

**Young Provincial Cambodian
University Students' Perceptions and
Reflections on their Future
Opportunities While Coping
With their Contemporary Lives**

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the Degree of Master of Social Practice
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DECLARATION

NAME OF CANDIDATE: SAMNIENG SEK

THIS THESIS ENTITLED:

Young Provincial Cambodian University students' perceptions and reflections on their future opportunities while coping with their contemporary lives.

**IS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT FOR THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
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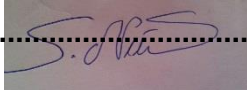
MASTER OF SOCIAL PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examined how young provincial Cambodian students perceive their future. This study also explored some of the obstacles the participants have faced since childhood and how these challenges have affected their lives.

The research was carried out within a transformative-emancipatory research paradigm. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with 18 rural university students studying in the Battambang province, in North-West Cambodia. A thematic analysis was performed on the collected data.

Young provincial university students in this study faced various issues, such as poverty including poverty of means and opportunity, domestic violence, discouragement, and unfulfilled rights during childhood. During their academic life at university, they faced more challenges, such as time constraints, the unavailability of their preferred major, the quality of lecturers, and their poor English qualifications. .

The findings of the thesis are messages to inform relevant policy makers about challenges rural students faced and means that helped them cope with the challenges. This will help them develop educational policies which are more pro-rural student as well as promote inspiring environment for them to fulfil their bright future. In addition, through these findings, parents and teachers can be aware of youth's feeling of disappointment and depression as a result of their misunderstanding and restriction of human rights to their children and students.

Key words: Cambodia, rural students, future aspirations, poverty, human rights, inequality.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AASW	Australia Association of Social Work
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AHRC	Asian Human Rights Commission
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CEDAW SEA	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women Southeast Asia
CPP	Cambodian People's Party
CSD	Council for Social Development
CSES	Cambodian Socio-Economic Survey
EU	European Union
FUNCINPEC	National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful, and Cooperative Cambodia
GEP	General English Practice
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GTZ	German technical Cooperation
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ILO	International Labour Organization
KYA	Khmer Youth Association
LMAP	Land Management and Administration Project
MAFF	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
MoEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoSALVY	Ministry of Social Affairs, Labour, Vocational Training and Youth Rehabilitation
MoWVA	Ministry of Women's and Veteran's Affairs
NGOs	Non-Government Organizations
RGC	Royal Government of Cambodia
UN	United Nations
UNESCO-IBE	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization - International Bureau of Education
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNTAC	United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia

WB

World Bank

WFP

World Food Program

PROLOGUE

I grew up in Banteay Meanchey province (formerly Battambang province), a rural province of Cambodia. My family were from a very low economic background and we were very poor. My mum was a state primary school teacher whose salary was too low to support our daily livelihood, whereas my dad was a violinist who could earn only during the wedding season. To feed our family and provide for our daily basic needs, my parents had to purchase groceries on a monthly accrual system, which they paid for, plus the accrued interest, once they had received their salaries each month.

Despite having such a poor background, I was brought up to value education. I was inspired by the notion of the value of education. “Education is sustainable wealth” is a catch phrase I memorised and aspired to. I always dreamt of having a higher education. And when I heard the word “scholarship” on an international radio broadcast by Cambodians abroad, I pictured myself studying abroad. However, my dreams could not have been achieved if my parents had not moved to a neighbouring province when I was in grade 4.

Due to the poor quality of education in my hometown, my parents decided to move to a neighbouring province, Battambang, where there were more good quality teachers and where a new, more affordable, higher education institution was founded at the time I finished high school. Although this institution charged a fair price, my mum could not afford the fees. But I was determined and, luckily, the Director of the institution allowed me to pay via loan.

Thus, through a combination of determination, will and opportunities that I was given, I was able to overcome the challenges of poverty to achieve my educational aspirations. Because of these experiences, I was very interested to find out if other young provincial Cambodians at university, people who had similar poor livelihoods, had similar aspirations to achieve greatness. I was curious about their lives before university; about how they managed to come this far; and about how they saw their futures.

INTRODUCTION

This research investigated how young Cambodian university students perceive their future opportunities while coping with their contemporary lives. The research was based on interviews with 18 university students studying at one of the higher education institutions in Battambang province, North-western Cambodia.

A large percentage, 70%, of Cambodia's population is aged under 30 (Khmer Youth Association [KYA], 2009). This population distortion resulted from the Khmer Rouge's policies during 1975-1979 (M&C News, 2011). Since today's youth are tomorrow's leaders, I was interested to find out more of their real life stories. The present research was designed to find out how rural Cambodian university students perceive and respond to major social issues that affect their lives. By analysing my data using social justice and human rights lenses, it is my hope that the findings could suggest some ways in which to successfully introduce social change in Cambodia. To ascertain if there are any differences between the perceptions of male and female youth, both male and female rural young Cambodian students were interviewed individually.

Aims and Objectives of the Research Project

The purpose of this research was to explore how young rural Cambodian university students perceived and responded to contemporary major social issues.

The objectives of the research were to find out:

- What were the major issues affecting young rural Cambodian university students' lives?
- How did they understand and respond to those issues that affect their lives?

Methodology

To collect data, semi-structured interviews were carried out. Following transcription of the interview data, a thematic analysis was performed.

Limitations of the Research

This research was restricted to rural young Cambodians aged between 19 and 30 who were studying at a chosen university in Battambang province. It was not limited to residents of this province though. This study did not address the majors and courses in which these students were enrolled.

Outline of the Thesis

The thesis is comprised of six chapters. Chapter one introduces readers to Cambodia: its political situation, human rights conditions, economy, official administrative systems, educational systems, social and family structures, and general rural outlook. The chapter includes a profile of Battambang province. These profiles are designed to contextualise the research for readers.

Chapter two critically reviews the relevant literature that is related to the findings of this research. This literature includes: the causes of youth poverty and relevant policies in Cambodia; gender inequality in education and opportunities and in the means to access education; education as a means to social mobility; the role of civil institutions, Buddhist temples, and relatives in rural youth's lives; and literature on theories of self-determination and its influence on young people's successes.

Chapter three outlines the methodology, including how the participants were selected, the methods used in the collection and analysis of the data, and the rationale for such. This chapter also outlines the chosen paradigm and identifies the ethical issues that arose in the research.

Chapter four presents the findings of this research which consist of themes and sub-themes emerging from the interviews. The emerging themes comprise: challenges the participants faced from childhood through to their lives today; how they coped with these challenges; their aspirations and the means and opportunities available for them to achieve these aspirations. The chapter also details the perceptions of participants of the progress of development in Cambodia, the social issues affecting young people's lives, the obstacles that might prevent them from achieving their dreams, as well as their future worries.

Chapter five provides a discussion of relevant recurring themes, such as youth poverty, including the notion of a poverty of means and poverty of opportunities versus determination and aspirations; unemployment and the impact of globalisation on rural Cambodian youth; the role of social capital, relatives and future orientation, using social justice and human rights lenses.

Chapter six concludes the analysis of the main findings and provides a recommendation to the government for further improving the mechanisms for

facilitating rural young people's lives. At the end of this chapter, recommendations for future research are provided.

CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND

This chapter contextualises the research by profiling the country of Cambodia, including its population; its social, economic and political conditions; its culture; and the differences between rural and urban values. Finally, the chapter profiles Battambang province, where the research was conducted.

1.1 Cambodia Profile

The Kingdom of Cambodia¹, also known as the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC)², is located in Southeast Asia, surrounded by Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand. It is “the successor state of the once powerful Hindu and Buddhist Khmer Empire, which ruled most of the Indochinese Peninsula between the 11th and 14th centuries” (Swann, 2009, p. 1). It consists of 24 provinces, including the one of the capital city, Phnom Penh. Located in a tropical area, Cambodia receives a monsoon rain and its climate is hot and humid. Unlike many other regions in the world, Cambodia has only two seasons, the dry season (November to May) and the rainy season (June to October).

Geography

There are five main regions in Cambodia including the capital city Phnom Penh, the plains, the coast, the Tonle Sap region, and the plateau/mountainous region. With a total size of 81,035 square kilometres, Cambodia owns massive natural resources (Hang, 2012). These include forests which comprise around two-thirds of the total land size (Swann, 2009); fish; rich soil which is appropriate for agricultural and animal farming; and a great range of mineral resources, ranging from gold to oil and gas (Hang, 2012). In addition to the great amount of natural resources, Cambodia is covered by two large lakes, the Mekong River and the Tonle Sap; both of which constitute 75% of the whole country and provide quite a good number of fish to all Cambodians (Swann, 2009). The Mekong River, according to Swann (2012), is 1 of the 12 longest rivers in the world. Its length is about 4,350 kilometres and it runs from Tibet through China, Burma, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia. The Tonle Sap, in Cambodian, “the Large Fresh Water River”, is the largest lake in Southeast Asia. During the dry season, the lake shrinks to 2,700 square kilometres and the depth around one meter; but in rainy season, it becomes 16,000 square kilometres and nine meters deep (Swann, 2009). It is considered one of the world’s most productive areas

¹ The Kingdom of Cambodia was established in September 1993, not long after the first election (Swann, 2009).

² The RGC was formed as a result of the first election in 1993 (Royal Government of Cambodia [RGC], 2004).

for fisheries and supports more than three million Cambodians; it adds 60% of protein to Cambodia's food consumption and 75% of Cambodia's annual fish catch comes from the Tonle Sap. There is a Tonle Sap Biosphere Reserve, which includes the lucky provinces of Banteay Meanchey, Battambang, Kampong Chhnang, Kampong Thom, Preah Vihear, Pursat, Siem Reap, Otdar Meanchey, and Krong Pailin (Swann, 2009).

