identification of their mother tongues/ethnicity based/langue based.

Based on existing documents, there are, by name, 27 groups of indigenous peoples in Cambodia. However, the National Policy for the Development of Indigenous Peoples records 24 groups, the general population census records 22 groups, the community database records 19 groups. We need further in-dept research and analysis on the actual number, names and others information of indigenous groups in Cambodia.

Based on the census data, the total population of all 22 indigenous peoples was 172,980 (equivalent to 1.11% of the total Cambodian population). The vast majority them (94% of indigenous peoples) living in Ratanak Kiri, Mondul Kiri, Kratie, Preah Vihear, Stung Treng and Kampong Thom provinces. The six major tribes with at least a population of 10,000 are: 1) Bunong with 36,585 people, 2) Tompoun with 36,373 people, 3) Jarai with 26,922 people, 4) Kreung with 21,453 people, 5) Kui with 16,762 people, and 6) Prao with 10,086 people. The six groups have a total population 148,181 people, equivalent to 85.7% of the total indigenous population.

The 2009 National Policy for Indigenous Peoples Development states that Indigenous Peoples originate in 15 provinces of Cambodia. The 2019 data show a total of 167,801 indigenous peoples (equivalent to 97.0% of all indigenous peoples) are living in these 15 provinces and 158,852 (equivalent to 94.7% of indigenous peoples living in these 15 provinces) were born and live in these 15 provinces.

1. Demographic Situation

Indigenous population continues to be young, with the median age of 21 years (compared to the median age of 26 years of the total Cambodian population). However, the age group of the indigenous population is changing following the age trend of the Cambodian population. The indigenous population under the age of 15 decreased from 41.7% in 2008 to 34.8% in 2019, the population aged 15-59 increased from 53.1% to 59.2% for the same period, and the population aged 60 and over slightly increased from 5.5% to 6.0% for the same period; resulting in the decline of age dependency ratio, particularly the young-age dependency ratio. By detailed age group, the 2019 data shows that infants and children under 5 years old accounted for 10.2%, children and adolescents in school age 5-17 years old accounted for 31.6%, young working age 18-35 years old accounted for 32.1%, middle working ages 36-59 years old accounted for 20.2%. The distribution of these age groups varies by indigenous group.

In 2019, there were 37,919 indigenous families, with an average family size of 4.6 persons per family. Indigenous people marry at the age of 24 for men and 20.6 for women, about 2-3 years earlier than Cambodians, both men and women, both in rural and urban areas.

Indigenous women who were married between the ages of 16 and 19 accounted for 49.5% of indigenous women in urban areas and 55.9% of indigenous women in rural areas (the figures were 29.6% among Cambodian women in urban areas and 38.1% among Cambodian women in rural areas). Indigenous men who were married between the ages of 16 and 19 accounted for 21.5% among indigenous men in urban areas and 24.7% among indigenous men in rural areas (the figures were only 9.5% among Cambodian men in urban areas and 14.5% among Cambodian men in rural areas).

2. Socio-economic situation



Education

The education situation of indigenous peoples has improved significantly, as well as the narrowing of the gender gap in education, as compared to the situation in 2013. In 2019, indigenous peoples aged 7 and over who were able to read and write in Khmer accounted for 56.5% (62.5% among men and 50.8% among women), increasing from 34.3% in 2013 (41.9% among men and 27.3% among women). The percentage of children currently enrolled in school increased from 49% in 2013 to 75.4% in 2019 for children aged 6-13 years old and increased from 44% in 2013 to 67% in 2019 for children aged 6- 18 years old. The percentage of children who were not in school at the survey date decreased from 49.4% in 2013 to 22.8% in 2019 for children aged 6-13 years old and decreased from 48% in 2013 to 22.6% in 2019 for children aged 6-18 years old.

However, indigenous children and youth are less educated than Cambodian counterparts and face problems of not attending school, attending the grade lower than their age, and dropping out of school, with the problems being different across different indigenous groups. The majority of indigenous peoples aged 25 and over had only primary education (74.6% in rural areas and 46.8% in urban areas) and lower secondary education (14.5% in rural areas and 23.8% in urban areas). Those who had high school education accounted for 5.4 percent of the rural population and 16.0 percent of the urban population, while those who had vocational training at any level accounted for only 0.2 percent of in rural areas and 0.6% of those in urban areas.



Labor Force and labor participation

Indigenous peoples have a higher labor force participation rate than the total Cambodian population, especially women. In total, 85.2% of the indigenous population aged 15 and over are economically active (87.0% of men and 83.5% of women), with an unemployment rate of only 0.7%. The majority of economically inactive people are students and domestic workers. Indigenous peoples with high labor force participation rate include Kraol, Thmaun, Kui, Stieng, Kreung, Jarai, and Bunong.



