



Food and Agriculture  
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# Promoting greater coherence between small-scale fisheries and social protection policies, mechanisms and programs in Cambodia

## RESEARCH SUMMARY

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## What is social protection?

Social protection is a broad term indicating a variety of interventions (programs, measures, instruments, schemes) adopted by states and other actors to reduce beneficiaries' (and their families') vulnerabilities to different sets of risks and shocks (natural, human, social, economic), to reduce and prevent poverty, and to tackle social exclusion. FAO adopts the following operational definition:

***Social protection comprises a set of policies and programs that addresses economic, environmental and social vulnerabilities to food insecurity and poverty by protecting and promoting livelihoods (FAO, 2017, p. 6).***

Social protection includes three broad components:

### Social assistance:

1. emergency response;
2. human capital development;
3. vocational training; and
4. welfare provision to the most vulnerable people.

social assistance, social insurance and labour market protection. Social assistance are public support programs to the most vulnerable in the form of conditional or non-conditional in-kind or cash transfers. Social insurance programs are contributory systems aiming at covering the contingencies of households or individuals. Finally, labour market programs include unemployment benefits, and programs to increase employability and skills.<sup>1</sup>

The Royal Government of Cambodia, in the Social Protection Framework (2016–2025), prioritizes social assistance and social security programs, as below:

### Social security:

1. pensions;
2. health insurance;
3. work injury insurance;
4. unemployment insurance; and
5. disability insurance.

## Executive summary

The aim of this policy brief is to make policy-relevant suggestions related to the following questions:

1. How can vulnerable fisher-farmers<sup>2</sup> access to social protection be enhanced?
2. What potential exists for social protection and fishery-related policies, institutions, mechanisms programs to:
  - a. mutually reinforce poverty reduction; and
  - b. incentivize conservation and sustainable use of fisheries and related natural resources.

Thus, the recommendations in this document are designed to improve levels of inclusion of vulnerable fisher-farmers in existing social protection policy and programs, based on factors specific to these fisher-farmers which lead to inequitable access compared to other groups.

## Key messages and recommendations

- **Challenge:** small-scale fisher-farmers (FFs), and the fisheries they depend on to a greater or lesser extent to support their livelihoods, face specific vulnerabilities, including inequitable access to information, infrastructure and social protection and other programs; low levels of formal education and skills outside fisheries; a lack of collective voice and representation at decision-making levels; current and project declines in the availability of fish; and relatively low assets with relatively high levels of debt. Greater inclusion of small-scale fisher-farmers in social protection can benefit both fisher-farmers' livelihoods and Cambodia's fisheries by, for example: a) providing incentives to patrol fisheries and improve environments for fish, and b) supporting some fishing households to transition to alternative livelihoods, thus easing human pressures on fisheries.

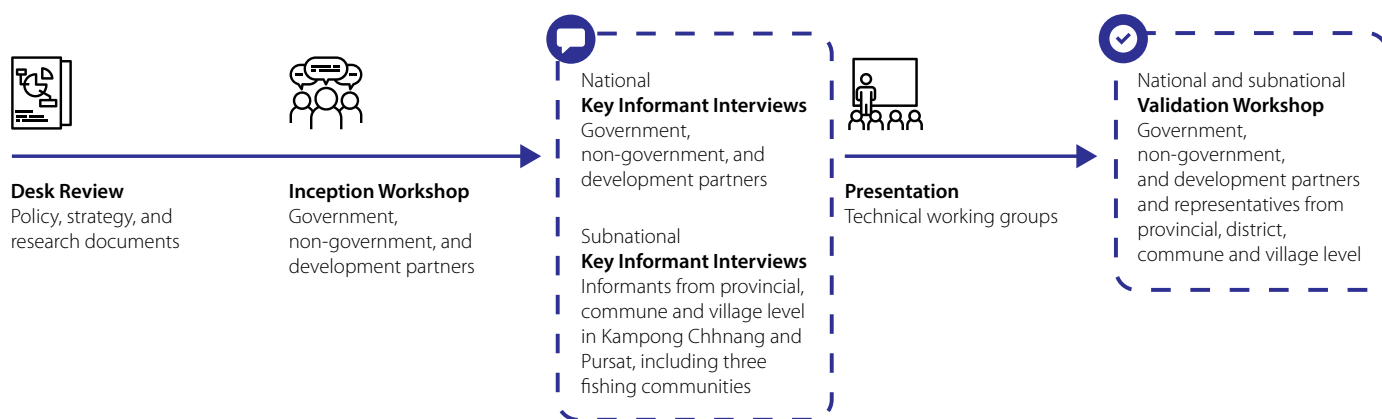
- **Recommendation 1:** Improve mutual awareness and coordination between fisheries and social protection agencies, including the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) representatives, the National Social Protection Council, relevant Technical Working Groups and Development Partners.
- **Recommendation 2:** Ensure suitable methods are used in censuses and surveys to accurately represent small-scale fisher-farmers and allow analysis of their needs.
- **Recommendation 3:** Provide capacity building to key sub-national bodies – including FiA-C staff and chiefs of CFIs, CFRs and fishing villages – to advocate, and raise funds from commune funds, the private sector, civil society and other local sources as appropriate, for their activities promoting the conservation and sustainable use of fish.
- **Recommendation 4:** Strengthen inclusion of and feedback by fisher-farmers through ensuring strong, continuing linkages with IDPoor on-demand, information dissemination and implementation of the social accountability framework initiatives.
- **Recommendation 5:** Make amendments to update the Fisheries Law and the Community Fisheries sub-decree to provide CFIs and CFRs with a mandate to raise funds to support their activities to conserve and support the sustainable use of fish.
- **Recommendation 6:** Provide options for income generation and alternative livelihoods (cash for work; more secondary scholarships; conditional vocational training scholarships – with a portion designated for women; community-based ecotourism; multi-purpose farms).