Population

The population of Cambodia is approximately 14 million, based on the census carried out in 2008 (Swann, 2009). Around 82% of the population live in rural areas (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport [MoEYS], 2010) and 70% are under 30 years old, about 26.3% of which are between 14 and 30 years old (World Bank, 2007). A Cambodian citizen is commonly called Cambodian or Khmer (Swann, 2009). However, literally, the word "Khmer" refers to one of the oldest ethnic groups in the region, inhabitants who were an "Austro-Asiatic" group who lived in Southeast Asia (Hang, 2012). Approximately 90% of the Cambodian population are Khmer, 5% are Vietnamese, and 1% Chinese-Khmer (Swann, 2009); the rest are Thai-Khmer, Lao-Khmer and Cham (Hang, 2012).

Languages and Religions

The official language of Cambodia is Khmer, but English and French are widely used (Swann, 2009). French is used by older people in Cambodia as a result of French Colonialism, while English is widely used by the younger generation and business people.

The majority of Cambodians are Theravada Buddhists, comprising 96.93% of the total population (MoEYS, 2010). Other religions found in Cambodia are Muslim Cham (Swann, 2009) which comprises 1.92% of the population and Christians, at 0.37% of the population (MoEYS, 2010).

Literacy Rate

The overall literacy rate in Cambodia is 80%; the rate for youth is 86% and the rate for adults is 76% as of 2007 (Chun & Townsend, 2010). While the proportion of females is higher than that of males, the literacy rate for the former is much lower than that for the latter (Chun & Townsend, 2010). More interestingly, despite the large percentage of rural dwellers, less than 1% of them have attended education at university levels (Chun & Townsend, 2010). The rate of youth who either have dropped out of school or have never been to school is 63% (International Labour Organization [ILO], n.d.).

Table 1: Cambodia's Profile

Nationality	Cambodian
Total Population	14.31 million (2011)
Female (% of population)	51% (2011)
Urban (% of population)	22%
Rural (% of population)	80%
Age 0-14 (% of population)	31%
Age 15-64 (% of population)	65%
Age 65+ (% of population)	4%
Life expectancy at birth	64 years (2011); female 64, male 62.
Annual population growth rate	1% (2011)
Language	Khmer (95%); English and French (5%)
Ethnic groups	Khmer (90%); Vietnamese (5%); Chinese (1%); Cham and others (4%)
Religion	Theravada Buddhist (96.93%); Muslim Cham (1.92%); Christian (0.37%); Others (0.78%)
Literacy rate adults (15+)	78% (2008), 74% (2009)
Literacy rate female adults (15+)	71% (2008), 66% (2009)
Literacy rate male adults (15+)	85% (2008), 83% (2009)
Literacy rate youth (15-24)	87% (2008), 87% (2009)
Literacy rate female youth (15-24)	85% (2008), 86% (2009)
Literacy rate male youth (15-24)	89% (2008), 88% (2009)

(World Bank, 2012a; Swann, 2009).

1.2 Political Situation

Before getting into an overview of contemporary Cambodia, it is essential to have an insight into the historical and political situation in Cambodia, including the civil war. It is not surprising that Cambodia has gone through a long period of conflict and unstable political conditions or that this history has strongly affected the recent social and economic development of Cambodia (Ing & Ghebreab, 2012).

Cambodia under French Colonization (1887-1953)

Firstly, due to the decline of the Cambodian Empire as a result of attacks by Thailand and Cham, Cambodia was put under French colonization by the Cambodian king in 1863, to protect the country from invasion (Swann, 2009). During this period (1863-1953), the French imposed an unfair treaty on Cambodia which restricted the King's power, extended the colonial authority to include control of rural areas and developed a land ownership system which ultimately resulted in a heavy land tax on Cambodian people (Swann, 2009). As a consequence, conflicts and fighting against the French occurred throughout the country until 1886.

Cambodia under King Sihanouk (1954-1970)

Secondly, with encouragement from the Japanese, Cambodia, led by King Sihanouk, carried out a campaign for independence and finally was granted full independence from the French in 1953 (Swann, 2009). From 1954 to 1970, Cambodia was ruled under a political party called the People's Socialist Community. The party was authoritarian and centralized and this style suited King Sihanouk. Due to this style of state socialism and the state's refusal to accept any aid from the United States, the economic development of Cambodia fell sharply. This poor economic development pushed many young and educated people into underemployment and produced strong dissatisfaction among these youth. Subsequently, opposition to the King and the authoritarianism of the state grew amongst a variety of groups, ranging from students to the political middle class. In 1970, when the King was out of the country, the whole National Assembly of Cambodia collectively announced a ban on the return of the King and that was the beginning of chaos and war within the country.

Cambodia under Chaos: Rebellion and War (1970-1975)

Thirdly, after defeating the King's authoritarian rule, the new government, led by Lon Nol, ended the monarchy and officially named Cambodia the 'Khmer Republic' (Swann, 2009). This new government received wide support from urban areas in spite of its laissez-faire principles. However, this support did not last long. Two opposition groups were secretly established to abolish the Khmer Republic. One was formed by King Sihanouk from Beijing through joining together with Cambodian communist guerrillas. Another was developed by the North Vietnamese through the training of the Khmer Rouge rebels. In 1973, the Khmer Rouge started fighting with the government and by 1975 the era of the Republic ended and the era of Khmer Rouge began.

The Khmer Rouge Regime (1975-1979)

After ending the Khmer Republic in 1975, the Khmer Rouge took over the country and named their new government the 'Democratic Kampuchea'; it later came to be known as the killing field regime. The vision of this new government was to form a real communist country (Kerbo, 2011) by adopting an extreme and self-reliant rule (Swann, 2009). To achieve this vision, their first priority was to kill those who were educated and who used to work for the previous government, since they believed those educated and ex-government officials had been corrupted by Western influences (Kerbo, 2011). Then they evacuated all people from the city and collectively settled them in rural areas, where they were forced to over-work in the rice fields. This mass resettlement was due to the fact that the government did not have transportation to bring food to the people, thus they brought the people to the food (Swann, 2009). Around two million people, including 90% of the country's teachers, died due to malnutrition, the eradication of opponents to the regime and being over-worked (Swann, 2009). In addition, the literacy rate of the whole generation that grew up during this regime dropped significantly during these years because the Khmer Rouge neglected any literacy improvement measures (Swann, 2009). Fortunately, due to Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia in 1979, the killing fields ended, though the Khmer Rouge forces still occupied the very west near the Thai border until the 1990s (Kerbo, 2011).

Cambodia during the Vietnamese Occupation (1979-1993)

From 1979 to 1990, Cambodia was occupied by the Vietnamese, who helped with the restructuring of the Cambodian government, called the People's Republic of Kampuchea (Kerbo, 2011), which was led by the Kampuchean People's Revolutionary Party (KPRP) (Swann, 2009). This government adopted a mixture of "socialism and small-scale capitalism" (Swann, 2009, p. 62). To reorganize the new government, the Vietnamese trained several ex-Khmer Rouge officials and provided them with leadership roles. In the mid-1980s, a new economic policy which allowed a more open market was created to replace that of the former communist policy. As a consequence of this new economic policy, state land was privatized; similar-sized plots of land were distributed to rural residents; and legal property rights were handed over to urban families (Kerbo, 2011). During this period, Cambodia was separated into two regimes; one regime consisted of the anti-Vietnamese group who fought against the presence of the Vietnamese; the other regime willingly and/or unwillingly accepted the roles assigned by the Vietnam (the new government organized by the Vietnamese in Phnom Penh city) (Swann, 2009). This split led Cambodia to stay in armed conflict until the Vietnamese withdrew their troop in the 1990s.

Cambodia after the Vietnamese Occupation

The Vietnamese withdraw their troops from Cambodia in 1989 (Kerbo, 2011; Swann, 2009). More importantly, the Khmer Rouge, which had been secretly financially supported by the United States since 1979, also chose to quit the fight in 1990s (Kerbo, 2011). This was the first time that Cambodia experienced peace after a very long period of war – both internal and external wars. In mid-1989, the French held an international conference to resolve conflicts within Cambodia in Paris. The conference produced an outcome called the Paris Peace Agreement in 1991, with the provision of full authority given to the United Nations to: reform the institutions of the Cambodian government; arrange democratic elections; operate a demining program; remove weapons from the army; and repatriate thousands of Cambodians from refugee camps in Thailand (Swan, 2009). In the same year (1991), the KPRP party was changed to the Cambodian People's Party (CPP). Since then, there has also been enormous foreign aid pouring into Cambodia.

Despite the official election arranged by the UN in 1993, Cambodia's political situation was still unstable until 1997, when a majority of the rest of the Khmer Rouge leaders totally quit their resistance (Kerbo, 2011). The result of the election left Cambodia with two Prime Ministers, Prince Ranariddh, the son of King Sihanouk, was the first Prime Minister, and Hun Sen was the second Prime Minister. In 1998, a second election involving 39 political parties, elected Hun Sen (the previous second Prime Minister) the sole Prime Minister, as his party (the CPP) got more votes than the first Prime Minister's (Swann, 2009). The CPP continued to win the majority in the following elections which took place in 2003 and 2008.

Cambodia Today

Currently, Cambodia is a constitutional monarchy (Chun & Townsend, 2010; United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA], 2005). Under the Cambodian People's Party (the CPP) since 1993, Cambodia has been notably politically stable and enjoyed a remarkable economic growth rate of 9.7% yearly between 2001 and 2007 (Kheang & So, 2011; Nuon & Serrano, 2010). Despite such stability and growth, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of social justice issues and human rights violations happening in this country as a result of the authoritarian style used to govern the country for decades (Hanlon, 2008). This increase can be seen from the gradual increase in the income spread between the rich and the poor (Nuon & Serrano, 2010; Adler & Woolcock, 2009); the significant increase in forced eviction cases (Asian Human Rights Commission [AHRC], 2010); and the lack of independence of judicial

institutions (Chinnery, 2009), to name but a few. The big gap between the income of the rich and the poor clearly illustrates the uneven distribution of the economic growth (Nuon & Serrano, 2010).

