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# SNAPSHOT

OF CIVIL REGISTRATION AND VITAL STATISTICS SYSTEMS OF

# CAMBODIA



## Program information

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Housed at the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the Centre of Excellence for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) Systems is a global knowledge and resource hub that actively supports national efforts to develop, strengthen, and scale-up CRVS systems. It collaborates with organizations and experts to broker access to information and expertise, including global standards, tools, research evidence, and relevant good practice.

The Centre of Excellence was established with funding from Global Affairs Canada and IDRC and contributes directly to the work of the Global Financing Facility, a key financing platform of the UN Secretary General's Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health.

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## Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide a brief introduction to the civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) system in the Kingdom of Cambodia.

The information is based on a desk review of publicly available documents on CRVS in Cambodia. Among other things, this report presents:

- Background information on the country;
- Selected indicators relevant to CRVS improvement;
- Stakeholders' activities; and
- Resources available and needed to strengthen CRVS systems.

## Brief country profile

The Kingdom of Cambodia is located in the southern portion of the Indochina peninsula in Southeast Asia. It borders Thailand to the northwest, Laos to the northeast, Vietnam to the east, and the Gulf of Thailand to the southwest.

### Cambodia



*Disclaimer: The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.*

- Land area: 181,035 km<sup>2</sup>
- Population: 16,486,542
- Capital city: Phnom Penh
- Official language: Khmer
- Ministry responsible for civil registration: Ministry of Interior
- Civil registration agency: General Department of Identification
- National statistical office: National Institute of Statistics



## CRVS dimensions

Births	
Completeness of birth registration	90% (2018) <sup>1</sup>
Children under 5 years of age whose births were reported as registered	73% (2014) <sup>2</sup>
Births attended by skilled health personnel	89% (2014) <sup>3</sup>
Women aged 15–49 who received antenatal care from a skilled provider	75.6% (2014) <sup>4</sup>
DPT1 immunization coverage among 1-year-olds	92% (2018) <sup>5</sup>
Crude birth rate (per 1,000 population)	22 (2018) <sup>6</sup>
Total fertility rate (live births per woman)	2.5 (2018) <sup>7</sup>
Adolescent fertility rate (per 1,000 girls aged 15–19 years)	51 (2018) <sup>8</sup>
Population under age 15 years	31% (2012) <sup>9</sup>
Deaths	
Completeness of death registration	46.9% (2017) <sup>10</sup>
Crude death rate (per 1,000 population)	6 (2018) <sup>11</sup>
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	24 (2018) <sup>12</sup>
Under 5 mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	28 (2018) <sup>13</sup>
Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births)	160 (2017) <sup>14</sup>
Marriages and divorces	
Marriage registration rate	Not available
Women aged 20–24 first married or in union before age 15	2% (2014) <sup>15</sup>
Women aged 20–24 first married or in union before age 18	19% (2014) <sup>16</sup>
Divorce registration rate	Not available
Vital statistics, including causes-of-death data	
Compilation and dissemination of civil registration-based statistics	Not available
Medically certified causes-of-death data	Available

## Civil registration system

### Legislative framework

Civil registration in Cambodia started in the 1920s during French colonial rule and was mainly limited to urban areas. Registration records were completely destroyed under the Pol Pot regime (1975–1979), and until 2002 there was no standardized legislation on civil registration.

The registration process in Cambodia started in 2002, but until 2004, only 300,000 people (less than 5 percent of the total population) were registered. The Ministry of Interior's nationwide mobile civil registration campaign in 2004 resulted in a birth registration rate of over 90 percent, representing 11 million people, by December 2006. The legislative framework was updated to reflect the need to rebuild civil registration records and ensure operation of civil registration. The main laws that govern the civil registration process are:

- *Law on Marriage and Family* (1989);
- *Law on Nationality* (1996);
- Sub-decree No. 103 on Civil Registration (2000); and
- *Civil Code* (2007).

Cambodia is also drafting a *Law on Civil Registration, Vital Statistics and Identification* (CRVSID Law); it will feature a chapter on vital statistics. While the drafting and consultations are still underway, authorities anticipate that the law could be adopted by the end of 2020. At the same time, the Ministry of Planning is reviewing the *Statistics Law of 2015*.

### Management, organization, and operations

Civil registration is the responsibility of the General Department of Identification (GDI) of the Ministry of Interior.

