CHAPTER 3

WOMEN, AGRICULTURE AND RURAL RESOURCES

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A FAIR SHARE FOR WOMEN
WOMEN, AGRICULTURE AND RURAL RESOURCES

Cambodia at a glance

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<td>11.5</td>
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<td>90</td>
</tr>
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<td>Percentage of rural women classified as unpaid family workers</td>
<td>46</td>
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<td>89</td>
</tr>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>Percentage of agricultural extension workers who are women</td>
<td>5-10</td>
</tr>
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<td>Percentage of Royal University of Agriculture students who are women</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of landless women-headed households</td>
<td>21</td>
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<td>Percentage of landless “war widows”</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
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<td>Percentage of land titles in both men’s and women’s names since 2001</td>
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<tr>
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<td>25</td>
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<td>1-2</td>
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<td>Percentage of village water committee members who are women</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>Percentage of ODA earmarked for agriculture and rural development, 2001</td>
<td>21</td>
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<td>Percentage of national budget earmarked for agriculture and rural development, 2002</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Share of agriculture, forestry and fisheries in GDP</td>
<td>33</td>
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</table>

3.1 Status, trends and issues

Most of the recent economic growth has been confined to urban areas while rural growth has been slow. Approximately 90 percent of the poor live in rural areas where the highest poverty rates are found among farmers and households whose heads have little or no formal education. The poorest households in Cambodia tend to have no assets but have high fertility rates, leading to a high dependency

ratio (number of young children relative to income earners per household), which then depresses income per head. The dependency ratio in rural areas is 90 percent (Beresford et al., 2003). Food security is a serious problem for the poorest: 36 percent of the population is living under the poverty line of $0.46 per day and 11 percent under the food poverty line (PMATU, 2003).

Agriculture remains the backbone of the Cambodian economy. The majority of the population continues to depend on agriculture for their livelihood, and most farmers are small landholders with less than two hectares of land. Agriculture accounts for 33 percent of the gross domestic product and is the primary source of employment for 73 percent of the labor force. Although agriculture is the primary source of livelihood for the vast majority of the population, this sector has been growing at an average annual rate of only 3.6 percent – half the total GDP growth rate in recent years.

Agricultural productivity is extremely low, both in terms of labor (about US$166 per worker) and land (US$480 per hectare) and is highly susceptible to disease and weather variations. Some of the causes for low productivity in the agriculture sector include:

- **Low levels of production** due to weak research and extension systems; weak irrigation and water control systems; pests and livestock disease; poor seed quality; lack of diversification of agriculture and livestock production and processing; and lack of sustainable fisheries.
- **Weak post-production and marketing** due to high post-harvest losses (related to poor storage, wastage and pests); little orientation to processing and markets; scarcity of business and farmer associations; lack of supporting institutions; and lack of access to market information.
- **Low investment** due to lack of secure land rights and shrinking plot sizes; lack of access to capital; corrupt and rent-seeking behavior; and lack of information about legal and policy environment.
- **Vulnerability** of rural households due to a lack of information on markets, policies and programs; weak financial systems and lack of financial services; limited access to community forestry and fisheries and other communal resources; presence of landmines; and weak early warning systems of natural disasters.

Women make up more than half of the agricultural workforce; hence, efforts to increase productivity will need to be both gender-sensitive and gender-responsive. In rural areas only 4 percent of women and 10 percent of men are in waged employment. The formal sector is only able to absorb approximately 5 percent of the total workforce. Of the 250,000 new workers joining the labor force each year, 94 percent must rely on the informal sector, primarily subsistence agriculture, where productivity and earnings are low (Chan, 2003). Given the high fertility rates in rural areas and the future exponential growth of the population, there is a concern about the limited availability and productivity of land and the implications for the livelihoods of future generations.

The improvement of rural livelihoods is hampered by inadequate provision of infrastructure (roads, water supply), social (education, health) and economic services (agricultural extension, technical support, financial and non-financial enterprise development). Women are even more constrained by unequal access to these services, which prevents them from being able to maximize the level of productivity and subsequent returns to their labor.