There is a wide range of literature covering the political conditions in Cambodia which include characteristics of the authoritarian state (Hanlon, 2008), and the patronage system (Kheang & So, 2011; WesterÖd, 2010), the lack of an independent judicial system (AHRC, 2010; Chinnery, 2009; Hanlon, 2008) as well as the weak influence of international donors (Chinnery, 2009). These issues are discussed below.

According to Hanlon (2008), Cambodia is still an authoritarian state despite the promised system of democracy and its basis in law. This position is due to a weak judicial system, a dysfunctional police system and human rights violations (Hanlon, 2008). Hanlon's (2008) findings are supported by Kheang and So (2011) and Chinnery (2009). These authors found that public protests and freedom of expression have been prohibited since 2003; that the justice systems are not independent; and that the police and military have been involved in human rights' violations. Chinnery (2009) also found that the government responded to civil society by three tactics: threats, imprisonment with wrongful charges, and attacks.

Kheang and So (2011) and WesterÖd (2010) found that the lives of the majority of Cambodians are based on patron-client relationships. Patrons are those at the top of the vertical line of the system, while clients refer to those who are in the lower levels of the system (World Bank [WB], 2006b). In order to survive in Cambodian society, connections with patrons are crucial (Chandler, as cited in WesterÖd, 2010). The CPP has monopolized decision making over government bureaucracies both at national and local levels (Kheang & So, 2011). This monopoly has allowed the CPP to build a strong patronage network. It is easy to see that elite business-people and government officials in all segments of the government are patrons of the CPP. These elites, while being offered lucrative opportunities to obtain personal benefits, are obliged to financially donate to the party (Kheang & So, 2011; WesterÖd, 2010). For example, the largest company that has appropriated land from the poor is known to be the main financial contributor of the CPP (Global Witness, as cited in Kheang & So, 2011, p. 8). Consequently, the whole justice system is formed in favour of those who have strong connections with the powerful (Adler & Woolcock, 2009) and the injustices committed by the main donors to CPP continue (Chinnery, 2009).

According to the Asian Human Rights Commission [AHRC] (2010), Chinnery (2009), and Hanlon (2008), due to political domination, the Cambodian judicial system is not independent. The political domination is illustrated by the large proportion (99%) of judges and chiefs of judges who belong to the CPP (AHRC, as cited in Hanlon, 2008, p. 8). These judges use laws to earn money, not to seek justice for affected people (WesterÖd, 2010). As a consequence, it is only those who have the determination to hold out in the face of threats, hostility, and legal action from the government, who frequently win their claims (Chinnery, 2009).

According to Chinnery (2009), international donors' influence has decreased and the power of the ruling government has noticeably increased. This can be illustrated by the cancellation of World Bank project on Land Management and Administration Project (LMAP) made by the government. This project cancellation clearly demonstrates the increased power of the government and the decreased power of foreign donors' ability to put pressure on the government in areas designed to improve everyday Cambodians' access to justice (Chinnery, 2009). The failure of the donors to influence the government to achieve its commitments to protect and promote human rights, also illustrates the weak influence of the donors (Chinnery, 2009).

One contributory factor in the increased power of the government can be seen in the strong influences of Korea, both north and south, and China, who provided unconditional aid to build infrastructure. This unconditional aid hampers the ability of other Western donors to impose conditions when providing aid to Cambodia (WesterÖd, 2010). Additionally, The European Union, which has a tax-free policy on the sugar imported from Cambodia, does not consider the fact that the plantation has displaced many poor farmers (Human Rights Watch, 2011).

1.3 Human Rights Conditions

Although Cambodians are protected by law under the 1981 constitution, which was created to "recognize and respects human rights" (Swann, 2009, p. 188) and human dignity, Cambodia has still been strongly criticized by civil society both nationally and internationally in terms of its human rights violations (Swann, 2009). There are four main human rights issues continuously concerning both national and international civil organizations: forced evictions, the fragile court system, freedom from punishment, and "freedom of expression and assembly" (Swann, 2009, p. 126). The first issue, the violation of human rights in relation to forced eviction, includes the failure of the government to fulfil its obligation to grant the victims of evictions their rights to

participate in the decision process in advance; their rights to accurate and complete information about the eviction; and their right to adequate housing under the international convention of human rights. The total victims of forced eviction was 53,758 families nationwide up to 2008 (LICADHO, 2009). The second issue is the weak court system. The courts in Cambodia are still corrupt, not independent, and under the influence of CPP, the ruling party. The third issue, freedom from punishment, includes many instances where, if the person perpetrating the punishment is a high-ranking official and/or a close associate of the CPP, they are not brought to justice by the authorities as normal citizens would be. Additionally, during the eviction process, it is common to hear of beatings and shootings from the armed force, which result in death or serious injury. Lastly, the government violates the rights of citizens to freedom of expression and assembly through banning public gatherings and the inadequate provision of media access.

1.4 Economy

With an annual per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of US\$700, Cambodia is classified as one of the world's least developed countries (Hang, 2012). Its economy is largely dependent on traditional agriculture which, in 2008 employed around 72.3% of the labour force (MoEYS, 2010). While the industrial sector has employed less of the population due to the lack of manufacturing infrastructure, this sector has become a main driving force for contemporary Cambodian economic growth (Hang, 2012). As reported by Hang (2012) and Cheam (2009), Cambodia has experienced a remarkable average growth rate of about 9% for the past 10 years and according to the World Bank was one among fifteen countries that experienced the most rapid economic growth in the world. The rapid growth has resulted from the fast increase in foreign direct investment and the fast growth of various sectors, such as banking and finance (21.6%); mining (18.2%); tourism services (17.4%); electricity (16.7%); clothing manufacturing (16.1%); building construction (15.5%); properties and land (12.4%); expansion of agriculture (9.7%) and transportation and telecommunications (8.3%) (Hang, 2012). According to the Prime Minister Hun Sen's recent official announcement, Cambodia is classified as one of the top ten rice exporters in the world (Kerbo, 2011).

Historically, Cambodian economic progress can be split up into three separated stages, the restoration period (1989-1998), the rebuilding stage (1999-2003), and the economic-success phase (2004-2008) (Hang, 2012). The restoration period, according to Hang (2012), was mainly about the establishment of a market economy. During this period, business enterprises owned by the State were privatized and a new tax system

was introduced and customs duty-free were eliminated. As a result, customs revenue increased from 8.5% in 1989 to 37% in 1991. However, there are no records of GDP growth available for this phase. The second stage primarily focused on economic and social improvement, the consolidation of peace, and the regional and global integration of Cambodia into the world through the implementation of the Triangular Strategy³. Achievements of the Triangular Strategy include becoming a member of Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1999; peace; becoming the 148th member of the World Trade Organization⁴ which allowed Cambodia to enter the world market and gain lots of profit from export; as well as a remarkable economic growth rate, with an annual GDP growth of 8.8%.

The latest phase (2004-2008) emphasized the implementation of the Rectangular Strategy⁵, in addition to the program of Public Financial Reform. These were implemented through establishing a “private sector development program” (Swann, 2009, p. 89), which emphasizes the facilitation of trade, the development of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) , and the heavy investment in transport infrastructure in provincial and rural areas (Hang, 2012). The improvements gained as a result of the above emphasis include the reduction of fees and time spent dealing with import and export procedures and the registration of new companies; the enforcement of the amended Investment Law, which allows the investment process to be approved within 28 days only; and the government approval of an “SME development framework so that it can be used among formal business and government institutions (Swann, 2009, p. 89). Additionally, the annual economic growth in this period noticeably increased to 10.3% from the 8.8% of the previous phase (Hang, 2012). As a consequence, living standards of Cambodians, including the income of a number of rural youth, has increased and the national poverty rate has decreased (Hang, 2012).

In addition to the above positive results of the government’s development strategies, one can easily see physical infrastructure growth, such as massive new luxurious hotels, apartments, and modern shopping malls, in several main cities such as Phnom Penh, the capital city, Siem Reap, the gateway to the famous Angkor temple, and other tourist site cities (Kerbo, 2011).

³ The Triangular Strategy is a National Poverty Reduction Strategy introduced by the Prime Minister after winning the election in 1998 (Council for Social Development (CSD), 2002).

⁴ Cambodia became a member of the WTO in 2003 (Swann, 2009).

⁵ The Rectangular Strategy, a successor of the Triangle Strategy, was introduced after the third election in 2003 to improve economic growth, create employment opportunities, strengthen the public sector’s efficiency, and promote social justice and equity (RGC, 2004).

Despite the recent economic achievements, a great number of issues have emerged. These include an increase in the inequality gap between rural and urban areas; the stagnation of rural-agricultural sectors; the inadequacy of employment opportunities for young citizens; and social issues related to landless people (Hang, 2012). These issues are further discussed in the next chapter.

Table 2: The Economic Profile of Cambodia

Currency	US Dollar (US\$) and Riel (R)
Economic growth rate	6% (2011)
GDP	USD 12.83 billion (2011)
Real GDP Growth	10.2% (2010); 7% (2011)
GDP per capita	\$795 (2011)
GDP by sector	Services (39.81%); Agriculture (36.61%); Industry (23.5%) (2011)
People below national poverty line (\$0.5/d)	30.1% (2007)
Labour force	7.97 million (2011)
Labour force by sector	Agriculture (72.2%); Services (19.2%); Industry (8.6%) (2008)
Unemployment	1.7% (2008)
Key business sectors	Textiles and garment factory; tourism; rice; fishery; timber and wood produce; rubber; cement; gemstone; and mining.
Exports	US\$5.219 billion (2011)
Export items	Clothes including footwear; timber; rubber; rice; fish and tobacco.
Key export destination	USA (48.6%); Hong Kong (24.4%), Canada (4.6%) (2005)
Imports	US\$6.709 billion (2011)
Import items	Oil, fuel, gas, cigarettes, gold, building supplies, cars and motorbike, tractors, and medical products.
Key import destinations	Hong Kong (16.1%); China (13.6%); France (12.1%); Thailand (11.2%); Taiwan (10.2%); South Korea (7.5%); Vietnam (7.1%); Singapore (4.9%); Japan (4.1%) (2005)
Inflation	5.8% (2010)
Total External Debt	USD3.2 billion (2006)
Domestic revenue	USD1.37 billion (2008) (Hang, 2012)

Total expenditure	USD930 million (2008)
Economic aid (grant and loans)	USD504 million (2005)

(Hang, 2012; World Bank, 2012a; Swann, 2009).

