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Cambodia

SHETRADES OUTLOOK | 2024



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ABOUT THE SHETRADES COMMONWEALTH PROJECT

TIMEFRAME

March
2018

March
2025

OBJECTIVE

To increase economic growth and job creation in Commonwealth countries by enabling the increased participation of women-owned businesses in international trade. The project is funded by the United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and implemented by ITC under the framework of the SheTrades Initiative.

ACTIVITIES

- Provide governments with the tools, information and capacity to implement gender-responsive policies. Also offer a platform for governments to work collectively and share best practices, including through SheTrades Outlook and in-country technical assistance on policy reform.
- Provide direct support to women-owned businesses. Build their competitiveness and their capacity to participate in trade through intensive training, mentoring and coaching.
- Work with business support organizations to improve the service offering for women entrepreneurs.
- Engage private sector partners to adopt business practices that create economic opportunities for women-owned businesses.



INTRODUCTION

SHETRADES OUTLOOK

Creating Trade Opportunities for Women in Cambodia

This policy brief presents an analysis and recommendations for Cambodia to unlock women's participation in trade by improving the policy ecosystem. It is based on the results of the SheTrades Outlook tool in Cambodia, which collected and analysed data from 18 national institutions and five private sector organizations.



WHY DOES WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT MATTER?

Cambodia is a rapidly growing economy, set to achieve high-income economy status by 2050. However, economic growth slowed considerably during the COVID-19 pandemic, exacerbating existing gender gaps as more women than men faced unemployment. Women-led businesses, which tend to be small, have also been the most severely impacted.

To reach its vision for 2050, Cambodia needs to harness women's economic potential. Women can engage in business and trade and contribute to increased output production. Cambodia's booming export sector presents opportunities for women to generate income and earn a livelihood. However, gender-responsive policies and tailored support are key to facilitating women's participation in Cambodia's economic growth.

The [Pentagonal Strategy – Phase 1](#) lays out a plan for the next 25 years to realize Cambodia's long-term economic and development goals. The strategy focuses on human capital development, economic diversification and competitiveness, private sector development and employment creation, sustainability and inclusivity, and development of the digital economy and society. These objectives provide concrete avenues to include women in the economy. Women's active participation in the economy can directly contribute to the goals of inclusivity and sustainability by advancing Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality. Moreover, investing in women's access to skills and resources can help increase output production and diversification into new sectors or markets. Further, supporting women to harness digital technologies can help accelerate competitiveness and innovation. Clearly, women's economic empowerment has the potential to support the cross-cutting objectives of the Pentagonal Strategy and contribute to Cambodia's economic growth.

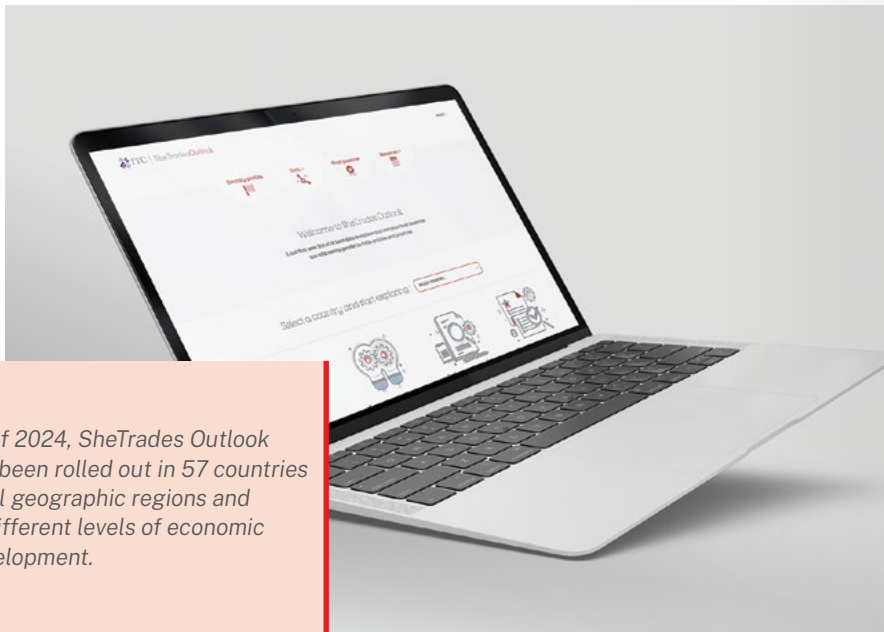
SheTrades Outlook identifies priority areas for improvement and good practices regarding women's economic empowerment in Cambodia. It can therefore provide critical data to help policymakers implement these strategies in a way that benefits women's economic inclusion and accelerates progress towards achieving Cambodia's vision for 2050.