When examining rural livelihoods, it is important to look beyond the traditional area of rice production. The cultivation of rice and other crops employs rural people for an average of four to five months, less than half the year, and provides only about one-third of their total income. Farmers sell their produce to traders or millers. The small scale and fragmented family production system leads to low bargaining power and thus low farm gate prices. They supplement their subsistence and incomes by fishing, gathering a range of food and non-food items, entrepreneurial activity and seasonal waged labor (Acharya et al., 2002; Beresford et al. 2003).
However, increasing landlessness and near-landlessness, combined with diminishing access to common property resources, implies that an increasing number of people, especially women, in rural households will remain without any productive resources except their own labor and will be unable to address poverty unless significant improvements are made in generating more rural non-farm employment (Beresford et al, 2003.)

Researchers studying gender roles in natural resources management in the Tonle Sap region found that women and girls in rural areas were engaged more and in a wider range of income-generating activities than men and boys, both in agriculture and forestry as well as other activities, but men had greater control over the benefits of productive resources (GAD/C and FAO, 1999).

This chapter of the gender assessment examines gender issues related to land and agricultural services, as well as infrastructure and financial and non-financial services that affect women’s access to viable agricultural and off-farm and market activities that lead to poverty reduction and food security in general.

### What are the concerns of women and men in rural areas?

A series of local consultations on “Poverty Reduction for Women” was organized by the NGO Women for Prosperity as part of Cambodia’s NPRS formulation process. The results of extensive consultations in six provinces showed that women shared similar concerns to men; the top five priority issues included: food insecurity; poor rural roads and transport; poor water supply; land access and security (no land title); and landmines. Further consultations with women at the commune and village level in Kampong Cham revealed that women prioritized roads, which are a public good, and men prioritized wells, which are usually constructed on private property (MoWVA, 2003b).

### 3.1.1 Women have a major role in agricultural production

Seventy-three percent of the labor force is primarily engaged in agriculture. Nearly 80 percent of these workers are primarily engaged in subsistence agriculture with women comprising 56 percent of the primary workforce in subsistence agriculture and 54 percent of the workforce in market-oriented agriculture; the majority of these women are unpaid family workers (LFS, 2001). Women heads of household are more likely to work in agriculture than male heads of household and yet are also more likely to be landless or have significantly smaller plots of land. Despite the important role women play in the agriculture sector, they also have considerably lower access to the resources and assets that would increase their potential to contribute to improved productivity, greater food security and reduced poverty.

### 3.1.2 Women have a potentially more important role in reducing food insecurity

Gender, food security and poverty are closely linked. The participatory poverty assessment (ADB, 2001) defined poverty as not having enough rice and other food to eat all 12 months of the year and thus persistent hunger, a chronic condition from which poor people could not escape except perhaps on a temporary basis. Because of hunger, poor people are unable to satisfy their other basic needs, such as being able to send all their children to school, pay for necessary health care and meet cultural obligations (ADB, 2001). People who are affected by chronic food insecurity include
subsistence farmers, the landless or marginal land holders, the urban poor and other vulnerable
groups. Transitory food insecurity affects people facing natural disasters, such as flood and drought.
A gender analysis of food security includes two angles: the differential impact of food insecurity
on women and men and the roles played by women and men that affect household food security.
Eleven percent of Cambodia’s total population is living under the food poverty line (PMATU,
2003). However, these measurements do not tell us whether women and men are affected differently.
As mentioned in Chapter 1, women consume less staple (rice) and discretionary (meat and eggs)
food items than men, and the health ministry is monitoring women’s low body mass index and
high iron-deficiency anemia levels. This would suggest that there is a possibility that women are
more vulnerable to hunger and differently affected by food insecurity than men (see Chapter 5).

Discussions about food security make a distinction between access and availability of food. A
recent study shows that nearly half of the 24 provinces are food-deficit areas. Even within large
rice-producing provinces, 30 percent of communes face chronic food shortages (NPRS, 2002a).
Given that Cambodia has recorded a rice production surplus every year since 1995 and is even
exporting rice, availability is not in question. The issue then is individual households’ ability to access
what food is available by increasing their purchasing power, which obviously needs to be
strengthened. Improving this situation relies more on strategies to increase family productivity
(through access to land and inputs), or household incomes. As previously stated, women’s incomes
cover over half their household expenditures, and women and girls are more engaged in income-
generating activities than men. This suggests that strategies to reduce hunger and food insecurity
must prioritize women’s economic empowerment, as well as their health and nutrition awareness,
as they clearly play a pivotal role in the provision of food and adequate nutrition in the household.