1.5 Rural-Urban Migration

Cambodia has experienced the highest rate of migration most recently. This migration includes migration from rural to urban as well migration abroad. Fifty seven per cent of the migration is rural to urban, thirty percent is migration abroad, and the rest is to rural areas in either the same or different provinces (Ministry of Planning, 2012). Of the rural to urban rate, 50.4% comprises migration to urban areas in the capital city and 6.2% comprises migration to urban areas in provinces. The main factor leading rural Cambodians to migrate abroad is employment opportunities, followed secondly by wanting to pursue education. However, the leading cause of rural-to-urban migration is education (Ministry of Planning, 2012).

1.6 Official Administrative System

Cambodia consists of 23 provinces, each of which has its own town/city, and one capital city (Swann, 2009). Each province is divided into districts which are split into communes that comprise of a number of villages. The capital city consists of a number of sections which are subdivided into multiple quarters separated into groups. The sections are called “Khan” in the Khmer language, the quarters are called “Sangkat” and the groups are known as “Krom”. The basic administrative level at local areas is at Sangkat for the capital city and at village for the provinces. Each of provinces is administered by a governor. The next administrative level consists of district mayors whose duty it is to oversee their districts and report to their provincial governor. Leaders at commune level are called commune chiefs and they work for the commune council and report to the district mayor. At village level, those who administer the village are called village chiefs and they report to the commune chiefs. The lowest level is group leaders and they are responsible for their group and report to the village chief.

Travelling through Cambodia, excluding the capital city, the most common outlook can lead one to think that it is a country of farmers (Kerbo, 2011). Situated on a large area of flat land, the majority of Cambodian small farmers produce rice. Some might grow fruits, vegetables and feed livestock, chicken or pigs. The most productive lands for rice production are those in the northwest (Battambang province) and southeast (Kompong Cham and Prey Veng), following by the five provinces surrounding these three provinces. The poorest area is found in Pailin, where millions of landmines were

planted by the Khmer Rouge, one of the north-western regions, which was under the control of the Khmer Rouge until the 1990s.

While the capital city and the most famous tourist sites have been filled by the massive building boom with luxurious hotels, apartments, and shopping malls, one must not forget that approximately 90% of the total population have no access to electricity; only 41% have access to clean water; 17% to reasonable-quality hygiene; 6.3% to smooth-paved roads; and only 2% of agricultural land is equipped with an irrigation system (Kerbo, 2011).

1.7 Education

After the mass abolishment of the education system by the Khmer Rouge in during their power in 1975-1979, Cambodia had to restore its education system for its own people from nothing (Pou, 2012b). After the fall from power of this regime in 1979, the National Ministry of Education, which is currently called the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS), was established (Hang, 2012). Schools were opened nationwide followed by the opening of a number of higher education institutions, such as the Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy, and the Faculty of Agriculture, as well as Technical Institutes, such as the Institute of Language; the Institute of Commerce; the Centre for Pedagogical Education and the Schools of Fine Art (Pou, 2012b). The very first private university was opened in 1997 in the capital city of Cambodia after the new policy of the government toward public and private partnership was issued (Pou, 2012b).

However, while the education system allowed as many as possible students to enrol, the government imposed a limit on the number of students who could enrol in upper secondary school and universities. This limit created inequalities, discrimination, nepotism, and a pervasive corruption in the educational system (Pou, 2012b). For example, bribes and political influence were used by rich and powerful parents to obtain seats at universities for their children (Pou, 2012b). This corruption completely limited educational opportunities for other Cambodian citizens. However, thanks to the assistance of the United States, United Nations and other donor countries during the 1990s (Pou, 2012b), the education sector has been impressively improved. This improvement includes equal education opportunities and rights-based value education.

Table 3: School Enrolment Rates

School Enrolment (% gross)	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Tertiary	3%	3%	3%	5%	6%	8%	11%	13%
Tertiary (Female)		2%	2%	3%	4%	5%	8%	10%
Tertiary (Male)		4%	5%	6%	7%	10%	14%	16%
Secondary	27%	31%	35%	39%	42%	44%	45%	46%
Secondary (Female)	21%	25%	30%	34%	37%	41%		44%
Secondary (male)	33%	36%	40%	43%	46%	48%		49%

(MoEYS, 2012).

Government's Commitment to Education

In July 2004, the Prime Minister of the Royal Government of Cambodia proclaimed his determination to carry out the Rectangular Strategy for growth, employment and equity, which was initially created in 2003 for a period of five years (Pou, 2012b):

The Royal Government will promote sustainable and equitable development, and strengthen Cambodia's social fabric to ensure that the Cambodian people are well-educated, culturally advanced, engaged in dignified livelihood and living in harmony in their family and the society (p. 301).

Additionally, in 1993, the government adopted a constitution that ensures the right of Cambodians to quality education, stated under article 65, which is strengthened through the Rectangular Strategy 2008-13 for growth, employment and equity and efficiency (Pou, 2012b). In December 2007, the government also adopted a new education law which was aimed at nurturing a helpful environment where every child can study and prosper (Pou, 2012b).

Schooling System

The schooling system in Cambodia consists of formal and informal education through either public or private schools (Pou, 2012b).

Formal education comprises of three stages which include primary, secondary, and higher education (Pou, 2012b; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization-International Bureau of Education [UNESCO-IBE], 2011). Primary schools consist of grades one to six. Secondary schools are divided into lower secondary and upper secondary schools. Lower secondary schools run from grades

seven to nine, and the upper ones run from grades ten to twelve. After the completion of lower secondary education, students can choose to either continue to upper secondary school or go to technical and vocational training schools which are equally well respected as high school certificates (UNESCO-IBE, 2011).

Tertiary education consists of an Associate degree, which takes two years; a Bachelor Degree, which takes four full time years for general courses, five years for engineering courses, six years for an architectural major, seven years for pharmacy, and eight years for medicine and dentistry courses; a Master degree which takes two years; and a Doctoral degree which requires three years (UNESCO-IBE, 2011).

Currently, there are 91 universities in 19 provinces and the capital city, of which 34 are public and 57 are private (Rany, Zain, & Jamil, 2012; Koam & Meyn, 2011). Both categories of higher education institutions provide a variety of programs, ranging from associate degrees to doctorates with diverse fields; in particular: business, law, tourism, agriculture, economics, engineering, foreign languages and health science (Pou, 2012b). These programs are overseen by government ministries (Rany et al., 2012). The general admission requirement to attend private universities is the successful completion of twelve years of general education (Rany et al., 2012).

The informal education available within Cambodia consists of life skills and literacy programs which are created for those, especially young adults, who do not have the means for formal education (Pou, 2012b). Thanks to such programs, 55,160 people, 64% of which are females, were literate by 2008 (UNESCO, as cited in Pou, 2012b).

Higher Education

It is widely known that the workplace requirements for education have increased. This causes more youth to enrol in higher education (Pou, 2012b). As a result of the government policy toward public and private partnership, the number of higher education institutions, particularly private universities, have dramatically increased nationwide (Pou, 2012b). Although the majority of universities are located in the capital city, a good number of them have opened in provinces so that higher education can be reach people in the provinces (Pou, 2012b).

Article 18 of the Education Law (MoEYS, n.d.) stated:

Higher Education shall teach learners to have complete personality and characteristic and promote the scientific, technical, cultural and social

researches in order to achieve capacity, knowledge, skill, morality, inventive and creative ideas and entrepreneurial spirit to the development of the country (p.7).

In 2003, the Accreditation Committee in Cambodia (ACC) was created to monitor and evaluate the quality and effectiveness of universities (Pou, 2012b).

Youth Policy

Cambodia has developed a comprehensive national policy on youth development due to the rising unemployment rate, the high job-related migration rate (including the risks associated with such migration), and the gender wage gap (MoEYS, 2011). This policy includes improvement in education, training and capacity building; building the spirit of entrepreneurship and the labour market; the provision of health services and education; the promotion of civic engagement; the development of volunteer networks at both national and sub-national levels; decreasing the gender wage disparity; the prevention of drug use and the restoration of youth fitness; the improvement of youth protection, security and justice; and the promotion of sports and recreational activities.

1.8 Social and Family Structure

Cambodian society is organized in a very hierarchical way (Swann, 2009). Levels of respect are granted in accordance with people's age. For example, an older person must be given a higher level of respect by a younger one. Each person is granted a different title ahead of their name. Failing to refer to someone with a proper title means failing to respect someone who is older or it is assumed that your parents failed to advise you on acceptable social behaviour. This hierarchy also applies to inheritance. For example, despite the fact that in theory, land and property are inherited equally by siblings, in reality, the oldest child might get more (Swann, 2009).

The social spectrum in Cambodia comprises of upper class or the elite class, and lower class. The classes are determined by various factors such as reputation, education levels, valuable possessions, and/or members of the royal families (Swann, 2009). What constitutes the higher social classes varies in accordance with Cambodia's different political regimes. During the pre-communist regime, the higher social class consisted of high ranking government officials and influential religious people.

