Covid-19 in Cambodia (Updates)

- **IPC: Over 16,000 C-19 samples tested since January in Kingdom** (Khmer time 5 June 2020)
  The Institute Pasteur announces it has tested over 16,000 samples for coronavirus.

- As of this morning, the total confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Cambodia remains at 125. Of them, 123 have recovered.

- **Four more Cambodian UN peacekeepers** stationed in Mali have tested positive for COVID-19, bringing the total number of known infections to 10, one of whom has died, two having recovered and seven being treated.

- **China’s Ministry of National Defence** donated four tonnes of medical supplies to aid Cambodia’s COVID-19 response, which included Viral RNA extraction kits, sampling tubes, pipette tips with filters, PCR tubes, centrifuges, RNA enzyme-free water, disposable protective clothing, shoes and non-invasive ventilators.

- The **Institute Pasteur du Cambodia** has announced it has tested 13,870 individuals and 16,506 samples for coronavirus since January in Cambodia, of which 125 have been positive. It further outlined that it has the testing capacity of around 400 samples per day, while the only other at the National Institute of Public Health operated by the Ministry of Health has the capacity to test 200 samples per day at this time.

- **256 garment, footwear and travel goods factories** have suspended their operations due to the COVID-19 pandemic, affecting more than 130,000 workers. **Around 169 companies in the tourism sector** had also been closed temporarily, leaving a further 16,891 people unemployed.

- The Garment Manufacturers Association in Cambodia (GMAC), the Cambodia Footwear Association (CFA) and the European Chamber of Commerce in Cambodia (EuroCham) had issued a joined letter to the European Commission to **postpone its withdrawal of the ‘Everything But Arms’ (EBA) preferential trade scheme for 12 months so that the apparel, footwear and travel goods sectors can recover.**

- The **Ministry of Labour** had transferred a total of $684,294 to 33,231 suspended workers from 83 factories and 28 hotels and restaurants via the third-party payment system last week. This week, it announced that a further 25,588 workers of 67 enterprises in the garment and tourism sectors will be paid allowances.
Interior Minister asked the administration in localities that border Thailand to increase professional measures at border checkpoints to prevent Cambodian workers from entering Thailand, which will shut its border until June 30 to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

The Thai Cabinet has decided to allow migrant workers from Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar to work in Thailand until July 31, 2020, to help reduce the potential COVID-19 spread and to maintain a workforce as the situation gradually improves.

Thais sending migrant workers back to Cambodia despite border closure (Khmer time 4th June 2020) Despite Thailand having closed its borders to prevent crossings in a bid to tackle COVID-19, Thai authorities are sending back hundreds of Cambodians migrant workers through Banteay Meanchey province daily.

The State Secretariat of Civil Aviation said there’ve seen an increase of between 200 and 300 passengers per day entering the country after it lifted the ban on people from six countries. Just as of Thursday this week, eight International flights carrying about 1,880 passengers landed in the Kingdom.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic has severely disrupted life and production all around the world, within the region, the construction of the Belt and Road projects continues in Laos, Cambodia and Indonesia despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

EU Ambassador said that the EU will help support the Kingdom’s tourism development once the COVID-19 pandemic has been resolved and international travel begins again, hoping the collaboration will further improve relations between the Cambodian government and the EU.

News on HRF sector-related works

Hun Sen: Protect lives by continuing with e-Learning (Khmer Times, 2nd June 2020). Prime Minister urged students to persevere with online home studies as the government tries to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the communities and called for understanding from the parents regarding school closures due to the pandemic.

PM Hun Sen calls to intensify children’s programs and protection (Khmer Times, 1st June 2020). Prime Minister called on the attention of public and private broadcasting stations and social media outlets to keep on airing campaigns on the protection of children from any form of violence and child labour, as well as design programs for children to prevent and stop them becoming victims. He further encouraged all concerned ministries and other related organizations to make extra effort in boosting children equal rights to have access to education, sanitation and clean water during the Covid-19 pandemic and to take an account on children’s interest for them to understand the crisis and be protected from transmission.

Children in poverty said to rise by 86M (Phnom Penh Post, 2nd June 2020). The UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and Save the Children warned that if urgent measures are not taken, the number of children living in poverty across low- and middle-income countries could increase by 86 million, a 15 per cent jump, by the end of the year. They, however, noted that the Cambodian government has done its part by initiating a monthly subsidy programme for more than 2.2 million poor families since COVID-19 hit by scaling up its social protection
programme such as the currently-approved Covid-19 Cash Transfer Programme for ID Poor Households and the completion of its identification of poor families in rural areas.

- **SDC, UN join effort to promote youth employability** (Khmer Times, 2\(^{nd}\) June 2020). The United Nations in Cambodia (UNC), in partnership with the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC), launched the second phase of the “Decent Employment for Youth in Cambodia” programme that aims to offer drop out students and vulnerable young people with innovative learning packages; including technical, entrepreneurial, career guidance and soft and hard skills training. The effort is to ensure that drop-out students and vulnerable young people are able to improve their employability and compete in the labour market while supporting the government and economy in the recovery from COVID-19.

- **Rural impoverished families to receive aid** (Phnom Penh Post, 4\(^{th}\) June 2020). The Ministry of Planning recently completed its survey of impoverished families living in the countryside and concluded that 56,000 families are eligible to receive government assistance during the Covid-19 pandemic. Advocacy and Policy Institute (API) said the current update of the poor households’ identities was widely recognised by development partners and national and international organisations.

