

SOCIAL HEALTH PROTECTION PROGRAMME

Challenges

Cambodia has one of the lowest life expectancies in the Asia-Pacific region. Thirty years of civil conflict left behind over 10 million land mines, disrupted health systems, and resulted in a high prevalence of disabilities. While Cambodia's economy and infrastructure have undergone significant development since the return to democracy more than 20 years ago, health and social protection systems need further reforms to close equity gaps. Many Cambodians continue to suffer from chronic malnutrition and there is a high prevalence of infectious and non-communicable diseases. Maternal and infant mortality rates have improved, but remain high. The health system is in urgent need of qualified and accountable personnel, as well as comprehensive standards for public and private facilities, in order to deliver good quality health services. Public health facilities are often understaffed as staff work simultaneously in private practices. Many Cambodians choose private providers due to the perceived higher quality of services. However, as the private sector is unregulated and there is no functioning accreditation system, the quality of both public and private health facilities is not ensured.

The majority of Cambodians live below or just above the poverty line. For these poor and 'near poor,' the direct and indirect costs of accessing health services are both a major cause of impoverishment and an obstacle to seeking health care. Households face high out-of-pocket payments at both public and private facilities: In 2013, the average annual out-of-pocket health expenditure was USD 231 per household; out-of-pocket health expenditure for households whose members include older people or individuals with disabilities was substantially higher. Recognising these challenges, the Royal Government of Cambodia strives to establish a Universal Health Coverage (UHC) to ensure that all citizens can access health services without the risk of catastrophic health expenditure. While a social health protection scheme has started for those employed in the formal sector, civil servants and people living below the poverty line, there is not yet an overarching social protection scheme which covers the whole population.

Project name	Social Health Protection Programme (SHPP)
Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Project region	Cambodia
Lead executing agency	Ministry of Health

Citizen participation in planning processes not only ensures that health services meet people's needs, but also contributes to greater social accountability. In Cambodia, health system governance is transitioning from a centralised to a decentralised system, with decision-making power increasingly vested in subnational authorities. At present, however, citizens have only limited avenues to voice their concerns in health planning processes and to provide feedback on health services. This is particularly critical for vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities and older individuals, who face numerous barriers in the Cambodian health system, including high direct and indirect costs, discrimination by health workers, physically inaccessible health facilities, and a lack of health information.

Our Approach

For more than two decades Germany's Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) has been supporting the Royal Government of Cambodia in its efforts to reform and strengthen the country's health system. Through the Cambodian-German Social Health Protection Programme (SHPP), the German Development Cooperation supports technical and financial cooperation measures aimed at improving the access of poor and vulnerable Cambodians to good quality and affordable health care services. The programme provides strategic advice to the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Economics and Finance on the introduction and expansion of various social protection mechanisms, supports the implementation of social health protection schemes, and strengthens the quality of local health services, including those targeting women and children. It supports health authorities,



Photo left: Nurse providing health information to a patient

Photo right: Promotion of a charter on clients' rights and providers' rights and duties



Training of midwives

Collection of funds for transport and food allowances to facilitate access to health services for the poor

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health training centres, hospitals and health centres in rural areas, and works closely with non-governmental and community-based organisations to strengthen their capacities.

Ensuring Social Health Protection for the Poor

SHPP supports the extension of social health protection coverage to all Cambodians, including to the large population of 'near poor' and to vulnerable households. Social health protection schemes like the Health Equity Fund (HEF) and subsidised voluntary health insurances for the 'near poor,' as well as targeted mechanisms (e.g. vouchers) for specific underutilised essential services; all contribute to improving access to health services and reducing financial barriers. Together with other development partners, German Development Cooperation provides financial support to the HEF, a third-party payment scheme which covers transportation expenses and health facility user fees for members of households identified as poor. SHPP also supports voluntary health insurance schemes in which the 'near poor', as well as vulnerable households, can buy into subsidised schemes for a reasonable annual contribution. More than 255,000 people are covered by social health protection schemes supported by SHPP in Kampong Thom, Kampot and Kep, the programme's target provinces. In addition to its focus on health financing policies and frameworks, the programme also works to improve the quality of health services by supporting the introduction of clinical standards, raising the skills and qualifications of health workers, and working towards the establishment of a health care accreditation system.

Improve Quality of Maternal & Child Health Services

The Rights-Based Family Planning and Maternal Health Project aims to improve the quality of maternal and neonatal emergency care and to build health providers' qualifications in Emergency Obstetric and

Newborn Care (EmONC). The project, which is active in Kampong Speu, Kampong Thom, Kampot and Kep provinces, provides technical support to implement national treatment guidelines and standards at facility level, including through a coaching scheme involving nurses, midwives and doctors. It also advises provincial and district health authorities on monitoring, supervision and strategic planning.

Another area of focus is the introduction of new competencies and tools to adapt health services to the needs of people with disabilities. The project has developed screening tools to aid early identification of developmental delays and impairments in children and to facilitate timely referral to services. These tools are currently being validated and integrated into national guidelines.

Making the Health System More Responsive to the Needs of Vulnerable Groups

SHPP promotes the inclusion of disabled individuals and older people in all aspects of the health system. It advises the Ministry of Health in its efforts to improve the quality of health services, the physical accessibility of health facilities and social health protection for people with disabilities and older people. The programme closely collaborates with self-representative organisations of individuals with disabilities and other civil society organisations, and facilitates trainings in basic health, disability awareness and patient rights. It promotes the participation of people with disabilities in health planning processes, so that they can raise their concerns and access the health care they need. Client satisfaction surveys measure the extent to which the expectations and needs of citizens – including the most vulnerable among them – have been addressed by health facilities and health managers.

Published by Deutsche Gesellschaft für
Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

Registered offices Bonn and Eschborn, Germany

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Printed by GIZ Cambodia
As at September 2016

GIZ is responsible for the content of this publication.

In cooperation with



Embassy
of the Federal Republic of Germany
Phnom Penh

On behalf of

Federal Ministry for Economic
Cooperation and Development (BMZ)

Division

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