Prior to the fall of King Sihanouk, Royal families made up the highest class. After the ousting of King Sihanouk, during the republican era, social classes were characterized by levels of achievement. All the royal titles were invalidated and replaced by the titles

of military and governmental officials. However, the royal groups were still recognized by the majority of the public. There were three different social groups that existed under that regime. The first social class, the most influential group of the era, were those who held senior positions in the military force. This class was considered a closed group. In other words, anyone from the lower class found it very hard to obtain such positions. The second group was those in the lower ranking elites. Members of this group included tertiary students, professional groups, certain religious officials, and those who worked in civil service sectors. The third group, called the middle class, consisted of skilled workers: entrepreneurs, including retailers; educators; junior military officials; doctors, including nurses and General Practitioners; Buddhist priests; and office workers. The majority of middle class members were those who belonged to non-Khmer ethnic groups, such as Chinese and Vietnamese, while most of the military and civil workers belonged to the Khmer ethnic group.

During the Khmer Rouge Regime, all types of social class were eliminated. Everyone was equal; everyone had to work in the fields like a slave; and there was no individual ownership of property. Only Khmer Rouge officials, including young, brainwashed Cambodians, had power over the large population throughout the country. However, before their elimination, they classified Cambodians under six categories: “the feudal, the capitalist class, the petite bourgeoisie, peasant class, the worker class, and the special class” (Swann, 2009, p. 46). The feudal class consisted of the monarchy and high-ranking government and/or military officers. The petite bourgeoisie comprised of professional people; retailers; civil service workers; employees; and religious priests. The peasant class included rich people (those who could afford to employ farmers to farm their land), those who had a medium level of livelihood, and poor people (those who do not have enough food). The worker class was made up of political party members, self-employed persons, and manufacturing employees. The special class contained lower military officials, including the police, academics and monks.

From the fall of the killing field regime until the present, the elite group has been comprised of those who hold higher positions and belong to the Cambodia’s People Party and are close friends with the Prime Minister (Kerbo, 2011; Chinnery, 2008). Material possessions are vitally important to the Cambodian upper and middle classes since they are a key means to represent their social status (Swann, 2009).

The lower social class, no matter what the regime is, contains rural farmers, including fishermen, craftsmen and urban unskilled labourers (Swann, 2009). The Khmer are a

majority among this class, following by the Cham and a few Vietnamese and Chinese. Within this group, different levels of prestige exist according to gender, age, level of moral attitude, and religious virtue. For example, in relation to gender, men are usually accorded higher status than women. In terms of age, older people are treated differently through attitude and language than are younger people. As regards to moral attitude, the better one behaves, the higher status one is accorded. Good behaviour includes trustworthiness, celibacy, kindness, and sympathy. Overall, villagers pay respect to high-ranking government representatives, teachers, and “Buddhist monks and nuns” (Swann, 2009, p. 45).

Family Structure

The most common type of family in contemporary Cambodia is a nuclear family which comprises of a married couple and their single children. These are the most vitally important relatives in Cambodian society (Swan, 2009) and the people to whom one turns when needing assistance. In rural areas, such units include distant relatives, neighbours and close friends as well. In other words, in rural areas, there is a stronger extended family system than the close nuclear-type, and distant relatives feel a solid commitment to look after the family. This system is very beneficial to poor Cambodians (Kerbo, 2011).

In relation to family responsibilities, beside the shared responsibility to secure their family’s economic status, husband and wife usually have different duties. The husband is usually the head of the family and in charge of ensuring his family has food and housing, while the wife is usually responsible for the management of the household budget, and is the key role model for their children, particularly the daughter, in terms of ethics and religion. In rural Cambodia, the husband is in charge of heavy tasks such as ploughing and harrowing the rice paddies; collecting sugar palm juice; taking care of cows and chickens, trading their animal assets, while the wife involves herself with lighter farm-related tasks in addition to her household budgeting job (Swann, 2009,). Legally, men are the head of the family. However, since the killing fields, female-headed households are very common, especially in rural Cambodia (Kerbo, 2011).

The majority of Cambodian children start school at the age of seven. At age twelve, a son starts helping his father to do outdoor, farm-related tasks and taking care of their livestock; a daughter begins to assist her mum with housework (Steinberge, 1959). Overall, older children are expected to look after their junior siblings.

1.9 Rural versus Urban Outlook and Values

A rural community comprises of typical houses which are built in a rectangular size, ranging from 4x6 to 6x10 meters, covered by a thatch-roof (Swann, 2009). The houses are constructed of wood and/or bamboo on stilts at about three to six meters from the ground to protect them from flooding. A typical house normally comprises three bedrooms, a living room, the parents' room and a daughter's room, since a son can sleep anywhere in the living room or under the house (Swann, 2009). The partition between each room wall is made of dried palm or, if the family is not very poor, wood (Kerbo, 2011). However, homes of poorer people have no separated rooms (Swann, 2009). This pattern is not much different from that described by Steinberge (1959) in the 1960s.

There is usually a backyard for growing fruit and vegetables; a small rice field, which is usually not adequate to feed the whole family; and a small flat structure made of bamboo sitting under the house (Kerbo, 2011). There is a hammock tied to trees, especially palm trees. The kitchen is usually built behind or attached to the house (Kerbo, 2011). Ox carts are usually underneath or in front of the house, even when the family does not own cows. Richer families own a few pigs or cows. However, the housing appearance of the poor has not changed much compared to what existed in 1959 and even up to 1,000 years ago (Kerbo, 2011).

Overall, the living standard and lifestyle of the poor has not changed much compared to that of 1,000 years ago (Kerbo, 2011). In the past 1,000 years, small farmers lived in tiny wooden or bamboo houses built on stilts and covered by a straw-thatch roof. They used cows to plough their farm and carry things. Although in the 21st century, Cambodia is enjoying a building boom and economic growth, the majority of farmers still live in the same living conditions and use traditional farming methods; in fact, some are even worse off, as they have lost their land due to either selling it to pay hospital bills or through land grabs by the rich (Kerbo, 2011).

Richer families in the village might have more assets, such as a television, radio, motorbikes and other consumer goods, than others (Kerbo, 2011). Their house is built of concrete with smooth walls. However, there is no electricity in major rural areas. Village school teachers in Cambodia are usually the most knowledgeable about problems and conditions in the village.

Primary schools tend to be located closer to the villages, however high schools are usually located far away, meaning that they are less accessible to the majority of young rural Cambodians who cannot pay the school fees and do not have transportation to go to school (Kerbo, 2011).

Similar to the capital city, urban areas or provincial townships consist of concrete houses built in a Chinese style, with a few levels, and those in the modern style (Kerbo, 2011). There is usually a shop on the ground floor where residents run their family business. In the township, there is often a market where villagers come to sell their fresh produce or buy raw meat that is typically hung on the stand or laid on wooden counters. Beside the market, it is common for new hotels, guesthouses, beer gardens, restaurants, and Karaoke Television (KTV) to be located. The roads into urban areas are commonly paved.

Rural versus Urban Values

After national independence, urban and rural values have become different due to the new lifestyle of urban residents (Bit, 1991). The rural villagers are likely to be more provincial, traditional and religious, whereas the urban tend to be more "internationalist" (Steinberge, 1959, p. 3), open-minded and non-religious. This difference has led to a separation of rural residents from city ones (Bit, 1991). According to Suksamran (as cited in Bit, 1991, p.25), because only a minority of the powerful group gained an understanding of non-religious political views (through the exposure of education abroad), the vast majority of Cambodians tend to be estranged from political activities since they are still deep in conservative and religious thought.

1.10 Battambang Province

Battambang province is located in the North-Western region of Cambodia, five hours drive from the capital city, Phnom Penh, and a 90 minute drive from the Thai border (Cambodia Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise [Cambodia MSME], 2010). Battambang is known as the second largest province and one of the three most productive provinces agriculturally in the country (Kerbo, 2011).

The size of the province is 11,622 square kilometres (MAFF, as cited in World Food Program (WFP), n.d). The population is one million and that is why this province has become the most crowded province of the country (Cambodia MSME, 2010). In town, there are over 150,000 residents which makes this town the second largest in the country (Cambodia MSME, 2010).

This province is known as the busiest city in the region (Cambodia MSME, 2010). Business activities include agriculture, agri-business, manufacturing, tourism and industrial services (Cambodia MSME, 2010). Besides being nationally famous for its sweet oranges, this province was historically known as the rice hamper of Cambodia (Kerbo, 2011). Every year, one can see farmers packing numerous rice bags to be sold to the world market, normally through Thailand and Vietnam. In addition, according to Cambodia MSME (2010), Battambang is “the largest producer of corn in Cambodia” (p. 5). Besides agricultural activities, this province has a remarkable number of business enterprises. For example, 6,000 private companies are operating in this province (Cambodia MSME, 2010). Additionally, there are nine tertiary institutions in Battambang province, eight are private and only one is public (Cambodia MSME, 2010). Table 4 shows the number of educational institutions in the province.

Battambang has a lower poverty rate and higher literacy rate than other provinces (Cambodia MSME, 2010). However, around eight Kilometres from the town, there is a slum in which resides people who were refugees of the Khmer Rouge and sent back from the refugee camp in Thailand after the fall of the Khmer Rouge (Kerbo, 2011). Houses in this community are constructed of plywood and old metal. Although it is located near the town, the majority of these houses do not have electricity. These people make their living by working as construction, blue-collar workers, and retailers in the township.

Table 4: Number of Educational Institutions in Battambang Province

Educational Institutions	Quantity
Universities	9
Vocational training institutes	3
Language training colleges	2
Teacher training colleges	2
Private schools	38
Secondary schools	113
Primary schools	590
Kindergartens	134

(Cambodia MSME, 2010; MoEYS, 2012).