These are the other ministries and agencies responsible for notifying and registering vital events:

- Department of Civil Registration;
- Department of Population Statistics;
- Department of Khmer ID Card;
- Department of Passports;
- Department of Nationality;
- Department of Administration; and
- Department of Information Management Systems.

### *National CRVS systems coordination mechanisms*

The National Steering Committee for CRVS and Identification was set up in February 2017; it is chaired by the Minister of Interior. Its main responsibility is to facilitate the implementation of the National Strategic Plan for Identification 2017–2026. The committee meets every six months and brings together eight different ministries, including the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Planning, Ministry of Justice, and GDI. At the *sangkat* or commune level, there is also the Commune Committee for Women and Children. This committee, which consists of various local stakeholders that are active in CRVS, announces new births and reports on other issues at monthly commune meetings with local leaders.



### *Administrative-level registration centres*

Cambodia's 1,646 commune (*sangkat*) offices act as registration points. Commune chiefs serve as local registrars and operate in line with the CRVS legislative and administrative frameworks.

In addition to the regular CRVS process, a few other mechanisms collect similar information. These information collection systems operate relatively independently.

- The commune police maintain a family book that records the names of each member of a particular family, the number of people under 18 years of age, the number of new births, and the number of migrants. The police send this information to the commune council and up to the district level each month.
- Communes also have lodging books that record the births, deaths, and names of everyone living in a particular household (whether or not they are related).

In June 2005, the GDI estimated that family books covered 88 percent of the population, while lodging books covered 91 percent.

### *Accessibility of civil registration services*

No information available.

### *Registration of vital events*

Birth, marriage, and death certificates are generally issued within three days of registration.

#### **Birth registration**

Sub-decree No. 103 mandates that **birth registration** must be done within 30 days following the birth. This registration business process is entirely paper based.

- Parents, a witness, or a person concerned can register the birth of a child at the commune office for their permanent residence. If the child is born in the hospital, they must supply the notification of birth form issued by the hospital. If the child is not born in the hospital, parents need to obtain and submit a letter certified by the commune chief recognizing the child's birth. In cases of delayed birth registration, the father, mother, or guardian must approach the provincial/municipal court concerned for a judgement and then present the judgement to the commune registrar for their residence to register the birth.
- After ensuring that all required documentary evidence has been provided, the registrar enters the information into twin (identical) civil status books. The commune chief issues, signs, and stamps the birth certificate.
- Two books are maintained. A new set of twin books is started on January 1 and closed on December 31 each year. One book is sent to the district office along with the annual report of births, marriages, and deaths. The second book is sent to the provincial office, which forwards it to the GDI. At the GDI, the data are digitized and entered into the central civil register database. Both books provide the basis for issuing copies of registration certificates.

#### **Death registration**

The **death registration** process works essentially the same way as the process for births, but hospitals issue death notification forms less often than birth notification forms.

- A death should be registered by relatives, a witness, or a person concerned within 15 days of the death. As with births, deaths must be registered in the commune for the deceased person's permanent residence.

### Marriage registration

For **marriage registration**, men and women who wish to get married apply to the commune registrar for the woman's residence for permission to marry.

- The registrar examines the application to make sure it meets the conditions of the *Law on Marriage and Family*. The registrar announces the scheduled marriage ceremony publicly by posting one copy at the woman's house and one at the commune office where the woman lives.
- Two more copies are sent to the commune registrar where the man resides. One copy is posted at the man's house and other at the commune office.
- If there is no objection, the marriage ceremony may be held after 10 days have passed. Marriages are registered in the Marriage Book.

### *Backlog of unregistered births*

No information available.

### *Sample registration forms*

Sample birth certificate form: [migra-info.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/191/2019/03/Birth-certificate.jpg](http://migra-info.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/191/2019/03/Birth-certificate.jpg)

### *Registration fee*

Under a new guideline issued in 2017, all civil registration is free of charge.

## Vital statistics system

### Vital statistics

The national statistical system covers all official statistics and statistical units in ministries and government institutions. As well as the National Institute of Statistics, 27 ministries, government institutions, and the National Bank of Cambodia collect and produce statistics.

The GDI collects and processes statistical data on the population and produces selected data on vital statistics based on registration data. Information on the number of registrations of births, deaths, marriages, and foreigners, disaggregated by province, district, and commune levels, is available. The data can be disaggregated by sex but not age. Vital statistics reports are not produced.