Rural households in 1997 spent up to 71 percent of total monthly consumption expenditure on
food. Rice purchases represent 20-30 percent of expenditures for the poorest half of the population.
Thus, any policy that has a favorable impact on rice prices will increase poor households’ consumption
(Beresford et al, 2003).

3.1.3 Extension services are minimal and women receive fewer extension
services than men

Women are a minority among beneficiaries of agricultural and rural livelihood-related services
and assets although they make up the majority of farmers and informal sector workers. Overall,
agricultural extension service levels remain very low. In 2002, only 20,000 farmers (0.7 percent
of all farmers) participated in extension activities. At this rate, it would take 65 years to reach only
half of the 2.6 million farmers in Cambodia (World Bank, 2003b). Access to quality extension
services is a serious issue for both men and women farmers, and women have significantly less
access to what little extension services and training are available. It is estimated that women are
only 10 percent of extension beneficiaries. Information on access to extension services is very
limited. However, based on the available information and discussion with government and donor
agency representatives working in the field, the following are some of the reasons for women’s
low access to extension service:

- Agricultural research and extension are not focused on the activities of women farmers. Men
  and women tend to specialize in different tasks (Table 3.1). Generally, male tasks are those
  involving considerable physical effort or use of technology and machinery. For example, in
  rice farming, women are responsible for seed preparation and planting (soaking, cleaning,
  storing, broadcasting), weeding and low-tech pest control. Men are responsible for land
  preparation, irrigation, pesticide spraying and mechanical threshing (Norris et al., 2001).
Table 3.1: Gender division of labor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Productive activities</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Rice operations</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land preparation</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soaking seeds for germination</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storing seeds</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weeding</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadcasting seeds</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transplanting</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrigating</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing fields</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applying fertilizer</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvesting rice</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threshing</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Animal raising</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pig and chicken raising</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle raising</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cutting grass for livestock</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Vegetable and fruit cultivation</em></td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reproductive activities</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collecting fuel wood</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrying water</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sewing, mending, washing clothes</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing and cooking food</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning house and yard</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking care of children</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total activities</strong></td>
<td>++</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More inputs</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average inputs</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little labor inputs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** This analysis does not include non-farm productive activities in which both men and women are actively engaged – although most likely in different ways (see Chapter 2).

**Source:** Based on discussions in villages in Svay Rieng and Prey Veng conducted as part of IFAD Rural Poverty Reduction Project formulation mission, Working Paper 2, Gender Analysis and Gender Mainstreaming, 2003.

- Access to extension services often requires travel to the district center, which is an average of 9 km from a village. For the poorest of farmers, the district center is an average of 13 km from their village. Only 3 percent of villages have agricultural extension workers and 7 percent have credit facilities. Concerns about safety make women hesitant to travel, while their responsibilities for cooking and childcare make it difficult for them to be absent from home for more than a few hours.

- The mostly male extension service staff find it culturally difficult to engage in face-to-face communication with women farmers. Typically, men are offered training and extension activities even when their wives are responsible for the tasks being studied, and new knowledge is rarely passed on effectively from husband to wife. Women extension agents can more easily
communicate with women farmers. Globally, it is estimated that women make up only 5-10 percent of agricultural extension agents, and Cambodia is no exception (World Bank, 2002). The small proportion of women extension agents relative to the proportion of women engaged in agriculture (over 50 percent) is likely to hinder reaching women farmers with the information they need to achieve improvements in those aspects of agricultural production for which they have primary responsibility. And this then leaves women out of any future innovations in this field (ADB, 2003).

- Information dissemination tends to be geared toward a literate population. Yet, 71 percent of women and 50 percent of men in Cambodia are functionally illiterate (UNDP/UNESCO, 2000). This has important implications for the design and delivery of extension services: Training and information dissemination has to be designed to be accessible to farmers with little or no education and for women who are less mobile than men, suggesting the need to explore alternative outlets for information about agricultural production, processing and marketing, and to look at bringing the information closer to where women are situated rather than assuming that the women will be able to travel to the meetings, trainings and other relevant events (ADB, 2003).