## Acronyms and terms used

<b>CAF</b>	Community Accountability Facilitator	Volunteers who disseminate information under the Implementation of the Social Accountability Framework (I-SAF) and facilitate the monitoring of service delivery.
<b>CFi</b>	Community Fishery	A group of people living in one or more villages in the Kingdom of Cambodia, who voluntarily agree to cooperate and participate with each other for the purpose of sustainable management, conservation, development and use of fisheries resources in their local areas and protecting their rights and interests in accordance with all legal instruments related to the fisheries sector.
<b>CFR</b>	Community Fish Refuge	A communal, natural or human-made water body which provides year-round shelter for fish, particularly in dry season, and which is located in seasonally inundated rice fields. A CFR is managed directly by local community members on a voluntary basis with technical assistance from Fisheries Administration (FiA) staff.
<b>FFs</b>	Small-scale fisher-farmers	People whose primary livelihood activity is farming, and who engage in fishing as an important but secondary livelihood. Their fishing activity is an important source of food and a minor source of income.
<b>FiA</b>	Cambodian Fisheries Administration	
<b>FiA-C</b>	Cambodian Fisheries Administration – Cantonment (provincial level)	
<b>IDPoor</b>	Identification of Poor Households programme	A national programme in Cambodia through which a standardized household assessment is conducted to identify households as either IDPoor 1 (poor), IDPoor 2 (very poor) or not poor. This information is shared with a large number of Government and non-governmental agencies to help them target services and assistance – including social protection schemes – to the poorest and most vulnerable households. IDPoor on-demand was piloted in 2018 to register new households and household members in between the regular three year poverty identification rounds.
<b>PES</b>	Payments for ecosystem services	PES schemes involve natural resource users being paid to conserve natural resources or manage them more sustainably (Mohammed, 2012)
<b>RGC</b>	Royal Government of Cambodia	
<b>SSFs</b>	Small-scale fishers	People who fish full-time, or whose livelihoods depend on their fishing activity. Fishing is conducted using small-scale or family-scale gear





## Methodology

The proposed entry points are designed to be applicable to fisher-farmers across Cambodia's freshwater fisheries. The study summarized in this brief employed qualitative methods.

The researchers did not employ quantitative analysis of IDPoor, Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey nor Agriculture Survey data to, for example, provide evidence of fisher-farmers' relative poverty, vulnerability or exclusion from social protection. In addition, the research and findings are relevant to Cambodia's inland/freshwater fisheries; the researchers have not focused on marine fisheries.

## Overview of social protection in Cambodia

The Royal Government of Cambodia's long-term vision for social protection is a system which will "reduce and prevent poverty", vulnerability and inequality and which will contribute to the development and protection of human resources and stimulate economic growth" (RGC, 2017a, p. ix). The right to social protection is embedded in Cambodia's Constitution, and is part of Sustainable Development Goal 1.3: proportion of population covered by social protection floors/systems including the poor and the vulnerable. Social protection is part of the Royal Government of Cambodia's (RGC's) Rectangular Strategy for Growth, Employment, Equity and Efficiency, phase IV, and specifically part of Rectangle 1 – human resources development. Social protection is an important part of "achieving the poverty reduction target of below 10 percent so as to prevent the relapsing into poverty" (RGC, 2018, p. 14). Development of social protection is also included in rectangle 4 of the

Rectangular Strategy (2014-2018), giving priority to continued strengthening of the social protection system,

*to be more interconnected and coordinated and consolidate it as an integrated, consistent, and efficient system covering both the public and private sectors, including a clear cut division of roles distinguishing between policymaking, regulation and operations (RGC, 2013, p. 38).*

The Government of Cambodia has established the National Social Protection Policy Framework 2016-2025 and its relevant instruments. In this framework, social protection is divided into social security and social assistance. The Government has also established the National Social Protection Council in order to effectively coordinate policy and implementation.

Formal social protection is still at an early stage in Cambodia, with low social protection spending by regional standards, and a lack of pro-poor focus in what is spent (OECD, 2018). However, sector agencies are increasing funding to large social protection programs – including the Health Equity Fund and National School Feeding programs.

Respondents to the key informant interviews and focus group discussions informing this research noted that the concept of social protection is culturally-specific. The National Social Protection Framework notes that "people have limited understanding of social protection and its benefits as well as of their obligations to participate in each scheme or program" (RGC, 2017a, p. xiv).

Significant changes are being made to social protection in Cambodia – including strengthening overall coordination between sectors and institutions, increasing funding to education and health programs from Government budgets, and plans to implement a ‘family package’. These affect a large proportion of the population. In this context, achieving greater access by and inclusion of fisher-farmers in social protection may require intentional, concerted support by a number of stakeholder agencies. In addition, senior RGC representatives have noted that the Fisheries Reforms which allow for family-scale fishing are already a substantial form of support to fishing-dependent households.