- **Warning for local agriculture sector** (Khmer Times, 2\(^{nd}\) June 2020). The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has warned of the upcoming multiple impact of viruses, plagues and economic damage in Cambodia, which will potentially affect the Kingdom’s only remaining economic pillar, which has been vital to Cambodia since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic this year. The warning outlined several natural crises such as the maize-destroying pest fall armyworm and the deadly African swine fever in pigs that are already having a serious impact on food security and hunger in the country. [FAO also called for government’s effort in prioritizing emerging pest, plant and animal diseases management programs in policy-making arena](Khmer Times, 4\(^{th}\) June 2020).

- **Farmers urged to grow short-duration crops to earn more** (Khmer Times, 5\(^{th}\) June 2020). Banteay Meanchey provincial authorities yesterday urged farmers to form communities to grow agricultural crops and breed livestock to supplement their income by selling their produce to local markets as the country is fighting the spread of the coronavirus.

- **Agriculture unlikely to absorb many laid-off workers** (Khmer Times, 4\(^{th}\) June 2020). The World Bank reported that Cambodia’s agriculture sector is unlikely to be able to substantially absorb laid-off workers from the garment and tourism industries. Recognizing that, IFAD is now working with the Cambodian government to leverage “a programmatic approach” to ease the economic distress and prevent food security stresses caused by the COVID-19 pandemic by creating opportunities for returning migrant agricultural workers and expanding prospects for smallholder farmers through enhanced production support.

- **Partnership to drive food-processing** (Khmer Times, 4\(^{th}\) June 2020). The Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF), Cambodia Australia Agricultural Value Chain Program (CAVAC), and the Institute of Technology of Cambodia (ITC), inked a partnership agreement to drive food-processing innovations through small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the Kingdom. The collaboration will create new opportunities to add value and generates additional jobs in the agriculture sector, which currently accounts for around 22 percent of the gross domestic products of the country.
MOWRAM calls for vigilance of possible lightning and wind gusts (Khmer Times, 3rd June 2020). The Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology (MOWRAM) has appealed to people to be vigilant of possible phenomena such as thunder, lightning and gusts, especially for those living in the central lowland areas, the Dangrek Range and the highlands in the northeast.

Report: 1.76m local jobs at risk (Khmer Times, 1st June 2020). The latest World Bank’s economic report titled, “Economic Update for Cambodia in a time of COVID-19,” outlines that Cambodia will register its slowest growth since 1994, contracting by between -1 percent and -2.9 percent, putting at least 1.76 million jobs at risk. It further highlighted that poverty in the country could increase among households in key economic sectors of between 3 to 11 percent higher than current levels.

Sewage waste filters installed in Phnom Penh (Khmer Times, 4th June 2020). Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and Phnom Penh municipality launched a full-scale waste drainage machine amounting about $115 as part of flood prevention and drainage improvement projects. The filter is expected to ease the operation of the sewages from municipal wastewater containing mainly household sewages plus some industrial wastewater for safety operation and protect the water environment.

Japan to extend over $41 million to support three development projects in Cambodia (Khmer Times, 4th June 2020). The Government of Japan will provide a US$ 41.4 million grant aid to implement three development projects in Cambodia, which are human resource development scholarship, Improvement of referral hospitals in Siem Reap province, an economic and social development programme in provision of medical supplies to combat the spread of COVID-19 in Cambodia.

Cambodia ranks ‘expensive’ mobile data in region (Khmer Times, 5th June 2020). The report by Cable, a United Kingdom-based telecommunications company, found that Cambodia is the fourth most expensive country in the Southeast Asia region when it comes to buying mobile data. Another study, which was commissioned by Numbeo, a Serbia-based global statistics website, found Cambodia is the fourth most expensive country to live in Southeast Asia. The price for 1GB in Cambodia ($1.5) is even higher than that of many developed countries such as Australia ($0.68/1GB), France ($0.81/1GB), Austria ($1.08/1GB) and United Kingdom ($1.39/1GB), where the cost of living is very high.

Cambodia to lose $3bn in revenue from tourism sector (Khmer Times, 5th June 2020) Cambodia will see a huge loss in revenue generated from tourism sector of around $3billion this year due to the pandemic spread, according to the Minister of Tourism. Minister Thong Khon said during the launch of additional safety measures for tourism-based business that the global virus has hit the tourism sector the hardest around the world and Cambodia will see it’s foreign and local visitors decline by about 70 percent and 50 percent respectively this year, causing the country to lose $3billion.

Government allots $166 million for Sub-national health services (Khmer Times, 5th June 2020). The Royal Government of Cambodia has decided to transfer $166 million to municipal and provincial administrations to manage their respective health service provision. The decision was unveiled by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sar Kheng while presiding over the launching ceremony of the health departments of municipal and
provincial administrations in Phnom Penh recently. Mr Kheng underlined that the government has issued a sub-decree to transfer over 20,000 health officials, and the budget of $166 million to municipal and provincial administrations.

- The Kingdom’s Microfinance Institutions (MFIs) have approved loan restructures to more than 180,000 customers among a total of nearly 200,000 customers who have asked for them as of May 31, according to figures from Cambodia Microfinance Association (CMA). The figure shows that 196,307 customers among the MFIs total of 2.6 million customers have applied for a loan restructuring and 180,301 customers have been approved – equaling $817,725,436.