> “Just because I cannot read and write does not mean I cannot learn by watching what needs to be done. I can then take what I have learned out into my own field and see if it works…It is not necessary to have some local village man being trained and then teaching me because he might not even do this.” – A woman from Svay Reng province, cited in the participatory poverty assessment report (ADB, 2001)

### 3.1.4 Diminishing access to natural resources is threatening livelihoods

Women and children from poor landless families, and especially women-headed households, collect snails, shellfish, firewood, weeds and other plants for consumption and selling. These activities are critical for food security but are threatened by natural-resource degradation and limited community control over natural resources (Kim et al., 2003). A recent study on gender and agriculture in Prey Veng and Svay Rieng, revealed that women-headed households in remote areas were almost completely reliant on the collection of wild resources to exchange for rice. Their increasingly difficult access to communal natural resources, combined with increasing landlessness, will have significant implications for their food security (IFAD, 2003).

### 3.1.5 Despite a new gender-responsive land law, women are vulnerable to having their land rights ignored

Rural livelihoods are principally based on land and other natural resources. Thus, the increasingly limited access to both of these resources contributes to chronic or seasonal poverty and food insecurity (Kim et al., 2003). An Oxfam land study found that when communities were asked to define poverty, landlessness or having small plots of land was the main criteria and that landlessness and near landlessness is an indicator of poverty in rural areas.

There are significant inequalities in land distribution: 20-30 percent of landowners hold 70 percent of the land, while the poorest 40 percent occupy only 10 percent (Beresford et al, 2003). Approximately 20 percent of rural households are landless, and 25 percent of rural households own land plots that are less than 0.5 ha – anything less than one hectare is considered insufficient to

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2 Over the previous year, 57,889 documents were distributed. Radio-based messages were used 10 times and television-based messages 11 times (MAFF, 2002). In rural areas, 41 percent of households have radios and 20 percent have televisions (CSES, 1999).
sustain livelihoods. Thus 45 percent of rural households are considered landless or near landless and are the most vulnerable to food insecurity. It is estimated that landlessness is increasing by about 2 percent annually (Kim et al., 2003).

Small land size, landlessness and unfavorable input-to-output price ratios contribute to rice shortages at the household level. Small plot sizes are a deterent to investment and productivity. Farmers with small plot sizes do not have the means, nor is it technically and financially efficient, to invest in and obtain adequate returns. Thus, productivity and profitability is low (Kim et al., 2002).

Land reform is very complex, given the impact of three decades of upheaval and internal displacement. The history of land management and administration in Cambodia is characterized by dramatic shifts and changes with few attempts at private-property registration, except during the colonial period. Land titles and cadastral maps were systematically destroyed in the 1970s. Land was redistributed in the early 1980s, though this was limited to rights to use land but not to own it. The right of individuals to own land was re-established in 1989 and a land law put into place in 1992. But a dual system developed with customary land rights competing with the official system involves high costs – mostly unofficial payments – for formal certificates of ownership. The ambiguity of rules and multiplicity of practices in land transactions contribute to significant corruption, according to a social assessment undertaken in 1999 in preparation of the Land Management and Administration Project (LMAP) that the World Bank, German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) and the government of Finland supported. Those with least access to titling benefits are people who are poor and who are least able to fight for their rights, such as women. The LMAP social assessment found that women, especially women-headed households, are vulnerable to having their rights ignored, partly due to a lack of knowledge of land rights and land titling procedures (World Bank, 2002h).

Land liberalization in 1989 and the ensuing confusion due to the unclear legislation process, resulted in negative impacts on women's land rights, especially for female heads of household (Kusakabe et al., 1995). Land reform is often criticized for having an unintended adverse affect on women-headed households (which tend to have fewer adult laborers) because the distribution of agricultural land was based on family size. This often resulted in the women-headed households having too small a parcel to produce enough food, consequently going into debt, selling the land and becoming landless. “War widows” own less land than the general population: Of those that own land, 84 percent own less than 0.5 hectare. Nearly half of all war widows do not have access to any land (Harding, 2000). The Oxfam GB land study found that landlessness was significantly higher for women-headed households. In their survey sample, one in eight families was landless, but the figure for women-headed households was 21 percent, or one in five. WFP surveys conducted in 1997 showed that female heads of households were twice as likely to have sold their land as male-heads of households. The majority of these were “distress sales” where families were forced to sell their land – illness being the largest single cause (Biddulph, 2000).

