

# **Data on Indigenous Peoples and Ethnic Minorities in Cambodia: Availability, Usage, and Inconsistency**

Workshop on Data and Information  
On Indigenous Peoples and Ethnic Minorities in the Philippines:  
Developing National Standards and Guidelines  
for Data Collection and Statistics

January 27-28, 2025, Shangri-La at The Fort, Bonifacio Global City

H.E. Dr. Bunnak POCH  
Secretary of State, Ministry of Planning, Cambodia  
and  
Mr. Kuntheary SOM, Project Manager, CIPO, Cambodia

# Content

1. Background
2. Government efforts in the development of Indigenous peoples (IP) in Cambodia
3. Reports on the Demographic and Socio-Economic Situation of IP in Cambodia
4. Key findings
5. Recommendations
6. IP data availability and inconsistency
7. Further consideration for addressing the IP data issues

# 1. Background

## 1. The indigenous peoples (IPs) of Cambodia in historical context:

- Historically, referred to as the "highlanders" or "hill tribes," primarily inhabit the northeastern provinces of Cambodia and their ancestors had lived in the region for thousands of years, predating the arrival of the Khmer people
- An integral part of the nation's cultural and historical landscape, and each IP group has its own unique language, cultural practices, social structures, and ways of life that have persisted for centuries.
- Historically, they were semi-nomadic, practicing swidden agriculture, hunting, and gathering.
- IPs are distinguished from other ethnic minorities in Cambodia, like Muslim (Called Cham), Lao ... ethnics

## 1. Background, cont.

### 2. The indigenous peoples (IPs) of Cambodia in contemporary context:

- A vast majority of IPs continue to live the same region
- Represents about 1.1% to 2% of the total population
- Combining from different literature sources, there are 27 IP groups: Bunong, Chong, Jarai Kachok, Kachruk, Kavet, Khe, Khoanh, Kloeng, Kreung, Kroal, Kui, Laeun, Lun, Mel, Mon, Por, Prao, Raang, Radh'e, Samre, Saorch, Spung, Stieng, Sui, Thmaun, and Tompoun. However, the exact number of IP groups are difficult to determine.
- One of vulnerable groups

## 2. Government efforts in the development of IPs

### 1. Relevant policies and frameworks:

- The 1993 Cambodian Constitution
- The 2001 Land Law
- The 2009 National Policy on the Development of Indigenous Peoples in Cambodia focusing on ten sectors: 1. culture, 2. education and vocational training, 3. health, 4. environment, 5. land, 6. agriculture and water resources, 7. infrastructure, 8. justice, 9. tourism, and 10. industry, mining and energy
- The 2009 Policy on Registration and Right to Use of Indigenous Communities in Cambodia (approved by the Council of Ministers on April 24, 2009)
- The 2009 Sub-Decree No 83 on procedures of indigenous communal land registration (signed on June 9, 2009 by the PM)
- Other initiatives and projects

## 2. Government efforts in the development of IPs, cont.

### 2. Implementation and administrative achievements:

- **Self-identification:** by 2024, the MRD approved a total of 200 self-identified Indigenous communities of 17 IP groups in 14 provinces
- **Legal entity recognition:** by 2024, the MOI registered 154 as legal entities of 13 IP groups in 8 provinces
- **Communal land registration:** by 2024, the MLMUP granted legal recognition to collective ownership a total of 1,105 titles, covering an area of 41,539 hectares, encompassing 4,159 families in 4 provinces
- **Other initiatives and projects**
  - Data and statistics on Indigenous peoples and communities
  - Museum for IPs
  - Eco-tourism projects
  - Mekong integrated water resource management project
  - Cultural preservation and promotion
  - Etc.

### 3. Reports on Demographic and Socio-Economic Situation of IPs in Cambodia

- Lack of IP data was the major challenge raised by the National Reflection Workshop on the National Policy on the Development of IPs on 11-13 January 2017 in Siem Reap, organized by MRD with support from UNDESA
- Actually, the IP data exist, but data producers never analyze or report it. Consequently, no one knows ...
- Reports on Demographic and Socio-Economic Situation of IPs :
  - The 2021 report was the first ever report using the existing data
  - The 2024 report was an updated with the most recent data
  - Both Provide comprehensive and inclusive data on demographic and socio-economic indicators needed for targeted planning and intervention activities, as well as for data sharing aiming to raise public awareness about IPs in Cambodia.
  - In Khmer and English
  - Each report was launched by the Minister of Planning, with participation for central and local governments, diplomats, DPs, CSOs, and indigenous community



KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA

Nation Religion King

The Report on  
The Demographic and Socio-Economic  
Situation of Indigenous Peoples  
in Cambodia: 2024 Update



Prepared in collaboration with  
Ministry of Planning and Cambodia Indigenous Peoples  
Organization