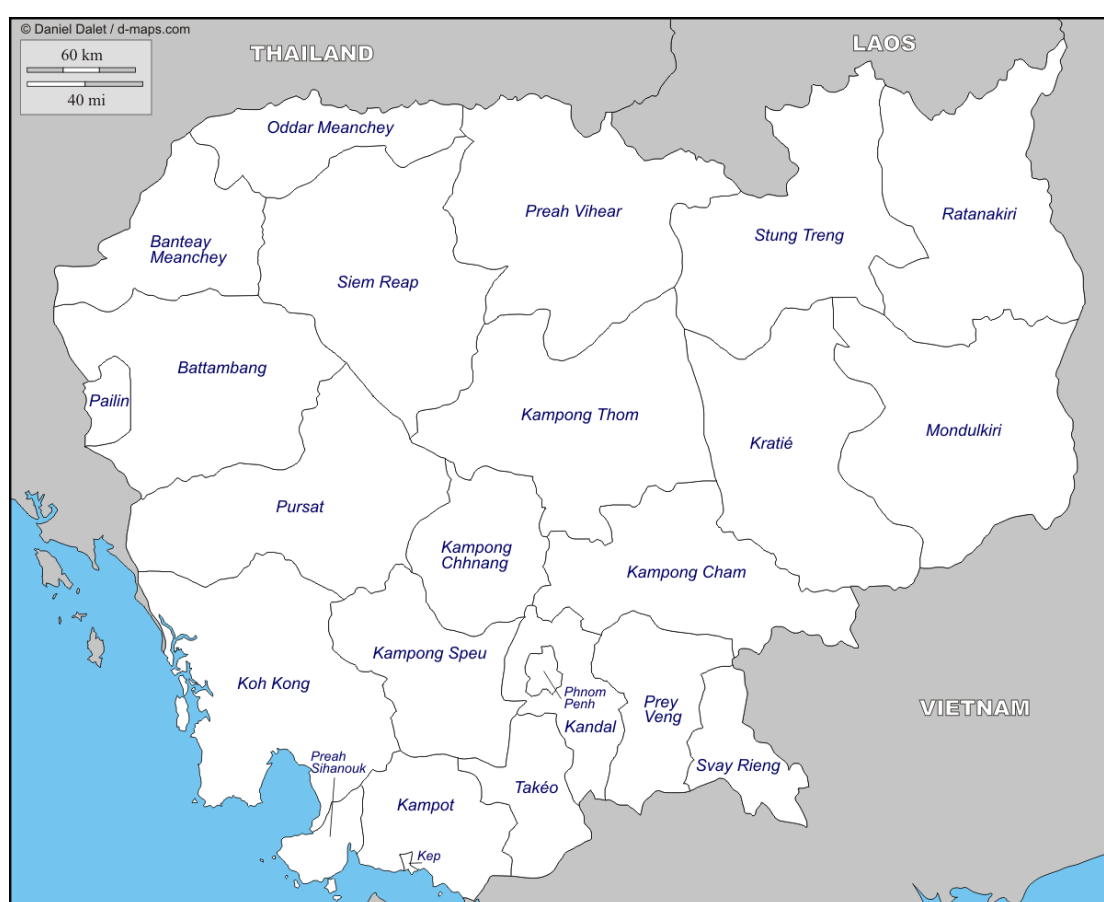


Figure 1: Map of Cambodia

(Retrieved October 19, 2014, from: http://d-maps.com/carte.php?lib=cambodia_map&num_car=26192&lang=en)

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the existing literature on the definition of “youth”; the Cambodian historical situation, including social, economic and political conditions; youth and social issues both in Cambodia and around the globe; information on the success of social justice developments in Cambodia and overseas; and information on levers of change in Cambodia.

2.2 Definition of Youth

Youth or young people are defined differently by different organizations and authors (Yong, n.d). The United Nations (2007) and International Labour Organization (ILO) (2007) define youth or young people as those who are aged between 15 and 24. Cornelio (2011) defined youth as those who are aged 15 to 30; and Wallquist (2002) describes youth as those who are aged between 18 and 45. Unlike others, the World Bank (as cited in Cornelio, 2011) defined youth as those who experience five life transitions: (i) continuing education beyond primary-school age, (ii) going to work for the first time, (iii) growing up healthy, (iv) getting into relationships and forming families, and (v) exercising citizenship, i.e. paying income taxes, having legal rights like voting, and getting a driver’s license.

In Cambodia, the definition of youth also varies. Youth are defined as people aged between 14 and 30 by the Youth Department of Cambodia (Wallquist, 2002; Yong, n.d); those aged between 15 and 30 by the Cambodian People’s Party; those aged between 16 and 39 by FUNCINPEC Party; and those aged between 18 and 40 by Sam Rainsy Party (Yong, n.d). On the other hand, a number of Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) who work with youth, such as the Khmer Youth Association (KYA), define youth as people aged from 16 to 35 years (Yong, n.d). Despite these different definitions, this thesis will focus on young people aged between 20 and 30.

2.3 Departments Involved with Youth

Before moving on to discuss youth-related issues in Cambodia, it is important to have an overview of the departments whose work involves young Cambodians. In relation to government departments, there are four ministries that include youth as beneficiaries: the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS); the Ministry of Social Affairs, Labour, Vocational Training and Youth Rehabilitation (MoSALVY); the Ministry of Health (MoH) and the Ministry of Women’s and Veteran’s Affairs (MoWVA); (Wallquist, 2002). In relation to non-government departments, there are a huge number

of organizations that work for youth; however this literature review focuses on the work of the government departments that work with youth.

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports implements four core policies though there is no general strategy in relation to young people. These policies include the universalization of nine-year fundamental education; the improvement of educational quality; connecting education to the job market; and the establishment of sub-units, such as the “Department for Sports”, the “Department for Higher Education”, and the “Youth Department”. The Youth Department comprises of national and provincial offices of youth and youth and children units at local level. Their tasks include working in collaboration with Councils of Youth, Councils of Children, at high school and primary school respectively, and Student Leaders who are selected by the school deputy director and are in charge of three activities, “Good Child, Good Friend and Good Student” (Wallquist, 2002, p. 16). Nevertheless, due to the shortage of budget and time for assigned people, the arrangements are mostly inactive in most schools. Other tasks consist of youth camping, publication of youth magazines, and mainstreaming information related to HIV/AIDS and human rights. In relation to collaboration, Wallquist (2002) reported that the Youth Department’s staff found relevant ministries did not really cooperate with them.

In relation to the Ministry of Social Affairs, Labour, Vocational Training and Youth Rehabilitation, there are three departments that are responsible for youth, the Youth Management Department, the Youth Rehabilitation Unit, and the Vocational Training department. The common task of the first two departments is to educate and rehabilitate poorly behaved young people and delinquents who are aged between 7 and 18 and come from poor families. Wallquist (2002) further highlighted that poverty is the main cause of delinquency among youth in Cambodia. The rehabilitation unit is particularly in charge of prevention-related strategies in collaboration with communities, the National Authority on Combating Drugs and UNICEF, while the youth management department is responsible for the rehabilitation centre. The third department works with the MoEYS to set up centres of vocational training for young people who are outside the formal school system.

The Ministry of Health is mainly in charge of health-related issues that affect youth, such as HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases. The Ministry of Women’s and Veteran’s Affairs also works on HIV/AIDS, but mainly focuses on girls and women.

Their other main tasks largely focus on “education, economic empowerment, legal protection and women and decision-making’ ((Wallquist, 2002, p. 18).

The activities of youth NGOs in Cambodia include advocacy for youth education, employment opportunities, and their involvement in decision-making and policy establishment; and providing capacity building to students in terms of health, democracy, human rights, including child rights and women’s rights, and environmental issues.

2.4 Youth-Related Issues in Cambodia

Reports and existing literature provide insights on a number of themes with regards to youth and social issues in Cambodia. These include health (The United Nations Country Team, 2009); traffic accidents (Road Safety Cambodia, n.d; Coalition for Road Safety in Cambodia, as cited in Ericson, 2008); domestic violence (CEDAW SEA, 2005); deforestation (BBC World Trust Service, 2011; Independent Forest Sector Review, as cited in McKenney, Yim, Prom & Evans 2004; McKenney & Prom, 2002); drug and alcohol abuse (UNESCAP, 2009; National Authority for Combating drugs, 2008; unemployment (World Bank, 2012b; Hang, 2012; Kerbo, 2011; Cheng, 2010; . Ricigliano , 2009; ILO, 2007; ILO, n.d.); poverty (Mohapatra & Sharma, 2012; Kerbo, 2011; Dalton, Ghosal, & Mani, 2010; Kruey, Kim and Kakinaka, 2010; Lister, 2007 Engwall, Sjöberg & Sjöholm, 2007; Moore, 2005); inequality (Ing & Ghebream, 2012; Kerbo, 2011; UNESCO-IBE, 2011; World Bank, 2007; Rumble, 2007; World Bank, 2006a); and education (The United Nations, 2007; Rumble, 2007).

Firstly, according to The United Nations Country Team’s analysis (2009), health-related issues that challenge youth are: sexual and reproductive health; illnesses resulting from pregnancy; unwanted pregnancies; unsafe abortions; mental health problems which result in suicide; and violence and accidents including traffic accidents. Overall, due to training provided by NGOs and awareness campaigns via the media, young Cambodians, both females and males, understand the issues of sexual and reproductive health and related infections. This includes a high level of awareness of the HIV/AIDS problem.

Secondly, based on data from Road Safety Cambodia (n.d), traffic accidents have become a number one killer in Cambodia. In 2009 alone, there were 21,519 road crashes, 7,022 people were seriously injured and 1,717 were killed. They further found that the most affected victims were active residents aged between 20 and 54. The

negative effects of traffic accidents include disability resulting from drunk-driving, high speeds, and low rates of helmet wearing. A 2007 interview survey conducted by the Coalition for Road Safety in Cambodia (as cited in Ericson, 2008), further found that the ill-effects of traffic accidents include the impact on family's income, children dropping-out-of-primary school, and worse health.

With regards to domestic violence, the survey on Youth Risk Behaviour, conducted by the Ministry of Education in 2005, found that 27% of young people reported experiencing domestic violence (CEDAW SEA, 2005). According to a baseline survey on attitudes toward domestic violence conducted by CEDAW SEA, the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) and UNIFEM in 2005, domestic violence is widely accepted by the majority of Cambodians, including young people. The survey further found a strong belief that women are entitled to fewer rights than men. It is broadly agreed that it is justified for a man to use extreme forms of violence, such as throwing acid or stabbing, when his wife does not respect or obey him. The common impacts on children of families where domestic violence is present were missing school and a fear for their lives.