## Overview of fisheries in Cambodia

The fisheries of Cambodia remains one of the largest and most biologically diverse fisheries in the world, with over 30 percent of the country consisting of either permanent or seasonal wetlands (MAFF, 2015). Fish trade in Cambodia provides USD200-300 million per year at the point of landing, and fisheries harvesting, processing and trade contributes 8-12 percent of Cambodia's annual GDP, with fish exports estimated at USD100 million per year (MAFF, 2010). Due to its highly productive and relatively accessible inland fisheries – with open access to small-scale fishers provided for by the Fishery Reforms – as well as its predominantly rural population, small-scale fisheries play important roles in Cambodia's economy and society, and are an important aspect or ‘strand’ of rural livelihoods. The 2013 Agriculture Census (NIS, MOP and MAFF, 2015) recorded that 525 952 households (20.2 percent of total households)<sup>3</sup> were engaged either partially or exclusively in fishing activities in the 12 months prior to the survey, reflecting the sector's importance for the livelihoods of rural households. Of these households, the vast majority (88.8 percent) were engaged in fishing and farming. Many such households cultivate rice and other crops and go fishing, including seasonally flooded rice field fisheries. The remainder of households engaged exclusively in fishing and aquaculture activities. Members of community fisheries (CFi) and community fish refuge (CFR) committees have a high degree of responsibility for protecting individual areas of Cambodia's fisheries in partnership with the Fisheries Administration Cantonment.

Males are more heavily involved in fishing than females (35.9 percent of males per household vs. 8.4 percent of females per household) (Mousset *et al.*, 2016). Fishing is physically demanding, requires a lot of energy, and also requires fishers to work away from home and in many cases at night. Fishing is also considered not safe. As a result, it is perceived to be hard for women to fish alone. Females are proportionally more involved in processing fish (56.2 percent females per household vs. 20.1 percent of males per household) (Mousset *et al.*, 2016) and in marketing fish than males.

Cambodia's fisheries are an important ‘safety net’, particularly for poor and very poor households living in/around fishery areas. Fishing in the densely populated lowlands zone is considered very important for the poor, very poor and vulnerable, as rice field fisheries provide an extensive area of ‘open access’ and highly accessible fish (Estepa *et al.*, 2016). In addition, “the increased importance of fish-related income coincides with the lean season when food, particularly rice, is limited” (Estepa *et al.*, 2016, p. 18). Consequently, “when the fish go down, the poor go down”. In the Tonle Sap, people reported that they coped with extreme weather shocks leading to the loss of crops or farm animals (such as extreme flooding in 2012, or severe drought) by increasing their fishing effort (Estepa *et al.*, 2016).

The management and development of Cambodia's Fisheries sector is governed by the Strategic Planning Framework (SPF) (2010-2019 and its update for 2015-2024) (MAFF, 2010; MAFF, 2015) the effective implementation of which is also stated under Agricultural Sector Strategic Development Plan (2014-2018) Sub-Programme 3.10: Improving the Implementation of Fisheries Strategic Development. It describes the goals that must be reached, including improving food and nutrition security for the people and continued support for economic development. The update for 2015-2024 incorporates the fisheries policy reforms and changes, along with issues associated with wider climatic changes, expansion of hydro-power, changing international obligations and increasing emphasis on the rights of women, gender equality, addressing child labor and involving the young and the poor in development processes. The update also provides for recognition of FAO's Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication.

Rice field fisheries are also noted to have great potential for growth and for benefiting the rural economy, with plans for 1 200 communes having a sustainable and effective Community Fish Refuge by 2019 (MAFF, 2010). With over 500 community fisheries (CFi) established nationwide, the updated SPF (2015 - 2024) places importance on the role of CFis in management of protected fisheries and other community benefits. This includes the wider quality of both livelihoods of the associated community and effectiveness of conservation under the CFi for 300 effective CFis by 2024 (from 50 in 2014). Changes are currently being made to the existing Fisheries Law (2006), following the Fisheries Reforms which led to substantial changes to Cambodia's fisheries sector. For example, in addition to CFis as stipulated in the existing law, article 101 of new draft revision to the law proposes the establishment of other community groups including aquaculture development communities and community fish refuge communities. It also requires them to participate in a sustainable manner in aquaculture development and in the management, conservation and utilization of fisheries resources. In addition, a new 10 year strategic plan for fisheries conservation is being developed.

Plans have been implemented to relocate approximately 2 000 people who are living in floating houses on the Tonle Sap off the water and onto land. Fishing is a core part of the livelihoods of many of these households. However, it will take some time for substantial changes to occur to patterns of human settlement on the Tonle Sap Lake. Recommendation six provides some suggestions around income generation and alternative livelihoods relevant to fishing families relocated from the Tonle Sap Lake.

## **Vulnerabilities and marginalization of small-scale fishers**

As Béné, Devereux and Roulen note: "fishers are not necessarily always among the poorest of the poor, but they are highly vulnerable and they are more often than not politically marginalized and socially excluded" (Béné, Devereux and Roelen, 2015, p. 4). Households that depend on small-scale fisheries "are highly vulnerable to livelihood shocks and risks from multiple sources, so they have significant unmet needs for social protection" (Béné, Devereux and Roelen, 2015, p. 52). Compared to other households, fisher-farmers in Cambodia can

experience factors leading to greater exclusion from information, infrastructure and services including social protection. Figure 1 below maps small-scale fisher-farmers' (FFs) vulnerabilities; gaps in current support in social protection, fisheries and related policies, mechanisms and programs; and entry points for improving coherence between such policies, mechanisms and programs, contributing to incentivizing conservation and management of natural resources and to poverty reduction.