First Edition



ព្រះរាជាណាចក្រកម្ពុជា  
ជាតិ សាសនា ព្រះមហាក្សត្រ

របាយការណ៍ស្តីពី  
ស្ថានភាពប្រជាសាស្ត្រ និងសង្គម-សេដ្ឋកិច្ច របស់  
ជនជាតិដើមភាគតិចនៅកម្ពុជា៖ បច្ចុប្បន្នភាពឆ្នាំ២០២៤



សហការរៀបចំដោយ  
ក្រសួងផែនការ និងសម្ព័ន្ធជនជាតិដើមភាគតិចកម្ពុជា  
ចេញផ្សាយលើកទី១ ឆ្នាំ២០២៤





## Table of Contents

Table of Contents	i
List of Tables	v
List of Graphs	vii
Preamble	ix
Executive Summary	xi
Maps of Indigenous population	xvii
1. Introduction	1
1.1. Backgrounds	1
1.2. Objectives of the report	5
1.3. Limitations and challenges	5
1.4. Methodology	6
1.5. Structure of the report	7
2. Demographic Situation of Indigenous Peoples	8
2.1. Indigenous Population and Groups	8
2.1.1. Number of Indigenous Peoples and Growth Rate	8
2.1.2. Indigenous groups and population by groups and changes 2008-2019	9
2.1.3. Indigenous Peoples and Place of Residence	11
2.1.4. Three Capital/Provinces with the majority of each Indigenous group	15
2.1.5. Number of villages with Indigenous peoples	19
2.1.6. Indigenous peoples in the 15 provinces of National Policy	19
2.2. Age-sex structure of Indigenous population	23
2.2.1. Percentage of females and sex ratio	23
2.2.2. Population age distribution	25
2.2.3. Population pyramid	28
2.2.4. Age dependency ratio	30
2.3. Family and marriage	30
2.3.1. Number of families and percentage of female-headed families	30
2.3.2. Marital status of Indigenous peoples	34
2.3.3. Inter-ethnic marriage	36
2.3.4. Age at first marriage	37
2.3.5. Early marriages	38
2.4. Fertility	41

2.4.1. Crude birth rate	41
2.4.2. Number of children ever born	42
2.4.3. Total Fertility Rate	42
2.4.4. Delivery with healthcare personnel presence	44
2.4.5. Birth registration of newborn	44
2.5. Mortality	46
2.5.1. Child Mortality	46
2.5.2. Mortality among Indigenous peoples by specific age groups	47
2.5.3. Causes of death	48
2.6. Migration	50
2.6.1. Number and percentage of migrants	50
2.6.2. Migration flow	51
2.6.3. Reasons for migration	52
2.6.4. Age and educational distributions of migrants over the last 10 years	53
2.7. Elderly population	54
2.7.1. Number and percentage of elderly population	54
2.7.2. Elderly population by groups	55
2.7.3. Marital status of the elderly population	56
2.7.4. Indigenous elderly by province	57
3. Socio-Economic Situation	58
3.1. Education	58
3.1.1. Literacy Rate	58
3.1.2. School enrolment	59
3.1.3. Percentage of currently attending school by age and Indigenous groups	61
3.1.4. Percentage of not attending school	63
3.1.5. School dropout rate	64
3.1.6. Over-Age for Grade	65
3.1.7. Access to education and vocational training	67
3.2. Labor force, employment, and economic situation	69
3.2.1. Economically Active and Inactive Population	69
3.2.2. Labor force participation rate by gender, age group and Indigenous group	71
3.2.3. Unemployment rate by gender, age, and group	73
3.2.4. Employment situation of Indigenous peoples	74

3.2.5. Employment by economic sector .....	76
3.2.6. Employment enterprises .....	78
3.2.7. Educational attainment of employed Indigenous peoples .....	79
<b>3.3. Health and hygiene .....</b>	<b>80</b>
3.3.1. Illness in the last 30 days .....	80
3.3.2. Types of illness in the last 30 days .....	81
3.3.3. Seeking medical consultation and treatment for illness .....	84
3.3.4. Breastfeeding and Infant Nutrition .....	86
3.3.6. Vaccination of Indigenous infants aged under 2 years old .....	87
3.3.7. Disability .....	88
3.3.8. Access to toilet facilities and clean drinking water .....	89
<b>3.4. Religion and beliefs .....</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>4. Housing, land, and collective property rights .....</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>4.1. Housing conditions .....</b>	<b>93</b>
4.1.1. Housing Ownership Conditions .....	93
4.1.2. Sources of lighting and cooking methods .....	94
4.1.3. Household assets .....	95
<b>4.2. Registration of Community and collective land properties .....</b>	<b>96</b>
4.2.1. Self-Identified Communities .....	97
4.2.2. Legal Communities .....	98
4.2.3. Land and collective properties .....	99
<b>5. Conclusion and Recommendations .....</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>5.1. Conclusion .....</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>5.2. Recommendations .....</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>Appendixes .....</b>	<b>103</b>
Appendix 1. Names and number of Indigenous groups from different sources .....	103
Appendix 2. Number of Indigenous families by group and province: Census 2019 ..	104
Appendix 3. Indigenous population by group and province: Census 2019 .....	107
Appendix 4. Number of Indigenous families by group and province: Commune database 2019 .....	110
Appendix 5. Indigenous population by group and province: Commune database 2019 .....	113
Appendix 6. Indigenous population by group and province: Commune database 2021 .....	116