Women in male-headed households face a different set of constraints with respect to land. Women's rights to land may be weakened by their subordinate status within a household where land rights are vested in the name of the male head of household. In cases of divorce, death or family breakup, women may lose their land rights, which generally leads to the impoverishment of women and children.

Since 1993, 620,000 land titles have been issued, the majority in the name of the male head of household. The new land law passed in 2001 includes a progressive measure to ensure that both women and men are identified as owners of the land. Since then, 80,000 new titles have been issued based on the new procedures, and a recent survey of 20,000 titles estimated that 78 percent of the new titles have been issued in the names of both women and men in the households (LMAP, 2003).
Despite joint titles that confer legal rights to wives, customary practices and enforcement regimes may not fully recognize these rights. Even where women have rights to land, these may be denied in practice due to gender-biased cultural and social factors. One study, for example, found that women often needed their husbands’ permission to include their names on land titles. In principle, when land is jointly registered, both parties must sign to transfer land titles; in practice, however, this is not enforced, and women are vulnerable to losing control over such decisions and deferring to their husbands (IFAD, 2003). Men usually have more decision-making power in the household, which makes it easier for them to sell land without consent from the wives. In such cases there is also a risk that women will not have access to the proceeds of a unilateral decision to sell the family land, thus not only losing their form of livelihood but also any benefits from the transaction. Women's low literacy limits their access to information about land issues, sales and rights.

Women and women's land interests still are vastly under-represented in the institutional structures related to land, such as the Land Policy Council, the Cadastral Commission for the Resolution of Land Disputes and the commune chiefs. However, LMAP has recently recommended that in order to encourage the participation of women in the provincial and district Cadastral Commissions and their secretariats, the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction should prioritize support to those commissions that include at least 30 percent women.

Social land concessions are currently being discussed at the policy level in order to address landlessness and land atomization. There is enough land in Cambodia to meet the needs of the landless on a one-off basis (So et al, 2002). But it cannot be assumed that women will benefit equally from such reforms in the absence of targeted measures to ensure that their interests are considered. Nor is it clear whether the land available for distribution to the landless will support sustainable agriculture or that poor families will choose to stay in the areas where land is available.

Land is an important resource, but poverty reduction in rural areas also depends on other complementary inputs and services to maximize the productivity of available land and to provide sources of income to the increasing number of landless people.

3.1.6 Access to financial and non-financial services is very limited

Credit in Cambodia is well regulated, but it is not widely accessible. Formal institutions do not serve rural populations, and semi-formal micro-finance providers are the de facto providers of financial services (mainly credit) in rural areas. A new regulatory framework has been introduced for micro-finance operators in Cambodia, but access to financial services by the rural poor is still very limited. Five providers are now formal micro-finance institutions and account for approximately 85 percent of credit provision. Another 48 are registered providers. These providers cover approximately 20 percent of households, but the coverage is uneven—some districts are not served by any of the providers, while several may serve other districts. Studies by CDRI and Oxfam GB and HK found that badly targeted credit schemes often do more harm than good by putting poor borrowers further into unmanageable debt, which was leading to landlessness. Interest rates, particularly from informal lenders, are notoriously high, but borrowers often have little choice.

In most credit programs, an estimated 70-85 percent of members are women (Walter, 2000). Because women are said to be in charge of household finances, and also believed to be more credit worthy, they tend to be the major borrowers. While women are estimated to make up a high proportion of credit schemes’ members, they tend not to be involved in the schemes’ decision-making processes and receive smaller loans (Catalla, 2001).
Women-only credit programs are preferable for women because they empower them to make their own decisions rather than deferring to other household members’ opinion. When women heads-of-households are included in credit schemes, they benefit from belonging to the group both financially and socially. In mixed-sex programs where access to funds depends on individual self-confidence and negotiating skills, women members tend to receive considerably smaller and less frequent loans than men. Also, families typically send only men to meetings when the important decisions are made, making it difficult for women, and in particular women heads-of-households, to participate. In poorly managed programs, the benefits are at risk of being concentrated in the hands of better-off people or the more powerful men who will sometimes exclude both women and poor men (Walter, 2000).