### **SSFs are not adequately represented in research, policy and planning for both political and technical reasons.**

Fishing in Cambodia, particularly on the Tonle Sap, is necessarily non-commercial and informal due to the fishery reforms, which restrict all fishing<sup>4</sup> to family-scale (i.e. small-scale) only. Despite these reforms, illegal fishing occurs throughout Cambodia, including medium- and large-scale fishing on the Tonle Sap Lake (Bandler, 2018). Associated with these factors, getting reliable data on the sector has become even more challenging, particularly as there are many cases of illegal fishing (Bandler, 2018), mainly in areas which are difficult to access, and there is no practical decentralized data recording method. This can significantly impede accurate monitoring of fish catch, and restrict the quality of data available to inform policy formation and decision-making.

In addition, census or survey questions about a person's occupation(s) cannot capture the diversity of rural people's livelihood activities (Béné and Friend, 2011), and can lead to significant under-reporting of the number of households who actually engage in fishing as part of their livelihoods. One survey in Cambodia found that more than half (58 percent) of households whose members did not report fishing as an occupation nevertheless engaged in fishing (Nasielski *et al.*, 2016). Many surveys which use occupation-based questions may under-represent the number of people for whom fishing is an important livelihood activity, with implications for policy, planning and programs. As a result, there are opportunities for surveys which utilize occupation-based information to more accurately represent small-scale fishers. This would enable stakeholders to analyze the socio-economic features of SSFs, and coverage by IDPoor and social protection initiatives. The Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey (CSES) is important in this regard, as it is seen as a useful tool for national-level monitoring of social protection coverage and uptake (OECD, 2017).

Despite the context of declines in fish catch in certain inland areas of Cambodia (Schwartz, Gätke and Baran, 2016), small-scale fishing households tend to continue, rather than abandon, their fishing activities (Kusakabe and Prak, forthcoming). There are gendered dimensions to this.

*The fishers' preference to maintain the current livelihood led by men are supported and subsidized by daughters and wives. Since the whole purpose of this income is to support the current livelihood, their income does not necessarily lead to their recognition or their empowerment or any freedom in expanding their economic activities. (Kusakabe and Prak, forthcoming, p. 9).*

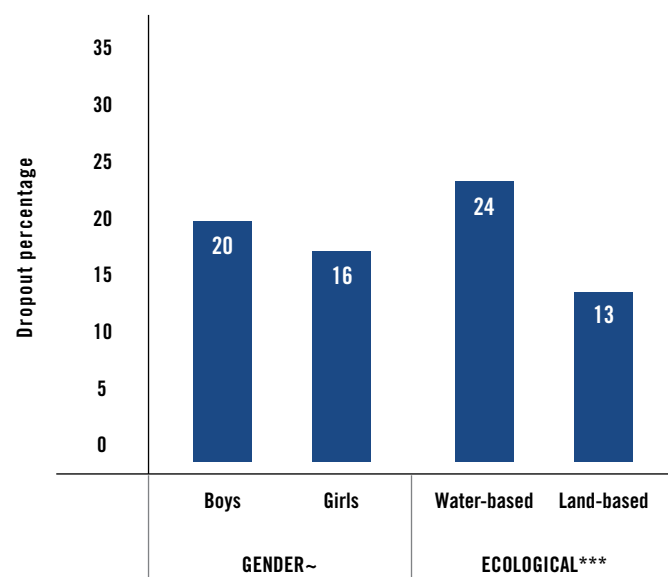
Specifically, in the Tonle Sap Lake and floodplain, children, especially daughters, are expected to earn and send remittances; in return, parents care for their grandchildren (Kusakabe and Prak, forthcoming).

**SSF households and communities tend to live in areas which are geographically isolated from population centers and associated services and infrastructure**, as such areas tend to have more fish available. SSF households also travel as whole families on *maard* (extended fishing trips for one to several weeks at a time), including some school-aged children and children under five. Transport on water can be expensive and time-consuming compared to land transport, which is also likely the reason for higher health and education expenditure by water-based communities (11 percent and 7 percent of average income, respectively) compared to land-based communities (Save the Children, 2018).

**SSF households also have relatively low rates of formal education**, which contributes to challenges around equitable benefits from public services and public information. This also contributes to SSFs operating within the informal economy (FAO, 2015b). A higher proportion of the heads of SSF households reported having no formal education compared to fishing-farming and farming only households (Rab *et al.*, 2006). A 2018 survey by Save the Children shows that 24 percent of children in water-based households on the Tonle Sap drop out of school compared to only 13 percent of children in land-based households ( $p=0.001$ ) (Save the Children, 2018). Boys were slightly more likely than girls to drop-out, but this difference was not significant (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2:**

Caregiver-reported drop out of school by children in the Tonle Sap.