WHAT IS SHETRADES OUTLOOK?

SheTrades Outlook is an innovative, evidence-based policy tool designed by the International Trade Centre (ITC). It identifies policies, laws or programmes that contribute to or prevent women's participation in the economy and in trade. This first-of-its-kind tool is based on 55 indicators. These are grouped under six interlinked pillars—Trade Policy, Business Environment, Legal and Regulatory Framework, Access to Skills, Access to Finance and Work and Society.

SheTrades Outlook is based on data collected by national consultants from 20 national institutions and organizations on average per country. Data are collected through interviews based on semi-structured questionnaires. Examples of institutions surveyed include ministries of trade, education, finance, technology and women's affairs; public procurement authorities; Customs authorities; central banks; national statistics offices; business associations; chambers of commerce; and other trade support institutions.

SheTrades Outlook also uses reliable, publicly available and recently updated databases from the Inter-Parliamentary Union; the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; the United Nations Statistics Division; the World Bank and the World Economic Forum. Additionally, national experts have identified an average of three good practices per country.



As of 2024, SheTrades Outlook has been rolled out in 57 countries in all geographic regions and of different levels of economic development.

SheTrades Outlook – results

For the data collection, 23 organizations – 18 national institutions and five private sector organizations – were interviewed. Institutions were chosen based on their strategic objectives and relevance for the six pillars of the initiative. The institutional survey was conducted in 2023. This policy brief presents the latest available data.

The SheTrades Outlook indicator scores range from zero to one. Cambodia performed the highest in Access to Finance. This was followed by Legal and Regulatory Framework, Business Environment, Access to Skills and Trade Policy. It performed the lowest in Work and Society.

Detailed information on the scores under each pillar is presented below. This includes strengths, bottlenecks and gaps identified in the data.



**FIGURE 1: SHETRADES OUTLOOK
INDICATOR SCORES**

TRADE POLICY



Consultation process	
Initiatives or mechanisms are in place to include women's associations/organizations in consultation processes	
Women's associations/organizations participate in consultation processes	
Trade and gender-related concerns are included in policies and agreements	
Policy or action plan on gender equality and women's empowerment includes trade-related concerns	
Trade agreements or regional economic integration agreements include gender provisions	
Assessment, monitoring and evaluation	
Ex-ante and ex-post gender impact assessments of trade agreements are carried out	
Trade policy uses gender indicators	
Gender-disaggregated data	
Law or regulation mandates the collection of gender-disaggregated data	
Gender-disaggregated data is collected on companies	
Women's participation in strategic roles	
Women are represented in ministerial and parliamentary positions	
Capacity building on gender issues	
Trade Ministry staff receive training on gender issues	
A gender focal point focusing on trade and gender issues has been established	



The Trade Policy pillar focuses on the inclusiveness of trade policies, agreements and practices. It also includes the adoption of gender-responsive practices in trade and trade-related institutions.

Cambodia exhibits medium performance in this pillar. This results from:

- Including women's business associations in consultation processes
- Using gender indicators in projects and programmes
- Mandating the collection of gender-disaggregated data and collecting gender-disaggregated data on companies
- Establishing a trade and gender focal point and conducting training for Ministry of Trade staff on gender issues.

However, there are opportunities for improvements, such as:

- Including trade-related concerns in the new national strategy on gender equality
- Mainstreaming gender in trade policy and agreements
- Undertaking gender impact assessments of trade agreements
- Adopting an internationally recognized definition of a women-owned or women-led business.

WHAT WORKS?

The Ministry of Commerce (MoC) invites the Cambodia Women Entrepreneurs Association (CWEA) to consultation processes. However, it does not actively collect data on the participation of women's business associations in these consultations.

All ministries in Cambodia are required to develop a gender mainstreaming action plan (GMAP) to help integrate gender into their respective policies and programmes. [Cambodia's e-commerce strategy](#) includes a systematic assessment of the digital skills gap, particularly between men and women.

The Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) coordinates the collection of gender statistics. All other government agencies are mandated to collect gender-disaggregated data through the [Sub-Decree on Designated Official Statistics](#).

Gender-disaggregated data are also collected on companies. For instance, Cambodia's economic census collects gender-disaggregated data on company ownership and employment. MoC also collects business registration data on company ownership disaggregated by gender. The Cambodia Data Exchange, an online data exchange platform created by the Ministry of Economy and Finance, compiles data on company ownership, employment and management disaggregated by gender. There is an opportunity for national institutions to collect gender-disaggregated data on exporting firms.

Staff from MoC participated in the World Trade Organization training on trade and gender in 2023. Two female staff from the MoC Department of International Cooperation, also participated in the five-week United Nations Conference on Trade and Development course on linkages between trade and gender.