The next issue is deforestation. The majority of Cambodians believe forests are key actors in bringing rain, maintaining groundwater supplies, and protecting humans and their property from floods and storms (BBC, 2011). According to the Independent Forest Sector Review (as cited in McKenney, Yim, Prom, & Evans, 2004), 3.8 million people, which is almost a third of the whole population, live within 5 kilometres of a forest. On average, forest products make up almost 10 to 20% of their total income. Forest resource collection is also understood as crucial secondary employment for rural dwellers (McKenny & Prom, 2002). Deforestation is therefore a serious issue impacting on rural communities.

2.4.1 Alcohol and Drug Consumption

In relation to drug use, the report of the National Authority for Combating drugs published in June 2008 suggested that 80% of illegal drug users were young people aged less than 25, followed by groups of farmers and labourers at 37.8%; street children and youth at 16.8%; students at 15.4%; and unemployed persons at 14%. The issue of illicit drug use is caused by the availability of drugs and the lack of youth

awareness of the risks of them, the report added. According to the report, 51.2% thought that yama⁶ was not really harmful if it is consumed moderately.

2.4.2 Unemployment

Cambodia is another developing country where the creation of job opportunities is not sufficient for young people. According to the World Bank (2012)^b, the total number of Cambodia's work force was 7.97 million in 2011. Almost 26% of them are youth (ILO, n.d). Thus, unemployment and the lack of a youth social safety net were found to be among the other main problems for Cambodian youth (ILO, 2007). The unemployment rate in 2004 in the capital city was much higher than that in the rural areas (ILO, 2007). For example, in Phnom Penh, the rate was 6.2% among those who were aged between 15-19 and almost 8% among those aged 20-24, while it was only 0.8% in the rural areas due to rural-urban migration (ILO, 2007). More interestingly, youth represented 72% of the Phnom Penh total unemployment rate in 2004.

ILO (2007) further implied that unemployment might lead to hopelessness and despair among youth. There are not many channels for youth to express their opinions about policies that have an effect on their job opportunities. Additionally, unemployed youth are more likely to be at risk of other social issues including drug abuse, sexually transmitted diseases, and HIV/AIDS. Corvalan and Leonardos (as cited in Cheng, 2010) also found that unemployment and under-employment lead to the development of low self-esteem, frustration, and depression among youth and adults.

In highlighting the factors that lead to increasing unemployment rates for Cambodian youth, Cheng (2010) identified the lack of universal primary education as one contributing factor. However, ILO (n.d) mentioned the disproportion between the number of industries and the number of graduates, and the lack of relevant skills of those graduates, as the causes of the increase in unemployment rates. Kerbo (2011) explored corruption as a contributory factor in unemployment. According to his interview with a good number of government officials and NGO staff, to get a job at a garment factory, one has to pay one-month's salary as a bribe to the company recruitment officers. Ricigliano (2009) further found that patronage jobs are a problem for Cambodians. Patronage jobs refer to those filled with candidates who are not qualified for the jobs (ICA, 2009).

⁶ Yama is a term that refers to illegal drugs which is commonly used in Cambodia and Thailand. The word itself is a Thai word which means "crazy medicine".

While most scholars highlight causes and effects of unemployment, Kerbo (2011) provided an overview of employment opportunities and working conditions in Cambodia, especially at garment factory jobs. Jobs at garment factories are mostly in the outskirts of the capital city and only for teenage girls between 17 and 21. These jobs pay only US\$50 to US\$60 per month with very poor working conditions. While these jobs employed 350,000 young teenage girls in the past, 60,000 of them lost their job due to the economic recession and many more became unemployed at the end of 2008.

Table 5: Employment Rates by Gender and Industry in Cambodia

Employment			
	Male	Female	Total
Adults 15+	85%	78%	81%
Agricultural sector	69% of male employed	75% of female employed	72%
Services	23%	16%	19.2
Industry	8%	9%	9%
Self-employed			
	79%	86%	83%
Unemployment			
Total unemployment	1.5%	1.8%	1.7%
Youth (15-24)	3.5%	3%	3.4%

(ILO, n.d.).

2.4.3 Poverty

Poverty has many different definitions in accordance with diverse views. In economic terms, poverty is defined as a certain deficiency in wellbeing (WB, as cited in Mohapatra & Sharma, 2012). In consumption terms, poverty is defined in terms of lacking food, health and housing (Mohapatra & Sharma, 2012). In multi-dimensional terms, poverty refers to a lack of capacity to function in society; the lack of power; poor health conditions; the lack of sufficient education and the lack of political freedom (Mohapatra & Sharma, 2012). In this thesis, poverty is mostly referred to those of multi-dimensional terms.

According to Cambodia Ministry of Planning, poverty is defined as “an inadequacy of resources and inabilities of households or individuals to meet their minimum basic

needs” (Kruy, Kim, and Kakinaka, 2010, p. 6). Being uneducated, unhealthy, and unskilled are universal terms used to define the poor.

Poverty can be assessed by two different measures, a single dimension measure and a multi-dimensional measure (Mohapatra & Sharma, 2012). By using a single dimensional measure, poverty is measured by an individual’s income and expenditure, or as the World Bank called it, as the poverty line per capita income. The poverty line is set in accordance with the estimation of purchasing power parity (PPP) (Kerbo, 2011). For instance, when the World Bank set \$1 as a world poverty line, it means what food items one dollar can buy in the United States of America, something like cheap bread or a burger. Then the PPP measure examines the number of people living in other nations who can afford the same bundle of items. So if the poor in Cambodia live under the poverty line, it implies that they cannot afford to buy the same amount of items that two dollars would purchase in the United States. Previously, the World Bank set one dollar as an international poverty line. However, since the price of food items has increased dramatically since 2008, these poverty estimates have become invalid in some countries, including Cambodia (Kerbo, 2011). Therefore, in 2010, according to Kerbo (2011), the World Bank set a new international poverty line at \$1.25 and \$2 per day. Additionally, this universal poverty line does not consider particular circumstances of people living in various areas around the world. Therefore, Cambodia is provided with its own national poverty line, set by the World Bank, which is \$0.50 per day (Kerbo, 2011). The World Bank also set different poverty lines for different areas in Cambodia. For example, the poverty line for the capital city is 2,351 Riel⁷; 1,952 Riel in urban regions; and 1,753 Riel in rural regions (Mohapatra & Sharma, 2012). In sum, by using a single dimension, there have been three different international poverty lines and three different national poverty lines for Cambodia so far, the \$1 per day, \$1.25 per day and \$2 per day for international poverty lines and the \$0.50, \$0.45, and \$0.35 for Cambodian regions (all figures in US dollars).

Besides measuring poverty using income and expenditure, the World Bank and the United Nations set a US\$0.50 a day poverty line in accordance with the consumption of food and non-food items, particularly the World Bank Cambodian Poverty Reports in 2006 and 2007 (Kerbo, 2011).

⁷ 2,351 Riel is around US\$0.50

By using a multi-dimensional assessment, poverty is measured in terms of capabilities, income or education, health, power or political liberty (Mohapatra & Sharma, 2012). For example, poor people do not have enough capability; might not have enough education or income; have poor health lack power, and may have a shortage of political liberty (Mohapatra & Sharma, 2012). In another view, poverty is explained by the definition of chronic poverty; for example, a mixture of geographical regions; life-cycle stages; health conditions and status in families, community and country (Hume, Moore & Shepher, as cited in Mohapatra & Sharma, 2012, p. 231). Mohapathra and Sharma (2012) explained poverty in terms of structural influences. These include markets; social and political correlations; low asset ownership; various vulnerabilities resulting from multiple factors; “shocks-agro-ecological, political and economic and spatial poverty trap” (p. 231).

According to Kerbo (2011), measuring poverty by using diverse methods helps to produce the highest level of accuracy about the various characteristics of poverty in a certain country.

A variety of literature discuss poverty issues. Kerbo (2011) provided an explanation of more indicators of the state of poverty, including food, nutrition, poor economic development, education and health; and compared Cambodia’s level of these indicators to its neighbours’ levels. The first indicator is food. The estimate of poverty in terms of food is called the food poverty line. The World Bank set the food poverty line at 2,100 calories consumed by a person or at the equivalent price of the amount of these calories. For example, the proportion of people living under the food poverty line had decreased from 22% in 1994 to 17% in 2004 in rural areas; 6% to 3% in the capital city; and 17% to 13% in urban areas.

The next indicator is nutrition. Poor nutrition means undernourishment. According to the 2009 Human Development Report (United Nation for Development Programme (UNDP), 2009), 33% of the Cambodian population is malnourished, while that of Laos is only 19% and Vietnam is only 16%. Additionally, Cambodia was, in 2008, ranked in International Food Policy Research 64th of 88 countries that contain undernourished children and child death. Surprisingly, Laos was ranked 57th, above Cambodia, followed by Vietnam as the 32nd and Thailand, the 23rd. This ranking means that the only countries that ranked below Cambodia are those in sub-Saharan Africa and other countries such as Haiti, Bangladesh and Tajikistan (Kerbo, 2011).