Significance Level  $\sim = 0.1$ , \* = 0.05, \*\* = 0.01, \*\*\* = 0.001

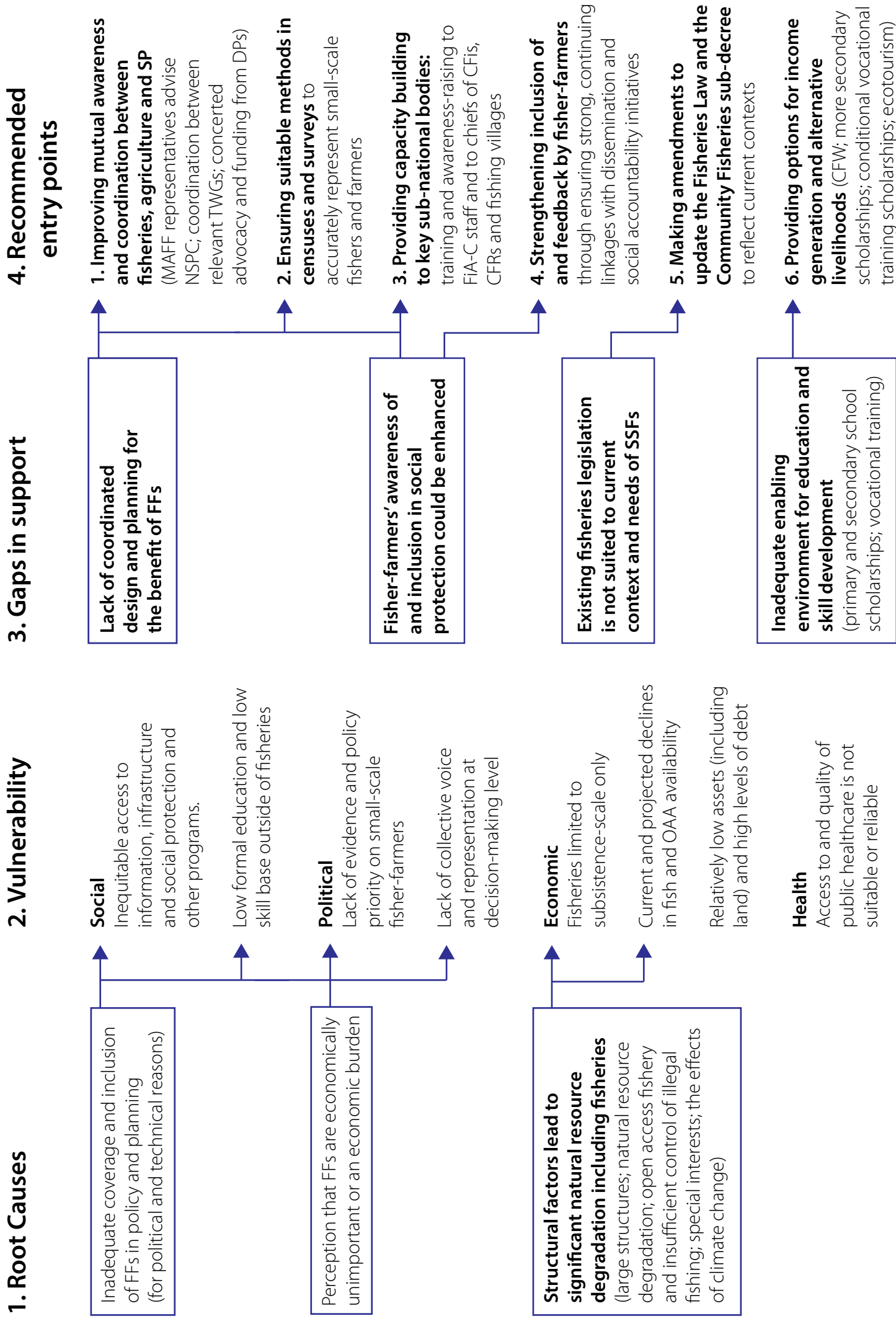
Source: Adapted from Save the Children 2018: 29.

Key barriers to children completing their education include the lack of financial support due to poverty (73 percent), the difficulty of transport and its cost (45 percent) and the distance of schools (31 percent) (Save the Children, 2018). Drop-out rates sharply increased between grades 6 and 7 and grades 11 and 12. One fifth of surveyed caregivers<sup>5</sup> on the Tonle Sap allowed their children to migrate for work, and 39 percent of caregivers reported that work migration caused at least one of their children to drop out of school (Save the Children, 2018).

Related to their relatively low levels of formal education, as well as factors leading to relative isolation from public infrastructure, information and services, **members of SSF households experience difficulties in having a collective voice and representation at local decision-making level (commune council and higher).**

There is room for improvement in SSFs' inclusion in social protection programs. Many national social protection initiatives, such as public works, vocational training, school feeding programs and seeds as disaster relief, are designed for land-based households. This challenge is also important in the context of plans to increase the proportion of national budget allocated to commune budgets.

**In addition, due to fishing being restricted to family-scale only, currently there are not pathways to be recognized as formal workers**



**Figure 1:** Mapping fisher-farmers' vulnerabilities, gaps in current support and entry points



**in fishing**, particularly on the Tonle Sap.<sup>6</sup> This can contribute to perceptions of (small-scale) fishers as economically unimportant.

In addition, one requirement for a person to be eligible for social security (pension, employment injury, unemployment, disability) is a degree of formality in their employment. Thus, those whose livelihoods are dependent on fishing in Cambodia do not have a pathway to receiving social security. It is difficult to incorporate fishers into social security as such arrangements “are relatively expensive and because they require sophisticated social security systems and financial infrastructure to be in place, as well as effective regulatory mechanisms” (European Commission, 2019, p. 5). Experience from Brazil of incorporating informal workers including fishers into the social security system – including unemployment insurance, retirement pensions (age or invalidity), and financial assistance for accidents, sickness, maternity or incarceration – may be instructive (Lourenço, Silva Henkel and Alves Maneschy, 2006).