MoC has a focal point in charge of the gender and youth working group. The gender focal point is also in charge of implementing the GMAP developed by MoC.



WHERE IS MORE PROGRESS NEEDED?

MoWA Cambodia has a national gender policy, the [Neary Ratanak VI \(2023–2028\)](#). It includes a strategy on women’s economic empowerment through digitalization, innovation and inclusiveness. MoWA should consider incorporating trade, entrepreneurship and development issues in the Neary Ratanak VI.

Out of the 23 institutions interviewed, 17 use a definition of women-owned business in their operations. However, the definitions are not uniform. Cambodia should consider adopting an internationally recognized definition of women-led or women-owned business as prescribed by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) [International Workshop Agreement 34: Women’s entrepreneurship – Key definitions and general criteria](#).^{1,2} Using such a standard definition can help national institutions better target beneficiaries of women’s economic empowerment programmes and can help monitor the impacts of these programmes. Lastly, Cambodia could contribute to collecting comparable data on women’s entrepreneurship at the regional and international levels by adopting ISO IWA 34.

In SheTrades Outlook, the levels of gender responsiveness in trade agreements are rated as ‘limited’, ‘evolving’ or ‘advanced’. Cambodia is party to nine free trade agreements. However, none have an evolving or advanced level of gender responsiveness. The government should consider incorporating gender equality issues in trade agreements because trade is a major driver of Cambodia’s economic growth. Ensuring that women and men can benefit from trade agreements can help promote gender equality. Increasingly, countries around the globe have created equitable opportunities for men and women by incorporating gender provisions in trade agreements. Cambodia could follow suit. The ITC policy guide *Mainstreaming Gender in Free Trade Agreements* presents recommendations and model clauses to improve women’s participation in trade through trade agreements.

To improve monitoring and evaluation of the impact of trade policy on women, MoC could conduct gender impact assessments before and after signing a trade agreement. This would ensure that the positive impacts of trade agreements on women are maximized.

1. Women-owned business – a business that is over 50% owned by one or more women, whose management and control lie with one or more women, where a woman is authorized to sign the legal documents and financial accounts of a business, and which is operated independently from businesses that are not owned by women.

2. Women-led business – a business that is at least 25% owned by one or more women, whose management and control lie with one or more women, which has at least one-third of the board of directors comprised of women, where a board exists, where a woman is authorized to sign the legal documents and financial accounts of a business, and which is operated independently from businesses that are neither led nor owned by women.

LEGAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK



<p>Signing, ratification and enforcement of key international conventions</p>	
<p>Country has ratified the CEDAW and CEDAW optional protocol</p>	
<p>Country has ratified and enforced ILO Conventions 100, 111, and 183</p>	
<p>Gender-responsive budgeting approach</p>	
<p>Government uses gender-responsive budgeting approach</p>	
<p>Laws that facilitate access to productive resources</p>	
<p>Law provides women and men with equal rights to property and access to financial services</p>	
<p>Laws that facilitate access to the labour market</p>	
<p>Law mandates non-discrimination in employment based on gender, protection from sexual harassment and equal remuneration for work of equal value</p>	
<p>Paid parental leave policies</p>	
<p>Maternity leave benefit is mandated</p>	
<p>Paternity leave benefit is mandated</p>	
<p>Childcare and education support and facilities</p>	
<p>Parents receive childcare and education support</p>	



This pillar assesses a country's adoption of the laws and regulations protecting and promoting women's rights. It also covers the laws and policies encouraging women's entry into, and continuity and advancement in, labour markets. An example would be laws that support women to combine work with childcare responsibilities. Over 50% of the data for this pillar was sourced from the

World Bank Women, Business and the Law; the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights; and the International Labour Organization (ILO) Information System on International Labour Standards.

Cambodia achieved high performance in this pillar. This is linked to the ratification of international conventions and the establishment of national laws that provide men and women equal rights to inheritance and ownership, as well as access to credit. There are also laws against gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace. The government provides paternity leave and childcare benefits and has adopted a gender-responsive budgeting approach.

WHAT WORKS?

Internationally, Cambodia has demonstrated its commitment to gender equality by ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention's Optional Protocol and ILO Conventions 100 (equal remuneration) and 111 (non-discrimination in employment and occupation).

Domestically, the government has legislated to ensure women and men have equal inheritance and ownership rights. Cambodia also has a law ensuring equal access to credit for men and women and prohibiting discrimination in opening a bank account. Finally, Cambodia has introduced laws prohibiting discrimination in employment based on gender and protecting against sexual harassment in the workplace.