Appendix 7. Villages with at least 10 Indigenous population .....	119
Appendix 8. Villages with at least 10 Indigenous families .....	142
Appendix 9. List of self-identified Indigenous communities acknowledged (in Khmer) .....	163
Appendix 10. List of Indigenous communities registered as legal entities (in Khmer) .....	170
Appendix 11. List of Indigenous collective land properties registered (in Khmer) ..	178
Appendix 12. Inter-institutional Working Group for Indigenous Community Data Collection and Reports (in Khmer) .....	184
Appendix 13. History of the Indigenous report preparation .....	190
Appendix 14. List of development partners supporting the report .....	191
Appendix 15. Glossary .....	192

### 3. Reports on Demographic and Socio-Economic Situation of IPs in Cambodia, cont.

- Formulation process of the IP reports:
  - Request by IP representatives following the 2017 workshop
  - Meetings among MOP, MRD and IP reps (the core group)
  - Creation of a technical working group, called the “**Inter-institutional Working Group for Indigenous Community Data Collection and Reports**” consisting of relevant LMs and IPs reps, with a member from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Cambodia being an observer
  - The report is prepared by MOP with a number of consultative meetings and workshops within the core group and among the TWG on the budgeting, contents, formats, data issues, report progress, ...
  - The final draft is put for discussion and comments from a wider audience, especially IP community reps and IP associations for review and comments
  - The final report is officially launched and published
- Biggest challenge: data inconsistency

## 4. Key findings

- IP population between ~180 and 260 thousand persons
- Demographics follows the modern trends: Fewer births, late marriages, increasing working age population, high labor force participation, better access to education and health services, improved livelihood ...
- Situations remained a concern in the context of sustainable development: fertility and mortality remain high, sizable teenage marriages and pregnancies and birth delivery at home or with TBA, higher incidence of infectious diseases, birth registration and vaccination is very low, less migratory movement, late schooling and over-age for grade, limited access to vocational training, concentrating in agriculture and un-paid jobs, limited access to clean water and electricity, ...

## 5. Recommendations

- Urgent attention and comprehensive interventions to address key challenges: high fertility and mortality rates, early marriage and early pregnancy, access to education, employment opportunities, and health services, clean water, sanitation, gender disparities, collective land conflicts, etc.
- Integrate their challenges into preservation and development plans for Indigenous communities across the country.
- Improving data availability and consistency, as well as data system management, including the implementation of IP community data collection project
- Revise and update the National policy for the development of IPs
- Disseminate and share information on the demographic and socio-economic situation of IPs with all relevant stakeholders, particularly at sub-national levels, aiming to enhance the understanding of and knowledge about IPs



## 6. IP data availability and inconsistency

Key data sources		Start YR	Question on ethnicity	IP identification	N of IP groups	Unident. ethnicity
1	Population censuses	1998 - now	Mother tongue (MT)	List of 22 IP MT	22	Others
2	Intercensal population surveys	2003 - now	Mother tongue (MT)	List of 22 IP MT	19	Others
3	Cambodia Socio-Economic Surveys	1993 - now	Is ... Khmer or other ethnic group?	List of ethnic minorities and other local ethnic group	IP groups Unknown	Others
4	Cambodia Demographic and Health Surveys	2000 - now	No question on IP	n/a		
5	Commune Database	~2000 - now	Aggregated data with IP groups listed	Based on village administrative records	19	Others

Also inconsistency in names of IP groups and their populations across different data sources

## 7. Addressing data inconsistency and inclusiveness

- Disseminate IP Reports widely at the subnational level, especially the public and IP communities, to raise public awareness and self-identification of IPs
- For the upcoming census, review the census questionnaires and procedure to involve IPs and to deploy IPs as data collectors in villages where IPs live.
  - Census always provides fewer indigenous population than other data sources.
- Scale up the IP community data collection and reports, a project started in 2023:
  - IP community data collection involves joint national, subnational, and IP teams to visit each IP village to record IP groups and names residing in the village, as well as basic demographic indicators and the communities IPs have formed.
  - Support is highly needed
- Create and send joint mobile teams to verify villages where:
  - IP groups and names are reported differently,
  - IP population is reported very few
  - Support is highly needed

- Thank for your attention!

- Q&A!