**The livelihoods of small-scale fishers have been impacted by declines in the availability of fish.** Related factors include a 43 percent

decrease in forest cover in the Tonle Sap Basin between 1990 and 2009 (Bandler, 2018, pp. 8-9), with losses also due to wild forest fires in 2016; increased numbers of people competing for fish from the Lake; widespread illegal fishing (medium-scale and commercial-scale) and overfishing; and fisheries legislation which requires updating to reflect the current situation of Cambodia’s fisheries. One study projects that, under the ‘worst case scenario’, fish production is expected to reduce by about 40 percent in the floodplain and about 70 percent in the Tonle Sap Lake proper by 2040 (MRC, University of Nice and M2 Euroaqua, 2018). Fishing communities on the Tonle Sap Lake report that unregulated and illegal commercial fishing on the Lake affects their income and living conditions, specifically their abilities to pay for the costs of education and healthcare (Bandler, 2018).

**SSF households have relatively low assets and high levels of debt.** Fishing village households own less land compared to households in other types of villages, especially homestead and agricultural land (Sithirith, 2015). This has implications for their ability to diversify their livelihoods, including by using land as collateral to borrow money. Water-based households have less diversified income sources,

with half of their income from fishing. In addition, 85 percent of water-based households have debt (Save the Children, 2018), and it is not uncommon for families to take out one loan to repay another. “To supplement the fishing occupation, fishing households manage their household finance, which is normally done by women.” (Kusakabe and Prak, forthcoming, p. 3) As part of this, borrowing money is often women’s responsibilities, and, especially in the Tonle Sap, women are the ones who enter into relationships with middlemen and manage the debt (Kusakabe and Prak, forthcoming). Levels of indebtedness can affect children’s school attendance. Almost one in four (22 percent) of caregivers on the Tonle Sap asked their children to work to repay debt (Save the Children, 2018).

## Access to and benefits from social protection

Unsuitable quantitative data about small-scale fisher-farmers currently limits abilities to monitor and assess access to, and benefits from, social protection initiatives at national scale. However, there are clear opportunities to improve access and benefits. These opportunities have been identified based on the following principles:

- alignment to the Royal Government of Cambodia’s policies and priorities, including the Rectangular Strategy (phase IV) and current policy and planning frameworks for fisheries and social protection;
- recognizing the nascent stage of the social protection system in Cambodia;
- recognizing that,

***high ambitions associated with the social protection system will lead to high costs which do not correspond to the budgetary capacity [...] Hence, the social protection policy needs to reflect fiscal space, as well as the economic and political situation. (RGC, 2017a, p. 6)***

- evidence that recommended action will help to address the vulnerabilities of small-scale fisher-farmers and promote their inclusion in, and benefits from, social protection;
- build on existing initiatives, and not propose new, untested initiatives;
- where entry points require additional funding, there should be examples of the RGC funding similar initiatives with positive impacts in the past.

## Policy recommendations

### Recommendation 1: Improve mutual awareness and coordination between fisheries and social protection agencies. This includes:

- Acknowledging at strategic policy level<sup>7</sup> that Cambodia's fisheries act as 'safety nets' when rural households experience shocks such as unseasonal dry periods/droughts; flooding which damages or destroys crops; spikes or sudden dips in commodity prices; changes in adult household members' abilities to gather resources or to work, etc.
- Establishing a mechanism for coordination between relevant technical working groups, specifically: 1) Fisheries, 2) Agriculture and Water and 3) Social Protection.<sup>8</sup> This could include, for example, a quarterly presentation by a representative from each TWG to the General Secretariat of the National Social Protection Council, highlighting relevant factors within their areas of responsibility.
- People from MAFF and FiA with appropriate seniority and relevant technical knowledge could form a working relationship with the General Secretariat of the National Social Protection Council and the Technical Working Group for Social Protection. Their role could be to provide technical advice around designing and adapting social protection policy and programs so they are adequately inclusive of the distinctive vulnerabilities of small-scale fisher-farmers.
- Where appropriate, additional technical and other inputs may be sought from other ministries and also from development partners such as the European Union, ILO, FAO, GIZ, etc. Development partners can contribute through:
  - concerted policy inputs around greater inclusion of fisher-farmers in social protection, and greater coherence between policies, programs and mechanisms
  - allocating funding for activities to support such inputs.<sup>9</sup>

**Rationale:** Social protection requires cross-sector approaches. In addition, having technical inputs from sector experts to the National Social Protection Council will assist in ensuring that social protection is responding to specific factors of small-scale fisher-

farmers. The need for such coordination is already acknowledged in the SPF, which notes that:

*a greater emphasis will be placed on the cross-sector interactions of policy and the need to develop more coordinated and cross-sectoral response to the challenges facing the sector. The Technical Working Group on Fisheries (TWGFi) will play an increasing role in encouraging and supporting this cross-sectoral approach (MAFF, 2015, p. 29).*

Cross-sector interactions can require stepping out of a person's 'comfort zone'; development partners can have a crucial role in providing concerted inputs including funding to encourage greater interaction and policy coherence.