Since 2008, under the Public Financial Management Reform Program: Stage 2, the government has implemented the [gender-responsive budget approach](#) and the GMAP. Gender-responsive budgeting was first piloted in MoWA and from 2010 was adopted by all ministries. Its objective is to increase spending in specific sectors that can provide economic opportunities for women.

The government provides childcare and education support services. According to the Cambodian Labour Law, parents receive a reduction in their salary tax calculations per month per child. Public sector employees receive a monthly allowance per child. The provision of lactation rooms and daycare services is mandated in companies with more than 100 female employees. Also, children in primary and secondary schools benefit from meal programmes in several provinces in Cambodia. Lastly, scholarships are also available for primary and secondary school students from low-income families (classified as ID Poor 1 and ID Poor 2 in Cambodia).

WHERE IS MORE PROGRESS NEEDED?

Cambodia should consider ratifying ILO Convention 183 on maternity protection.

Currently, women receive 90 days (12.8 weeks) of maternity leave with 50% pay. Women who are part of the National Social Security Fund are paid 70% of their wages during maternity leave and US\$200 upon delivery. There is an opportunity to ensure that women have 14 weeks of maternity leave with full pay, in line with ILO Convention 183 on maternity protection. The government should also consider mandating parental leave for fathers.

Lastly, the government could establish laws to provide equal remuneration for men and women for work of equal value.



BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT



Representation of women business associations	
Women's business associations are represented at the national level	
Women-led businesses participate in activities conducted by chambers of commerce	
Business start-ups	
Support services are available when establishing a company	
National institutions implement incubator/accelerator programmes	
Access to trade and customs information	
Help and information desks are available at government offices to assist companies in complying with national regulations and export/import requirements	
Information on changes in customs procedures and trade regulations are announced in a timely manner	
Public procurement	
Information on public procurement process, vendors and transactions are available	
Preferential scheme on public procurement for women-led businesses is implemented	
Reporting and monitoring unfair practices in trade	
Means exist for women and men to report complaints on wrongdoing on trade regulations or procedures	
Trade facilitation and gender-responsive framework in customs	
Single-window electronic interface is available	
Gender-sensitive guidelines by the World Customs Organization or other national monitoring framework is implemented	
Border-level customs agents and officials receive training on gender-sensitive practices	



A business ecosystem conducive to resilient growth is essential throughout the business cycle. This pillar focuses on the inclusiveness of the business ecosystem and covers the industry bodies supporting women's entrepreneurship. It also assesses the ease and cost of establishing and running a business, trading across borders, and accessing information and public procurement markets.

Cambodia has a medium-high score in this pillar. This is due to the existence of women's business associations in Cambodia, the availability of business support services, incubators and accelerator programmes, and the establishment of help desks and grievance redress mechanisms. Information about changes in Customs rules is published online. Cambodia has also fully implemented the single window electronic interface. However, opportunities for improvement exist, such as:

- Publishing information on public tenders
- Collecting gender-disaggregated data on suppliers in public procurement
- Adopting a preferential scheme for women-owned businesses in public procurement
- Adopting gender-sensitive practices in Customs
- Providing training on gender issues to Customs officials.



WHAT WORKS?

The CWEA is a national organization representing women in business. It provides a platform for women in business to raise concerns with the government and the private sector to improve the inclusiveness of the business environment. It also provides networking and business growth opportunities for women entrepreneurs.

Women-led businesses regularly participate in activities organized by the Chamber of Commerce of Cambodia (CCC). The CCC conducts trainings on various topics, including, among others:

- Barcode registration
- Business financial management
- Marketing and sales strategies
- The credit guarantee scheme for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)
- Digital marketing on social media for Cambodia's enterprises
- Competition law and the sub-decree on requirements and procedures for business combinations.

The CCC estimates that almost 30% of participants in all its workshops are women.



Business support services are available when establishing a company in Cambodia. For instance, MoC has a business registration department that provides information through an [online portal on business registration](#). The Ministry of Industry, Sciences, Technology and Innovation (MISTI) launched the [Khmer SME](#) website, which guides SMEs through registering their business and provides relevant information on tax obligations and incentives. The CWEA also provides legal counselling to its members on setting up a business. In 2023, these services benefited 2,000 women entrepreneurs.

Incubator and accelerator programmes are also available for start-ups. The [Techo Start-up Center](#) under the Ministry of Economy and Finance implements several accelerator programmes. For example, the Reverse Innovation accelerator programme is focused on fintech start-ups. The Digital Platform Accelerator supports start-ups to create innovative digital platforms or digital solutions for various market segments. The Digital Platform Accelerator has assisted 52 start-ups so far, of which 35% were women-led. Finally, the Techo Start-up Center runs the Digital SME Accelerator, a 17-week-long programme supporting innovative projects from concept to execution. It has supported 58 start-ups, of which 35% were women-led start-ups.