Equally, if not more important to poor women are other financial services, such as savings schemes, that enable them to maintain some control over their incomes at a personal and household level, which can be used as a safety net in times of crisis. Non-financial services such as micro-enterprise development skills training are also necessary to improve off-farm incomes and market access. The participatory poverty assessment found that women were interested in credit and savings schemes and had specific plans about how they would use the money, but only about a third of the respondents had access to any opportunities (ADB, 2001).

3.1.7 Rural roads and transport is a priority for women, as well as men

Poor roads and transport systems are commonly cited as a priority concern for both poor men and women (ADB, 2001; Women for Prosperity 2002). Poor infrastructure makes it difficult to access markets, schools and health clinics and contributes to lower incomes, higher food prices, lower levels of girls’ school enrollment and high maternal mortality rates. Poor infrastructure also contributes to the high cost of transport in Cambodia, which also reduces access to goods and markets and distorts prices, further aggravating food insecurity.

The travel and transport burden seems to be equally divided between men and women, though it differs in nature: Women make more trips, carry more weight and spend significantly more time collecting water and traveling to the market, usually with less access to modern transport. Although men make fewer trips, they travel longer distances and spend much of their travel time for fishing, cultivating rice and non-agricultural activities (MRD/ILO, 2000). Proximity is a critical factor for women’s access to markets and services, given their restricted mobility due to concerns about security and family responsibility.

3.1.8 Women also prioritize clean water supply

Only 29 percent of the Cambodian population has access to a clean water supply – 53 percent of urban dwellers and 25 percent of the rural population (World Bank, 2003). It is estimated that Cambodians spend one to two hours a day collecting water, and this is done primarily by women (MRD, consultation). All women participants in the participatory poverty assessment complained that they spent much of each day in the dry season retrieving water for cooking, washing and bathing purposes – nearly twice the time they spent in the wet season (ADB, 2001). The poverty assessment also found distinct gender differences relating to the priority in the delivery of water services at the community level. Women want more convenient access to safe water for drinking, cooking and bathing purposes, and they do not want to spend much time accessing it for their daily needs. Time spent retrieving water did not seem to be a major concern for men. Instead, men
asked for irrigation systems for crops but not for household farming systems, which would benefit women as well. The Ministry of Rural Development (MRD) is implementing a rural water supply program that ensures that three women and two men are on the Village Water Committees and that there will be a water source every 100-150 meters.

Access to water can be affected not just by distance to a water source but also by the cost of it. Concerns have been raised that if users have to pay for the more convenient access of private sector water supply, poor families without the income will choose not to use the system. In this case, women’s water collection burden would not be alleviated. It would be useful to explore innovative schemes to cross-subsidize water provision for the poor with revenues raised from charging private sector enterprises for water provision.

Only 18 per cent of the population has access to sanitation facilities – 58 percent of the urban population and only 10 percent of the rural population. A WFP study showed a high correlation between the presence of separate sanitation facilities in schools and girls’ attendance (WFP, 2001) (see also Chapter 4). Women’s access to safe water and sanitation has enormous implications for their and their families’ health.

### 3.1.9 Women are under-represented in agriculture sector decision-making and the civil service

Although women make up the majority of farmers, they are a minority among the beneficiaries and providers of agricultural services. Women’s significant contributions to the agriculture and rural development sector are not mirrored in their participation in decision-making and the civil service. While women represent more than 50 percent of all subsistence and market-oriented agricultural workers, they make up 20 percent of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) staff – and most of those positions are administrative. Very few are found in decision-making positions or have direct contact with farmers. As mentioned previously, it is estimated that only 5-10 percent of the agricultural extension agents are women (World Bank, 2002). In 2002/2003, only 17 percent of all students at the Royal University of Agriculture (RAU) were women, although this is a significant increase from 6 percent in 2001/2002 (MoEYS, 2003). The change is a result of RAU officials adopting a policy to raise the proportion of women students to at least 30 percent (LMAP, 2003).