### Causes of death

Deaths occurring in health facilities are issued a medical cause-of-death certificate, but it does not meet international standards and is not issued systematically. Health practitioners routinely enter cause of death in their facility's ward register book. This book is used for coding the cause of death, though not according to the ICD-10 system. This coded information is aggregated in a monthly report and entered into the online Health Management Information System, which is used in more than 1,000 public health facilities.

Health facilities are not obliged to report vital events to the GDI; few private facilities report data to the GDI or the Ministry of Health. Verbal autopsy is not yet in place. Instead, local registrars fill out this information based on the reports of relatives. For suspicious deaths, a doctor will do an autopsy and record the cause of death.



In 2017, the Ministry of Health, with support from the World Health Organization, started using a simplified version of ICD-10 to record deaths and causes of death. Two national hospitals and eight provincial hospitals were included in the pilot program.

**Table 1. Information collected on causes of death.**

Cause-of-death information	Information collected	
	Yes	No
For deaths occurring in health facilities	X	
For natural deaths occurring in the communities	X	
For non-natural deaths occurring in the communities	X	

## Digitization

### Computerization

CRVS systems are mainly paper based. Since the National Strategic Plan for Identification was adopted in 2017, CRVS business processes are gradually becoming digitized. Once the transition is complete, the CRVS system should be better integrated with the digitized system for issuing national ID cards. Registration data will be part of the Integrated Population Identification System (IPIS).

The digitized civil registration process is built around web-based applications that can be run from authorized computers at registration offices. The Centre for Civil Registration Data Management recently introduced a cloud-based database, with data stored on Amazon cloud servers. Access from individual workstations is restricted by username and password; data is encrypted

before transmission. Digitization has resulted in improved client satisfaction, shorter wait times, faster delivery of certificates, and a more modern and secure system. This system will help to prevent duplication, ensure real-time access, improve client searches, enable certificate printing, and facilitate the retrieval, compilation, and reporting of data.

### *Online registration services at health facilities*

Most services are paper based, but work is underway to digitize them. The civil registration web-based application has been upgraded so it can link to the patient medical registration system that the Ministry of Health runs and automatically collect medical data on a medical notification.

### *Mobile technology application*

Mobile technologies are not used for civil registration processes.

### *Unique identification number*

Cambodia is transitioning from the Khmer ID to the proposed IPIS. By 2019, each individual was to be assigned a personal Khmer Identification Code (KIDC) at the time of birth registration and will use this code for life. This number is made up of 10 digits, including one reserved digit, eight random digits, and one check-sum digit based on a Modulus 11 algorithm. The reserved digit is used to distinguish temporary stay and working foreigners from citizens of Cambodia.

### Population register

The IPIS will ensure reliable nationwide information on the population as well as unique identification for every person of Cambodia. Data in the system that is modelled around the idea of a national population register in use in many countries around the world is to be constantly updated (preferably in real time) from other systems.

Existing and emerging computerized systems are yet to be integrated into a unified IPIS. These computerized systems include:

- Civil Registration and Vital Statistics System;
- Khmer ID Card Management System;
- Passport Management System;
- Residential Management System; and
- Nationality System.

The conceptual design of the IPIS integrates all systems involved in the continuous recording of information pertaining to each member of the resident population of a country, making it possible to determine up-to-date information about the size and characteristics of the population at selected points in time. The CRVS acts as the initial registration point, where a new record for an individual is created in the IPIS and a new Khmer Identification Code (KIDC) is generated and assigned to it.

### ***Digitization of historical civil registration records***

The GDI has begun transferring paper-based archives into a digital format. As of 2017, the Centre for Civil Registration Data Management had digitized around 6 million out of 16 million records.

### ***Link with identification system***

Cambodia has seen several phases of evolution in its ID systems. Civil registration existed in the country historically, but all records were destroyed under the Khmer Rouge between 1975 and 1979. After a phase of rebuilding in the early 1990s, Cambodia developed a foundational ID system called the Khmer ID. The Khmer ID is considered the most extensive and accurate source of information related to identification in Cambodia. People in Cambodia who reach the legal age of 15 are eligible for the Khmer ID card.

The existing Khmer ID is assessed as being at an intermediate stage and built around a strong biometric-based deduplication process and a chip-based smart card. The government has made birth certificates mandatory for the issuance of the Khmer ID. Birth certificates provided in the enrolment process are uploaded to the Khmer ID system, but these are not indexed. Hence, it is not possible to search for entries using a birth registration number.