The National Incubation Center of Cambodia helps start-ups in the digital and information and communications technology (ICT) sectors launch and develop their businesses. Khmer Enterprise also implements 23 start-up incubation programmes in Cambodia. These include [Go4eCAM](#), the DakDam Incubator Programme, ImpactHub Phnom Penh, Bluetribe and Angkor 500. The Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, in collaboration with the Cambodia Academy of Digital Technology, has an accelerator programme for start-ups in the telecom and digital sector.

The General Department of Customs and Excise (GDCE) has a physical help desk providing information on trade statistics, export/import incentives, rulings on tariff classifications and origin of imported goods, authorized operators and pre-arrival processing. It also provides information on Customs valuation and other Customs procedures. Information on trade statistics and Customs regulations can be found [online](#). MoC also has a physical and [online](#) help desk providing information on export procedures, particularly on issuing certificates of origin.

Updated information on Customs procedures and trade regulations is published [online and circulated via Telegram](#). Changes are publicized prior to implementation and the CCC is notified in advance. However, most business associations rely on freight forwarders for updated information on Customs procedures instead of the GDCE website and updates.



Cambodia has fully implemented the [single window electronic interface](#). Four trade and Customs procedures can be completed online:

- Electronic Customs declarations
- Electronic application for and issuance of import and export permits
- E-payment of Customs duties and fees
- Electronic exchange of Customs declarations / certificates of origin / sanitary and phytosanitary certificates between the country and other countries.

The single window is working on allowing the electronic submission of sea/air cargo manifests. A certificate of origin needs to be applied for at MoC.

There are mechanisms to register complaints about wrongdoing in trade regulations and procedures. The GDCE has a Customs appeal box and complaints can also be submitted through the GDCE website and Facebook page. MoC has a service desk where complaints can be recorded. Further, companies can raise concerns with the CCC. The CCC is invited to the yearly Government Private Sector Forum, where it presents input from its members on complaints. In case of urgent complaints, the CCC can raise the issue with the relevant national institution.

WHERE IS MORE PROGRESS NEEDED?

The General Department of Public Procurement (GDPP) publishes information on the application and selection process for public tenders on its [website](#). Information on public tenders is not always available because tenders under a certain threshold value are not published on the GDPP website. Small businesses and women-owned businesses, which tend to be more qualified to bid for smaller contracts, are therefore unable to access them and miss the opportunity to participate in the bidding process. Consequently, the GDPP should consolidate and publish information on all public tenders, big or small, on its website.

The GDPP could create a gender-disaggregated database of registered suppliers and public procurement transactions. This can help map women's participation in government procurement and identify women-led businesses that should be notified regarding smaller public tenders.

The government can promote women's participation in public procurement through inclusive policy and practices and preferential schemes. It should consider raising awareness on gender-responsive public procurement among the GDPP and other procurement entities. The GDPP could explore opportunities to reform current procurement practices and procedures to encourage women's participation in public procurement processes. It should also consider implementing more targeted measures, such as quotas for women-led businesses in procurement opportunities, targets for the share of public procurement opportunities awarded to women-led businesses, and the inclusion of women-owned businesses in the subcontracting plans of awarded public procurement. Adopting gender-responsive public procurement can ensure that women and men can equally submit bids, win tenders and supply to the government. The ITC policy guide [Making Public Procurement Work for Women](#) recommends how to reshape public procurement to improve women's participation in it.

The government should consider collecting gender-disaggregated data on persons reporting trade malpractices. This can help assess women's needs and track how trade policy can be improved to benefit women.

The GDCE has an opportunity to adopt gender-sensitive practices in Customs. It is currently preparing to collaborate with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Australia to learn good practices and eventually adopt the World Customs Organization gender equality organization tool. The GDCE should also consider providing training to border-level Customs agents on gender-sensitive practices.

ACCESS TO SKILLS



Education and literacy	
Law mandates compulsory education	
Gender disaggregated data on adult literacy	
Skills programmes for workers and entrepreneurs	
Enrolment rate in technical and vocational programmes (female/male ratio)	
Skills training programmes for workers are conducted	
Business skills training for MSME owners are conducted	
Training to facilitate access to markets are conducted	
Targeted support and capacity building programmes for women	
National institutions provide targeted support and capacity building programmes for women	
Access to ICT and business innovation support	
Policies and programmes are in place to support women's business innovation	
Access to internet	



Improved access to education is essential to building necessary skills and reducing the inequality of opportunities between men and women. It is also vital to break the vicious cycle of poverty. This pillar focuses on measures designed to enhance women's abilities and business-related skills. One objective is to close the education gap. Another is to equip women with the capacity to compete and succeed in international markets and occupations traditionally dominated by men.