A recent survey found there was a high level of unmet demand for training opportunities among women staff within MAFF. Only 2 percent of the women surveyed from provincial offices had a bachelor’s degree and 19 percent never completed primary school. When these women had access to training opportunities, 19 percent were able to take on higher-level duties and received more professional respect and responsibility (MAFF 2002a).
3.2 Government policies and strategies

Despite the importance of agriculture and rural development for poverty reduction and broad-based growth, government allocations to these sectors remain relatively small. Agriculture and rural development are two of the four priority sectors in the NPRS and SEDPII, but their shares of the total current expenditure for 2003 are 2.3 and 1.1 percent, respectively, compared to defense and security, which commands 22 percent (Beresford et al, 2003). The national budget allocation in 2002 for agriculture and rural development was 4 percent, while education and health were allocated 18 and 11 percent, respectively (NPRS, p. 134). Overseas development assistance during the past ten years has been allocated as follows: 9.5 percent for education, 14 percent for health, 7.5 percent for agriculture and 13 percent for rural development (CDC, 2002).

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (MAFF) and the Ministry of Rural Development (MRD) are the ministries that are most directly involved in the development of agriculture and the rural economy. But several other ministries also play a major role: the Ministry of Commerce (MoC), the Ministry of the Environment (MoE), the Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology (MoWRM), the Ministry of Women’s and Veterans’ Affairs (MoWVA) and the Ministry of Land Management (MLM). The MoC plays a critical role as the driver of the Pro-Poor Trade Sector Strategy, which is focusing on agri-business and agro-processing as potential growth areas. The institutions and mechanisms that support the agricultural sector, such as extension programs, face severe financial constraints, including very low staff salaries and weak accountability mechanisms (similar to all departments of the civil service). As a result, they lack skilled staff and experience high rates of absenteeism, especially in rural areas – precisely where they are most needed. Implementation activities are limited to those supported by specific development projects.
A number of projects within MAFF have integrated a gender component – with many successes. Examples include:

- **National Rice Integrated Pest Management Project**: Forty-four percent of the 4,137 farmers trained were women. This high rate of success was due to the scheduling of training at times that were convenient for female farmers, recruiting female trainers, providing gender awareness training to all trainers and making special efforts to encourage women to participate.

- **Agriculture Quality Improvement Project (AQIP-AusAID)**: This project developed a gender and development policy and strategies which require that gender be taken into consideration in all phases of the project cycle, and that attention be paid to ensuring that both men and women are involved at all levels in the planning, implementation and evaluation of project activities as well as in decision-making bodies, associations and working groups.

- **Cambodia-Australia Agricultural Extension Project (CAAEP-AusAID)**: The percentage of female extension workers increased to 18 percent in target districts and special initiatives were introduced to accommodate the low literacy levels of female farmers. Fifteen percent of farmers contacted by extension workers were women.

- **Agriculture Productivity Improvement Project (APIP-World Bank)**: Approximately 41 percent of participants in on- and off-farm farmer trials, farmer training and demonstrations have been women. Ninety percent of the female staff have received some training.

- **Women in Irrigation, Nutrition and Health Project (WIN-FAO)**: Training was provided to 239 farmers in homestead production (home gardening, cash crop production, livestock raising and water management); 187 of these farmers were women (78 percent); 188 farmers (80 percent women) were trained in integrated pest management (IPM) in vegetable growing and 150 farmers (59 percent women) in IPM in rice cultivation. WIN also facilitated the formation of 10 farmer groups headed by women; 15 farmer water-user communities (5 headed by women); and 16 farmer water-user groups (15 headed by women). Project participants at all levels participated in gender training.