### Recommendation 2: Ensuring suitable methods in censuses and survey to accurately represent small-scale fisher-farmers.

Assess how a tool may be developed to support assessments of households' fishing-dependency, and thus better identification and inclusion of small-scale fishers in national-level surveys, assessments and censuses to inform planning and policy. Research into the fish-dependency score developed by Nasielski *et al.* (2016) could be used to support this process. Households which are involved in fishing and / or farming may be categorized as either:

1. **Fishing-dependent households** who depend almost entirely on fishing for their livelihood. 90 percent or more don't own any land, or only own enough to live on but not to grow crops/vegetables. This includes members of floating fishing villages.
2. **Farming-fishing households** who engage in fishing as an important but secondary livelihood – an important source of food and minor source of income.

Once developed, this tool should be socialized with relevant government departments and development partners, including the Department of Statistics and Planning at MAFF and relevant departments at the Ministry of Planning and National Institute of Statistics (NIS). Key research and planning tools to be considered in this regard are the Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey (CSES), the Agriculture Census, the Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey and the IDPoor database.<sup>10</sup> If necessary, technical assistance should be provided.

**Rationale:** This will allow analyses to be conducted specifically for fishing-dependent households, including various socio-economic factors, vulnerabilities and coping strategies. It will also facilitate an assessment of the level of inclusion of fishing-dependent households in IDPoor.

**Recommendation 3: Providing capacity building to key sub-national bodies:** training and awareness-raising to FiA-C staff and to chiefs of CFIs, CFRs and fishing villages to advocate for and raise funds for their fish conservation activities from commune funds, the private sector, civil society and other local sources as appropriate. This includes encouraging the trained chiefs of CFIs and fishing villages to join the women's and children's committee on the commune council to advocate for increased attention and funding to small-scale fisher farmers.

**Rationale:** The SFP for Fisheries 2015-2024 notes that "support will be provided to develop collaborative bodies which enable Community Fisheries to be represented and to have voice in policy decisions related to them" (MAFF, 2015, p. 18). Some chiefs of CFIs, CFRs and villages are already part of commune council meetings, while others are not. Funding to commune funds is increasing quite significantly in proportional terms. However, there are many competing demands for this funding. This funding is also typically allocated to tangible initiatives like small-scale infrastructure (The Asia Foundation, 2017). Thus it is important for organizations like CFIs and CFRs to be trained and

given access points to the Commune Council to advocate for such funding.

**Recommendation 4: Strengthening inclusion of and feedback by fisher-farmers** through ensuring strong, continuing linkages with IDPoor on-demand, information dissemination and implementation of the social accountability framework initiatives. This includes optimizing the number of Community Accountability Facilitators (CAFs) working in fishing-dependent villages, including potentially with commune funding. With adequate training and incentives, and when networked with local NGOs, CBOs and peers, CAFs have potential to promote greater inclusion in and feedback about social assistance measures by fisher-farmers (The Asia Foundation, 2017).

**Rationale:** There are a number of existing initiatives for increased awareness of, inclusion in, and benefits from services including social protection. IDPoor on-demand is important for small-scale fisher-farmers, many of whom are away from their homes for extended periods, as it ensures assessments of people who missed initial assessments. The Implementation of the Social Accountability Framework (I-SAF) enhances access by citizens to public information about standards of service and budgets of local education, health and commune services; facilitates citizen monitoring of these public services; and provides capacity building to commune and district level councilors and staff and local public service providers, as well as to Community Accountability Facilitators (CAFs) (NCCD



and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Cambodia, 2014). A process review found that

*CAFs are an important link between the commune administration and the people. [...] Many of the commune chiefs interviewed suggested that they were committed to finding funds for this position even after the end of [project funding] (The Asia Foundation, 2017, p. 2).*

**Recommendation 5. Making amendments to update the Fisheries Law and the Community Fisheries sub-decree** to provide CFis and CFRs with a mandate to raise funds to support their fish conservation activities, including by: i) explicitly allowing CFi committees to impose fees on non-CFi members who fish in their area; ii) explicitly allowing CFi and CFR committees to apply for funding from commune funds; and iii) allowing CFi and CFR committee members to raise funds through other initiatives, including community-based ecotourism. For clarity, a suitable legal instrument (the CFi sub-decree or other) should explicitly state which forms of income generation are and are not allowed. Robust monitoring of such activities should accompany this change in order to support transparency of how funds are generated, what purpose they are used for, and by whom.

**Rationale:** There is not currently adequate resourcing or incentives outside of short-term project support for community members to join CFi and CFR committees and successfully improve and manage the protected fishery areas. In addition, current and projected future declines in the availability of fish, particularly on the Tonle Sap Lake, affect the abilities of poor fishing-dependent households to catch enough fish to support their livelihoods, making fisheries conservation activities particularly important. Significant planned increases in funding to commune funds, as well as Government support for ecotourism, represent opportunities to generate income to support fisheries conservation. In addition, requiring non-CFi members to pay fishing fees is currently practiced in some CFis, and formalizing this practice in legislation may provide incentives for more people to join and contribute to CFis.