Cambodia's performance in this pillar is medium. This is related to the availability of upskilling programmes for workers and entrepreneurs, training on trade and public procurement processes, and targeted support to women's business associations.

WHAT WORKS?

The Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MoLVT) launched a skills training programme prioritizing students from poor families in 2023. It focuses on 10 sectors: construction, electricity and energy, electronics, manufacturing, mechanics, business and ICT services, refrigerating and heating systems, tourism, and agriculture and agro-processing. Between November 2023 and January 2024, 22,000 students were enrolled in these trainings, with an average of 60% female students. The programme also provides a monthly allowance of approximately US\$50. Similarly, the Ministry of Economy and Finance launched the [Skills Development Fund](#), which co-finances training on upskilling, reskilling and pre-employment in factory enterprises. It focuses on six priority sectors: manufacturing, construction, electronics, tourism, digital and automotive. MISTI and Ministry of Tourism also offer upskilling workshops for workers.

SMEs registered with MISTI receive in-person training on business skills such as:

- Food safety
- Promoting women entrepreneurs in business
- Promotion of digital business
- Strengthening the implementation of patents
- The advantages of business registration under the Cambodia Data Exchange.

In total, 35% of the 2,659 participants in the MISTI training were women. The Go4eCAM project trains SMEs on topics such as management, business plan development, marketing and branding, and e-commerce. The Trade Training and Research Institute (TTRI) provides online and in-person training to SMEs on e-commerce, with 41% female participants.

Training is available to help entrepreneurs and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) navigate trade rules and procedures. For instance, the GDCE provides training to import and export companies on rules and procedures related to Customs, tariff classification, Customs valuation and rules of origin. In 2023, MoC conducted capacity-building workshops on implementing the rules of origin of the upgraded Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)–China Free Trade Area Agreement. Out of 43 participants, 13 were women. The Khmer Enterprise Export Readiness programme and the TTRI also provide training on trade rules and collect gender-disaggregated data on participants. Out of 12 companies in the Export Readiness programme, eight were women-led. Women made up 37% of the participants who attended TTRI training.

The Skills Development Fund, the National Bank of Cambodia (NBC) and Pact Cambodia provide targeted financial literacy training to women entrepreneurs and women’s business associations. MISTI and the Ministry of Youth, Education and Sport also train women on topics such as sewing, carpentry, manufacturing standards and clean production.



WHERE IS MORE PROGRESS NEEDED?

National institutions should consider increasing the enrolment rate of women in technical and vocational education and training programmes. In 2023, the female enrolment rate was 32%, according to estimates from the MoLVT.

There is an opportunity for the GDPP to organize trainings on public procurement processes for businesses. This would ensure that women know the rules and can be better prepared to participate in public procurement.

There are policies and programmes in place to support business innovation. At the national level, MISTI and other ministries have developed road maps to promote business innovation in different sectors. These include the Digital Tech Roadmap, the Tourist Tech Roadmap and the Agri Tech Roadmap, among others. In addition to these road maps, Khmer Enterprise supports digital transformation and enhances the digital environment for start-ups and SMEs in the ICT sector. The Go4eCAM initiative runs an innovation challenge that provides grant funding to SMEs demonstrating innovative ideas and solutions for digital transition, domestic/cross-border e-commerce and contributing to sustainable development.

National institutions can also collect gender-disaggregated data on internet and mobile phone usage.



ACCESS TO FINANCE



Access to financial services	
Digital financial services are available	
There is access to formal financial resources (female/male ratio)	
Financial inclusion strategies and programmes	
Financial inclusion strategy or programme is implemented	
Financial support for women-led businesses and women's business associations	
Women-led businesses receive financial support to participate in trade fairs	
Fiscal and trade finance schemes	
Financial institutions are mandated to report gender-disaggregated data	
Fiscal schemes are available to facilitate entrepreneurial opportunities	
Trade finance schemes are available in the country to facilitate trade	
Financial instruments and other financing opportunities	
Financial instruments are available to support entrepreneurial opportunities	
Venture capital financing opportunities are available to support women entrepreneurs	



This pillar focuses on women's access to formal financial services. It also covers whether governments – alone or in partnership with the private sector – have developed innovative solutions to promote financial inclusion for women. Examples include removing or modifying bank requirements for physical collateral or verifiable cash flow so that women can access finance more easily.

Cambodia has the highest performance in this pillar. This is related to several factors, including:

- The availability of digital financial services
- Implementing a financial inclusion strategy and financial literacy programmes
- Providing financial support to women-led businesses to participate in trade fairs
- Mandating the collection of gender-disaggregated data by financial institutions
- Providing financial schemes targeted at women.