However, the vast majority of indigenous peoples are self-employed (44%) or work without pay (49.3%), especially among women aged 15 and over (25% men and 73% women work without pay). In terms of the economic sector, the vast majority of indigenous peoples aged 15 years and over are employed in agriculture (92.2% for both sexes, 90.7% for men and 93.6% for women) and a small number are employed in the industry sector (1.7% for both sexes, 1.9% for men and 1.6% for women) and the service sector (6.1% for both sexes, 7.4% for men and 4.8% for women), with these figures being negligibly different from the 2013 data.



Health and hygiene

According to the Socio-Economic Survey data, 14% of all local ethnic minorities used to have an illness and 0.07% used to have an injury in the 30 days prior to the survey, with boys being more likely to be ill than girls and older men being more likely to be ill than their counterpart women. Illnesses in the last 30 days were influenza (30.1%), dengue fever (14.1%), typhoid fever (9.9%), gastritis (9.3%), rheumatoid arthritis (9.2%) and diarrhea (7.4%). Only 2.8% had respiratory illness, 2% had malaria and 0.7% had cholera. Most children under the age of 5 had the flu (56.6%), dengue fever (15%), diarrhea (11.4%), respiratory illness (6.9%) and cholera (4.8%). While being ill, indigenous peoples generally sought for first consultation and treatment from pharmacies, followed by private clinics, referral hospitals, district referral hospitals and health centers, while for their most recent consultation and treatment they frequently sought for services at provincial hospitals, followed private hospitals, clinics, pharmacies and district referral hospitals.



Disability

Disability data show that 5.3% of indigenous peoples over the age of 5 have some degree of disability (5.7% of women and 4.8% of men), most of whom have visual and hearing impairments.



Hygiene

About 56% of Indigenous households do not have access to a toilet (the figure is more than three times higher than that for Cambodian households with only 17.2%), with 27.8% among urban households and 58% among rural households. For sources of drinking water, 52% of indigenous households use well water (36% in urban areas and 54% in rural areas) and almost 10% has access to piped water (27% in urban areas and 8% in rural areas). Overall, The percentage of indigenous households having access to clean water has increased compared to the figures in the first report.



3. Housing and amenities

The housing occupancy situation did not differ between 2008 and 2019. In 2019, more than 93% of indigenous households owned a home (93% in rural areas and 89.1% in urban areas), 5.8% lived in rent-free residential units (5.9% in rural areas and 4.1% in urban areas) and less than 1% lived in a rented home (0.3% in rural areas and 6.6% in urban areas). Data on lighting sources, energy sources, cooking and household appliances show a significant improvement in the status of indigenous families from 2008 to 2019. Especially for indigenous families living in urban areas.

The main sources of lighting differed significantly between the same period due to the increase in the percentage of using battery (41.6% in 2008 compared to 61% in 2019) and state electricity grid (5% in 2008 compared to 31.3% in 2019) to replace kerosene lamps (66.2% in 2008 compared to only 2% in 2019). The use of battery as lighting is more common in rural households, while the use of state electricity grid is more common in urban households. Firewood continues to be the main source of cooking fuel for ethnic minority households, especially in rural areas, while liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) is the main source of cooking fuel for urban households.

Regarding household amenities, the increase in percentage of households that owned television, mobile phones, motorcycles, cars, or tractors, and the decrease in the percentage of households that had radios or bicycles, indicate a significantly improved situation of the indigenous households in 2019. Indeed, nearly a quarter of households had a television (52.3% in urban areas and 21.1% in rural areas), 78.7% had a mobile phone (85.8% in rural areas and 78.2% in rural areas), 78.5% had a motorcycle (83.5% in urban areas and 78.1% in rural areas), 2.7% had a car (10.7% in urban areas and 2.1% in rural areas), 3.6% had a refrigerator (18.6% in urban areas and 2.5% in rural areas), 2.3% had a computer (10.5% in urban areas and 1.7% in rural areas), and 20.1% had a tractor (6.1% in urban areas and 21.2% in rural areas).

4. Registration of collective community and land ownership

Through constitution in 1993 article 31 and 44, Land Law in 2001 article 23 as well the National Policy for the Development of Indigenous Peoples, self-identification of indigenous peoples as belonging to a certain indigenous group or community in the location where they live and how their self-identification, By November 2024 the Ministry of Rural Development has issued identification certificate to 198 indigenous communities, encompassing 14 indigenous groups in 14 provinces out of 455 community. The Ministry of Interior has also registered a total of 154 indigenous communities as legal entities in villages of 8 provinces. The Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction has also registered collective land for 33 indigenous communities and granted a total of 856 collective land titles for a total area of 33,899 hectares, covering a total of 3,235 families located in four provinces as of December 2020

5. Conclusion

Indigenous peoples are now in a better demographic and socio-economic situation. However, these conditions remain well below those of the Cambodian people in all socio-economic aspects, and indigenous peoples still face many challenges that need to be further considered for in-dept research and analysis on the actual number, names and others information in terms of protection, conservation and conservation for development of indigenous peoples in Cambodia.

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