**Recommendation 6: Providing options for income generation and alternative livelihoods** (cash for work; more secondary scholarships;

conditional vocational training scholarships – with a portion designated for women; community-based ecotourism; multi-purpose farms)

- a. Ensure a minimum number of vocational training scholarships are provided to SSF households – including those households relocated from the Tonle Sap Lake. These scholarships should be conditional on the recipients' children continuing to attend school. A portion of these scholarships should be designated for women. The vocational training being offered should be closely linked to market opportunities. Trainees should be supported to understand the employment market for such skills and to learn how to find and apply for such jobs.<sup>11</sup> It may be appropriate to offer some 'start-up funding' or equipment to support the trainees, including small groups of households who have relocated from the Lake, to implement the training they have received. Such funding and equipment should be directly linked to the training these households have received. If such an initiative is externally funded, it may be appropriate to seek that a proportion of the funding to be provided from Government budgets, and to seek to increase the Government funding relative to external/donor funding over time.
- b. Increase the number of lower- and upper-secondary scholarships available to children of SSF families. This can contribute to addressing the higher school drop-out rates including due to migration for work.
- c. Consider a cash for public work program involving payments to small-scale fishing households who undertake planned public works activities which contribute to environmental rehabilitation in and around Cambodia's fisheries. This could include activities such as re-planting, patrolling and protecting flooded forests around the Tonle Sap. Such an activity should incorporate lessons from the implementation of public works programs in Cambodia, including:
  - i. clearly identifying the intended beneficiaries;
  - ii. ensuring that incentives are sufficient to encourage these beneficiaries to join, including vocational training related to the public works activities which develops employable skills;

- iii. ensuring to the extent possible that public work activities completed contribute to increased opportunities for longer-term income generation (for example, rural roads which improve access to local markets; flooded forest re-planting which can be linked to community-based ecotourism);
- iv. encouraging local ownership of the quality of completion, including by considering requiring local cash and in-kind contributions to public works activities, including from commune funds, where appropriate.

**Rationale:** Increased scholarships for vocational training to SSF families contributes to the Fisheries Administration’s policy objective of contributing to the development of

*viable, sustainable and beneficial livelihood alternatives for those people that are excluded [from Cambodian fisheries]. These will be closely linked to community aspirations, market opportunities and wider development agendas at national and local levels. (MAFF, 2015, p. 35)*

They are also relevant to the needs of (former) SSF households relocated from the Tonle Sap Lake. The National Technical Vocational Education and Training Policy 2017-2025 highlights the importance of targeting the high number of young people who have dropped-out of school, as well as of giving “priority to women, marginalized groups, poor youth, school dropouts, ethnic groups, migrant workers [...] to study in TVET through providing

adequate scholarships, allowances and dormitories” (RGC, 2015b, p. 9). Social assistance programs which are “conditioned on school attendance or other behaviors have successfully increased utilization of services in addition to having positive effects on household income” (Zambra, 2018, p. 8). A 2008 evaluation found that a program that gave transfers to poor families in Cambodia provided their daughter is enrolled in school, maintains a passing grade, and is absent without “good reason” fewer than 10 days in a year, raised enrollment rates by between 20 and 30 percentage points (Filmer and Schady, 2008).

Fishing activities in Cambodia are marked by seasonality, meaning that fishing households may experience times of shortage. Cash for work programs during such times provide modest supplements to household incomes, and provide protection from food and nutrition insecurity. In addition, activities such as re-planting flooded forest can contribute to fisheries conservation. Programs involving payment for public works – specifically ecosystem services – often generate tangible economic and environmental returns (European Commission, 2019). The RGC have extended an existing cash for work program, the EFAP, showing the Government’s support for such schemes. While public works programs (PWPs) “are costly relative to other interventions [...] PWPs can adapt from being primarily poverty-alleviation instruments to interventions which simultaneously develop economic assets and provide training and work experience to low-skilled workers” (OECD, 2017, p. 117).



## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Adapted from FAO. 2015. The State of Food and Agriculture. Social protection and agriculture, breaking the cycle of rural poverty. Rome, FAO. 151 pp. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4910e.pdf>
- <sup>2</sup> The term 'fisher-farmers' reflects the fact that many small-scale farmers in Cambodia also fish. Recommendation 2 below provides further detail.
- <sup>3</sup> The number of households increased to 680,000 households in the supplementary survey conducted shortly after wet season, highlighting the seasonality of fishing activities in Cambodia.
- <sup>4</sup> Seasonal dai bag net fishing is an exception.
- <sup>5</sup> Caregivers are defined as the adult who spends the most time with the children.
- <sup>6</sup> As the commercial aquaculture sector develops it has potential to provide more formal employment.
- <sup>7</sup> This could include the 10 year Strategic Plan for Fisheries Conservation and the Agriculture Sector Strategic Development Plan 2019-2023.
- <sup>8</sup> At the time of writing, there are plans to establish a Technical Working Group for social protection (a function currently performed by the Technical Working Group for Social Protection, Food Security and Nutrition).
- <sup>9</sup> For example, funding could be allocated to Technical Assistance, working within relevant Ministries. These people would be responsible for undertaking cost-benefit analyses of some arrangements over others, including: i) increased budget for home-grown school feeding to make small fish powder a part of school meals; ii) budget allocation for a cash for work environmental rehabilitation program with a vocational training component in fishing-dependent areas. In addition, their responsibility could be to mobilize support from multiple large development partners to jointly advocate to and advise the Government about specific high potential social protection policy initiatives and mechanisms for SSFs.
- <sup>10</sup> In addition, if a social registry is developed, this could also be considered.
- <sup>11</sup> Households with sufficient Khmer literacy may be trained to use the Bong Pheak job search website.

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