WHAT WORKS?

Digital financial services—including mobile banking, online banking, issuing payments and sending/receiving money internationally – are available in Cambodia.

NBC has adopted the [National Financial Inclusion Strategy 2019–2025](#). The Strategy aims to increase access to quality formal financial services and reduce the financial exclusion of women by half, from 27% to 13%, by 2025. It sets out six priority strategies to achieve this goal:

1. Encourage savings in formal financial institutions
2. Promote innovative credit products for SMEs
3. Enable the expansion of payment system capabilities
4. Improve broader access to insurance
5. Strengthen the capacity of the financial sector regulators
6. Increase consumer empowerment and protection, and financial sector transparency.

There are several financial literacy programmes in the country. In 2018, NBC set a goal to achieve 70% financial literacy for women in the country by 2025. To achieve this, NBC – with support from the Good Return, MoWA and the CWEA – provides training on financial literacy to women. In 2023, a mini-scoping exercise by NBC showed that Cambodia had achieved 68% financial literacy for women. The Ministry of Youth, Education and Sport has also embedded financial literacy training in the curriculum of school students. Classes take place for one hour a week on topics such as expenses, income and saving. The Credit Guarantee Corporation of Cambodia, along with Maybank and Sathapana Bank, implemented a financial literacy programme in Cambodia where 30%–40% of the beneficiaries were women.

Women-led businesses also receive financial support to participate in trade fairs. Under the Go4eCAM programme of MoC, women-owned SMEs received full sponsorship to participate in trade fairs in the Republic of Korea and Mongolia, and payment of booths for a trade fair in Thailand. Under the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications accelerator programme and the Cambodia Academy of Digital Technology, top-performing start-ups receive full sponsorship to participate in roadshows. The Ministry of Tourism organized the ASEAN Tourism Forum, in which businesses were invited to participate for free. Khmer Enterprise also supports businesses to participate in trade fairs, with some incentives targeted at women.

NBC mandates the collection of gender-disaggregated data on bank account ownership, security loans, non-performing loans and product use. With support from the Alliance for Financial Inclusion, NBC is developing a framework to collect gender-disaggregated data on the use of financial products and services.

Financial instruments to support women entrepreneurs are also available in the country. For instance, the Credit Guarantee Corporation of Cambodia has the [Women Entrepreneur Guarantee Scheme](#) in place, which targets women and women-owned businesses. The scheme size is US\$30 million and provides an individual loan guarantee for a maximum of seven years. As of 30 September 2023, 96 women-owned SMEs had benefited from the Scheme to the tune of US\$5.4 million. The SME Bank also implements the [Cambodia Women Entrepreneurs Scheme](#), which provides a special interest rate of 5.5% per annum on loans to women to expand or start a new business.



WHERE IS MORE PROGRESS NEEDED?

Cambodia should consider implementing trade finance schemes to encourage more women to participate in trade. Trade finance schemes can help exporters access the capital necessary to sell their products in international markets. Examples include letters of credit, guarantees and short-and long-term grants.

There is also an opportunity for the government to provide venture capital financing opportunities that target women entrepreneurs.

WORK AND SOCIETY



Woman's opportunities in the labour market



Women are allowed to work in the same industries and perform the same tasks as men



Estimated annual earned income, US\$ PPP (female-male ratio)



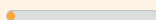
Labour force participation rate (female-male ratio)



Female share of employment in managerial positions (%)



Time spent on unpaid work



Time-use on unpaid domestic chores and care work (male-female ratio)





This pillar addresses the unconscious or conscious gender biases that prevent women from participating equally in the economy. This includes existing patterns of job segregation and the interventions set up by governments to address these biases. Cambodia scored the lowest in this pillar.

WHERE IS MORE PROGRESS NEEDED?

Cambodia has an opportunity to facilitate the participation of women in managerial positions. In 2021, women occupied only 29.2% of managerial positions.

Without a law on equal remuneration of women and men for work of equal value, the gender wage gap persists in Cambodia. In 2021, the female-to-male gender wage gap ratio in Cambodia was 0.695.

Time-use data are not regularly collected in Cambodia. They were collected once in 2004, revealing a gender ratio of 0.1: women spend an average of three hours per day on unpaid work, while men spend 0.3 hours per day. The government should consider undertaking this survey regularly and using gender-disaggregated data to understand the difference between how women and men allocate their time to unpaid care and domestic work.



The way forward

Cambodia aims to become a high-income economy by 2050. It has set out an ambitious strategy to achieve this goal by focusing on cross-cutting priorities of growth, equity, competitiveness and employment. These are all avenues through which women can actively contribute to economic activity and growth.