MAFF project counterparts have been trained in gender within the context of individual projects (including two gender focal points trained by MoWVA). MAFF’s growing awareness of and commitment to gender mainstreaming is reflected in the targets set in the NPRS. In addition, MAFF has recently established a gender working group which has the potential to play a lead role in coordinating gender-related activities within MAFF, organizing opportunities for sharing experiences between projects and supporting institutional learning on gender in agricultural development. However, the members presently have limited understanding of gender concepts or skills in gender analysis. ADB’s forthcoming loan for the Agriculture Sector Development Program (ASDP) will include support for strengthening the capacity of the MAFF gender working group and the development and implementation of a gender mainstreaming strategy. The ASDP will also include several measures to promote gender mainstreaming in the agricultural sector:

- The five-year loan will require the Government to establish a formal career track for agricultural graduates who are accepted into the MAFF civil service. The career track will start with a minimum of three years’ employment at the district level. As an incentive to graduates, the loan will provide a supplement to the government salary for 60 positions, half of which must be filled with women.
The project will provide extension and credit to farmers’ groups in four provinces, requiring that these groups include equal numbers of men and women farmers. Gender training will be provided for staff and farmers.

MoWVA will be a member of the secretariat; the Provincial Departments of Women’s and Veterans’ Affairs (PDWVA), where this program will be implemented, will be part of the task force for agro-enterprise development, and agro-enterprise support services will be established within Women in Development Centers.

In parallel, MRD has also adopted several initiatives to integrate gender into their programs. MRD is responsible for supporting Village Development Councils (VDCs) and requires that at least 40 percent of council members be women (see Chapter 8). Also, the Ministry’s draft Water and Sanitation Policy and Strategy emphasizes the importance of addressing women’s as well as men’s needs, and ensures that women are the majority members on the village water committee.

The underlying assumption related to the low public investment in agriculture is that the private sector will invest in developing the agriculture and rural sectors for the purposes of boosting exports. However, it is doubtful that the private sector is able or willing to provide the economic public goods necessary for sustainable and broad-based rural development. It is even more doubtful that the private sector would place primacy on the mutually reinforcing goals of poverty reduction and gender equality, which will not automatically follow any market-driven economic structure. Thus, there is arguably a need for the state to provide incentives to private investors to ensure that these objectives are at the center of any economic development strategy involving the private sector.

As well, increases in the supply of social services may not have the desired results if people are still too poor to be able to take advantage of them. A shortfall in investments in rural livelihoods will affect the returns to investments in social sectors, such as health and education. However, efforts to increase rural incomes will result in increasing demand for social services, which will result in more positive health and educational outcomes for the poor. This is particularly true for women and girls whose demand for social services is more price sensitive (inelastic) than for men and boys (Beresford et al., 2003).

Gender-responsive targets and indicators for agriculture and rural development included in the National Poverty Reduction Strategy 2003-2005

- The NPRS section on Promoting Agricultural Development sets out specific quantitative targets regarding women’s participation in agricultural services. These provide for the inclusion of 30-50 percent women in training of agricultural extension and animal health workers, and in training courses on agricultural mechanization, soil fertility management and conservation, safe pesticide use, IPM, agricultural production and agri-businesses, vegetable production and home gardening, and agro-food processing.

- The section on Private Sector Development recommends that agricultural extension targeting farm production workers and market vendors should include gender-specific extension programs focusing on women as the dominant players in traditional rice farming, fishing (i.e. post-catch production and marketing) and market vendors.
• The section on **Decentralization and Improving Local Governance** recommends the establishment of pilot agricultural cooperatives to promote stable food stocks and pricing in VDCs, and that 45 percent of the members should be women.

• The section on **Ensuring Food Security** has the strategic objective to enhance food security for all, especially poor women and children, and that the Special Program on Food Security ensure that women should constitute 50 percent of the beneficiaries from these programs, constitute 40 percent of the farmers trained in the farmer field schools, and 50 percent of the farmers benefiting from the small livestock raising program.

• The section on **Road and Transport Development** targets 45 percent women as beneficiaries in employment generated from road construction.

• The sections on **Improving Access to Land, Water Resource Management and Irrigation Development** and **Safe Water and Sanitation** do not include any reference to women or gender.

The section on **Promoting Gender Equity** includes the following: Ensure equal access rights of women and veterans to economic resources and opportunities and their equitable participation in national decision-making, development planning and poverty reduction processes. Create alternative livelihood opportunities and enhance capacity of women entrepreneurs and workers. Increase women’s access to land. Provide training programs for micro and small-scale enterprises. Organize farmers’ associations with women as 50 percent of the membership. Support mechanisms for women in trade unions and business.