The Khmer ID system will be upgraded with additional safeguards after it is integrated with the IPIS and the CRVS system. This will allow civil registration and ID records to be linked using the KIDC as the unique identifier.

### **Interface with other sectors and operations**

Once the IPIS is up and running, different institutions will be able to share and update information on individuals. Until then, civil registration records are used for legal purposes to prove nationality and other rights linked to citizens and family law. A birth certificate is mandatory proof of identity for the Khmer ID. This ID gives access to other government and private sector services.

## Improvement initiatives and external support

### Improvement plan and budget

Cambodia has started to implement the National Strategic Plan for Identification. It was developed with national ministries, civil society, the private sector, development partners, and the community at large to “guide acceleration of government efforts to increase the birth registration rate and identification in Cambodia.” The plan is composed of five overarching strategic goals, each with their own interim targets:

- Develop the legal environment for personal identification;
- Establish a universal and responsive CRVS system;
- Establish an Integrated Population Identification System;
- Launch a unified data distribution system; and
- Introduce e-services.

CRVS is mentioned in Cambodia’s National Strategic Development Plan 2014–2018. In the chapter on Key Priority Policies and Actions, the report notes the need to “support strengthening of civil registration and vital statistics systems that record vital events such as births, deaths and causes of death.” CRVS is also mentioned in Cambodia’s National Population Policy 2016–2030, where the role of the Ministry of Interior is “to improve the Civil Registration System and to build relationships with other line ministries such as Ministry of Health and Ministry of Planning.”

### *Budgetary allocations and requirements*

The Government of Cambodia is expected to cover the costs to implement the National Strategic Plan for Identification. Some estimates that the government has shared publicly show that the cost to implement the IPIS will be around US\$50 million.<sup>17</sup>

### *Activities identified as high priorities*

Some of the key priorities that the government is focusing on are:

- Drafting the *Civil Registration, Identification and Vital Statistics Law* and submitting it to the national assembly;
- Drafting laws on the legal amendment needed to create the IPIS;
- Creating a universal ICT-based civil registration system;
- Creating a vital statistics system by 2023;
- Integrating CRVS with auxiliary systems for data exchange by 2024;
- Setting up a modern and secure data centre for the IPIS;
- Setting up the population registry;
- Modernizing and integrating the Khmer ID system with the IPIS; and
- Introducing e-services by 2025 for client-oriented, efficient, and transparent service delivery.

## Support from development partners

Cambodian authorities have a long record of working with international development partners that provide support in improving civil registration, vital statistics, and identification services:

- Building on a legal review previously completed by UNICEF, Bloomberg Philanthropies, within its Data for Health program, provided support with drafting a new legislative framework in line with international best practices.
- Asian Development Bank provided technical support in creating a comprehensive plan for implementing the National Strategic Plan for Identification in 2016.
- Plan International is working to reduce barriers and generate demand for birth registration of the most marginalized children.
- UNICEF is supporting the GDI to pilot an app to monitor civil registration supplies at the commune level.
- The World Health Organization is supporting the use of ICD-10 and better medical death certificates.

## Conclusion

Cambodia has made remarkable strides in birth registration completeness since its records were completely destroyed in the 1970s. According to the Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey, only 22 percent of children under 5 were registered in 2000, while by 2016 that number had grown to 78 percent. Now the registration rate is nearly universal. Death registration is lagging behind, however. Registration levels are still lower for rural populations, Indigenous and ethnic minorities, children born outside of their parents' place of permanent residence, migrant children, children born into low-education families, children delivered by traditional birth attendants, people living in remote areas and hilly terrain, and poor families. A comprehensive law on CRVS and ID management systems is still lacking.

Although the CRVS system is still largely paper based, a strategy to overhaul the registration system is underway. The goal is to bring CRVS services in line with global good practices. That means processes will be digitized and integrated with other systems related to legal identity to create a unified population register. This process is expected to result in tighter integration with health sector information systems to make it easier to process birth and death registrations. While the strategic vision is fully realized, challenges remain in securing funding. The greatest challenge is the lack of systemic solutions for timely communication of vital events.

## Resources

### Websites

Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific: Cambodia – [getinthepicture.org/country/cambodia](https://getinthepicture.org/country/cambodia)

General Department of Identification, Ministry of Home Affairs – [news.gdi.gov.kh](https://news.gdi.gov.kh)

National Institute of Statistics – [nis.gov.kh/index.php/km](https://nis.gov.kh/index.php/km)

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