Based on the SheTrades Outlook results, Cambodia has made progress in promoting women's economic empowerment in several areas, such as access to finance, access to skills and business environment. Particularly, the government provides financial instruments to support women's entrepreneurship and ensures that support services, incubators and help desks exist to encourage more women in business. This outcome directly contributes towards the objective of the Pentagonal Strategy to promote entrepreneurship, create employment and innovate the private sector. Several national institutions also provide skills training programmes for workers and financial literacy training for women. These initiatives support the Pentagonal Strategy's objective to improve the technical skills of workers and make the Cambodian financial environment more inclusive.

However, the results also point to areas where more progress can be made, particularly in the trade policy pillar. Policymakers could mainstream gender in trade agreements and conduct ex-ante and ex-post gender impact assessments of trade agreements. This can help ensure that women are able to benefit from the growing export sector and the opportunities presented by such treaties.

Women's participation in business and trade can play a key role in achieving Cambodia's goals of Vision 2050. Based on the SheTrades Outlook results, the following recommendations can help women become a large contributor to Cambodia's economic growth through trade and business.



01

THE WAY FORWARD: MAINSTREAMING GENDER INTO TRADE POLICY

Cambodia has an opportunity to use trade policy as an instrument to promote gender equality and women's economic empowerment. Specifically, the government could:

- Incorporate gender equality in trade agreements
- Raise awareness on the importance of carrying out gender impact assessments of trade agreements, and build government capacity to conduct such assessments
- Adopt the internationally recognized definition of a women-owned business specified in ISO International Workshop Agreement 34: Women's entrepreneurship – Key definitions and general criteria
- Raise national institutions' awareness about the standard definition of women's entrepreneurship and the importance of using the definitions in the implementation of projects, programmes and other initiatives on women's economic empowerment
- Providing training on gender issues to Customs officials.

02

THE WAY FORWARD: INCLUSIVE FRAMEWORKS

It is important to ensure that policies, schemes and practices related to business and trade benefit both women and men. To do this, the government can:

- Incorporate trade issues in the national strategy document on gender equality and women's economic (Neary Ratanak VI)
- Consolidate and publish information on public procurement processes on the GDPP website
- Consider publishing information on smaller tenders and notifying women-led SMEs regarding relevant opportunities
- Raise awareness on gender-responsive public procurement and the different options and steps to reform the public procurement system to promote greater participation of women in the procurement market.

03

THE WAY FORWARD: MONITORING MECHANISMS

To support the monitoring and evaluation of existing gender-responsive initiatives, the government can:

- Regularly collect gender-disaggregated national statistics on time use
- Collect gender-disaggregated data on:
 - exporting firms
 - complainants of trade malpractices
 - vendors in public procurement
 - internet and mobile phone usage.

04

THE WAY FORWARD: TARGETED INITIATIVES

Initiatives targeting women are crucial to ensure that they benefit from access to skills and finance initiatives. Specifically, national institutions can:

- Offer incentives to women to participate in trainings and technical and vocational education and training programmes
- Provide venture capital financing opportunities, especially to women-led start-ups
- Provide trade finance schemes to encourage women's participation in trade.

GOOD PRACTICE: STRENGTHENING LOCAL BUSINESS SERVICE CENTRES TO SUPPORT WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

The SME Bank implements the Cambodia Women Entrepreneurs Scheme. The goal of the Scheme is to provide women entrepreneurs with favourable conditions and affordable loans to start new businesses or grow their businesses.

It provides special interest rates of 5.5% p.a. for working capital and capital expenditure to businesses owned by women. It also encourages businesses to register, giving them priority to apply for loans. The SME Bank has a set of priority sectors, including food processing; manufacturing of certain goods, such as consumer goods and spare parts; waste recycling; and those serving the tourism sector. Women-led SMEs operating in these sectors are given preference.

The SME Bank implemented a loan disbursement plan of \$50 million in 2022. In 2023, this amount was increased to \$100 million, and women entrepreneurs borrowing from the bank in 2023 increased by 30%.

Source: [SME Bank](#)

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

More information about this policy brief and the SheTrades Outlook project can be found at: <https://outlook.shetrades.com/home>.

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Contribution to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals:



#SheTrades

HER SUCCESS. OUR FUTURE.

The International Trade Centre's (ITC) SheTrades Initiative is a global platform that empowers women to engage in business, creating value for both them and their communities. The Initiative ensures that the right capacities and conditions are present to foster inclusive and sustainable trade.

SheTrades delivers activities and training that improve women traders' ability to do business successfully. At the same time, the Initiative works to remove inequalities that hinder women's participation in trade and foster a better trade environment for all.



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