Another poverty indicator is economic development. Considering this indicator, Cambodians have the lowest proportion of people able to access to hygienic water compared to their neighbouring countries. For example, only 17% of the whole population have access to hygienic water in Cambodia, while in Laos that percentage is 30%, in Vietnam it is 61% and 99% in Thailand. The next indicator is education. Kerbo (2011) has stressed primary school enrolment as a key measure for this indicator. In contrast to the preceding poverty indicators, on this indicator, Cambodia ranks higher than Laos and Vietnam. For example, the primary school enrolment rate for Cambodia is 99%, compared to 94% in Vietnam and 84% in Laos. Nevertheless, according to the author's interviews with village teachers and villagers across Cambodia, the figure for Cambodia may be incorrect

The last indicator mentioned by Kerbo (2011) is health, which is described in terms of the rates of life expectancy at birth, infant mortality, and the number of doctors.. The life expectancy rate in Cambodia is still low compared to its neighbours. The rate is around 56 years, while it is 62 in Laos, and 73 in Vietnam. The child death rate is also still high. For example, in 1,000 childbirths, there are 98 losses, whereas there are only 62 in Laos and 16 in Vietnam. In relation to the number of doctors, Cambodia has far fewer physicians than Vietnam. For instance, there are only 16 physicians out of 100,000 persons in Cambodia, but there are 53 in Vietnam (there are no statistics for Laos). Unlike the previous three factors, the rate of childbirths done by professional nurses and midwives is 32%, which is higher than Laos which is only 19%, though lower than Vietnam. This difference is due to the fact that the definition of professional health care staff is looser in Cambodia than it is in Laos and Vietnam (Kerbo, 2011).

Kerbo (2011) further confirmed after his qualitative research in Cambodia, Vietnam, Thailand and Laos that in spite of the accuracy of the poverty data in most parts of the regions, in reality, Cambodia is poorer than what the qualitative data express. However, Kerbo (2011) added, the situation in Cambodia is not that bad compared to sub-Saharan African regions.

Parr and Kuma (as cited in Mohapatra & Sharma, 2012) explained poverty by using three traditional views: income, basic needs and capacity. In the income view, a person is poor when their income is less than the poverty line. With regards to basic needs, poverty means an inability to meet basic needs such as food, housing, clothing, and healthcare. From a capacity standpoint, a person is categorized as poor when they fall short of the capacity needed to perform their duty in society.

Poverty Data

Kerbo (2011) summarized poverty data from the World Bank ranging from the first report to more recent ones and compared the statistics to what he saw in the field. The first report in 2004 assessed that the rate of people living below national poverty line in Cambodia decreased from 47% in 1994 to 35% in 2004. However, Kerbo (2011) argued, the decrease was mostly in urban areas, especially in the capital city, whereas in rural areas it actually went up. The misleading figure was due to the fact that in 1994 the World Bank researchers did not have access to the areas that were under the control of the Khmer Rouge and therefore had to estimate some data. Based on the same poverty line in the World Development Report 2010 published by the World Bank, according to Kerbo (2011), 35% of the whole population lived below the poverty line, with 38% in rural regions and only 18% in the towns and city.

The World Bank 2006 report advised that the poverty rate in Cambodia really dropped, though it was a slight drop, after the 1990s and inequality in terms of income did not rise as much as a majority of civil society had supposed. Yet, Kerbo (2011) claimed, the living standard of people in a majority of the villages he visited across the country are not much different from that of people 1,000 years ago. The 2008 report used the one-dollar-per-day measure and showed that 66% of Cambodia population lived below \$1 poverty line. Kerbo (2011) confirmed the data was quite correct.

Table 6: Poverty Data based on Various Poverty Line Definitions

Poverty headcount (% of population)	1994	2004	2007	2008
At \$0.5 (national poverty line)	47%	35%	30%	
At \$1.25 a day	45%	38%	32%	23%
At \$2 a day	75%	66%	60%	53%
At rural poverty line (% of rural population)		38%	35%	
At urban poverty line (% of urban population)		18%	12%	

(World Bank, 2012b).

Causes of Poverty

Poverty primarily results from two key factors, external and internal (Dalton, Ghosal, & Mani, 2010). External factors include the social environment, imperfection of markets, corruption, and other kinds of governance failures, whereas internal factors include people's aspirations and personal beliefs. The external factors can be addressed, as suggested by Dalton and his colleagues (2010), through the provision of financial support, a change of social environment, and strengthening institutions. The internal factors such as people's aspirations and beliefs can be relaxed by the adjustment of one's aspirations and beliefs.

Kerbo (2011) and Lister (2008) highlighted family debt as another cause of poverty. Through his qualitative research in rural Cambodia, Kerbo (2011) confirmed a good number of rural residents had to sell their land or seek bank loans at a very high interest rate (20% per month) in order to pay the hospital bill for their children.

Kerbo (2011) clarified that the factors preventing poor Cambodians from moving out of poverty are not their personal and familial features. According to his observations, Cambodians, especially those who live in rural areas, are strongly determined and hard-working people. However, due to the shortage of opportunities, such good characteristics may not pay off.

Collier (as cited in Kerbo, 2011) mentioned "four main traps" (p. 164) that maintain a nation's poverty. These include countries where "73% have been in a recent civil war; 29% have abundant natural resources; 30% are landlocked with few resources; and 79% have had a long period of bad governance" (p. 164).

Kerbo (2011) further explained that "landlocked" does not describe Cambodia. Neither is civil war currently happening in Cambodia. Therefore, there are only two main traps that might keep Cambodia poor: the rich natural resources and chronic poor governance. In relation to natural resources, the country is still poor due to the short-term view of the government coupled with short-sighted, unsustainable economic policies. Limited transparency and widespread corruption among government officials also contribute to poverty in the country.

Rural and Urban Poverty in Cambodia

Poverty in Cambodia is seen as a rural issue (Engwall, Sjöberg & Sjöholm, 2007). Approximately 80% of the rural poor are reliant on rice production (Hang, 2012). In Phnom Penh, the capital city of Cambodia, only the smallest number of people live under the poverty line due to the fact that it can offer options that can maintain some families (Engwall, et al., 2007). The gap between the income of rural and urban is rising. This is due to the fact that the poor living in rural areas have less access to the markets (Engwall, et al., 2007) available in urban areas

Table 6: The Rate of People Living below the Poverty Line According to Location

	2004	2007
Rural	34%	35%
Urban	21%	12%
Phnom Penh	5%	

(CSES, 2004; World Bank, 2012b).

The causes of rural poverty are different across provinces. There are five main regions in Cambodia: Phnom Penh, the plains, the coast, Tonle Sap, and the Plateau/mountains. Engwall et al. (2007) found that in coastal areas, rural households are better off than those who live in other regions since they have more access to non-agricultural jobs in the cities and abroad. They also found that the access to various sources of income is beneficial to rural landless poor. This is also confirmed by Kerbo (2011). For example, Kerbo (2011) reported that families who live near rivers or ponds can earn a little extra (around US\$0.75 or \$1 per day) from selling fish and frogs they have caught nearby to cover their inadequate rice production during rainy season each year.

Although the poverty rate slightly decreased in rural areas, where 90% of the poor reside, the standard of living for most of the poor has not much changed. Furthermore, the rural poor's living standards are arguably as poor now as they have been for the past 1,000 years, despite the noticeable economic growth rate for the country (Kerbo, 2011). Through field trips to rural villages across the country, he observed that most of the poor still use car batteries instead of electricity and get water from local drilled wells and rivers, streams or small lakes by using traditional means, such as metal buckets.

Swann (2009) identified the shortage of basic infrastructure, which prevents the poor from having enough education and useful skills to improve their living standard, as the main cause of rural poverty. Kerbo (2011) highlighted the lack of irrigation systems and the high rate of interest charged by the banks as factors contributing to the lack of basic infrastructure. For example, only 9% of the rural population has access to electricity and not more than 7% of the areas in the countryside have an irrigation system. What is worse is that the number of poor people in rural areas is growing due to the loss of their land through land grabs and/or selling their land to save their children's lives. Farmers regularly experience land loss despite the growing number of micro-loan programs at community level; the interest rate is too high for them to repay these loans. More importantly, even if they have land, approximately 70% of rural Cambodian peasants do not produce enough rice to supply themselves and their family. This reality is a harsh contrast to the formal declaration of the Prime Minister that Cambodia is "one of the top ten rice exporters in the world" (Kerbo, 2011, p. 52). However, no one is extremely starved in rural Cambodia, Kerbo (2011) confirmed.

Corruption and the dysfunction of the government are the main factors that keep these citizens poor (Kerbo, 2011). Although the government has many development plans and receives a huge amount of foreign aid, few of the plans have been implemented and little of the received aid has reached the rural community. Kerbo (2011) has further claimed that the future of rural people is getting worse.

Kerbo (2011) has also argued that rural people in Cambodia are hardworking and they are strongly determined to prosper. However, without opportunities, these personal features can only help them succeed so far. Strong determination and a hard-working personality alone cannot lead people to prosper, Kerbo (2011) explained. It is the government's duty to make opportunities available to their citizens. This can be done through the improvement of physical infrastructure, such as roads and schools, and human infrastructure, including fair and transparent economic settings which allow citizens to generate lucrative opportunities for themselves (Kerbo, 2011).

In relation to physical infrastructure, the Cambodian government, with the assistance of international donors, has done a great job over the last few decades. For example, a growing number of primary and elementary schools have been built in rural areas where rural residents can get access on foot (Kerbo, 2011). Additionally, the national highway was completely reconstructed; and provincial and rural infrastructure were improved so that people in the rural villages can connect to urban markets easily

(Hang, 2012). However, in terms of human infrastructure, the government of Cambodia has not performed as others expected, compared to other Southeast Asian countries (except Burma), Kerbo (2011) has claimed.

While poverty in rural areas has been somewhat neglected by the government through corruption, the poverty situation in urban areas has been worse (Kerbo, 2011). The common theme for the poor in urban areas, especially Phnom Penh city, is suffering from forced eviction due to the building boom in Cambodia. Kerbo (2011) summarized the facts and figures as follows. First, since 1993 around 133,000 inhabitants who live in poor areas in the capital city, and others in the 13 provinces, have suffered from forced evictions conducted by the government's military and police. Often, they were forcefully transferred at midnight to a rural relocation site where there were no employment opportunities, no farmed land, and no appropriate housing. Second, due to the new large land leases made to international construction firms, approximately 150,000 people are estimated to be at risk of forced eviction in the near future.

Youth Poverty

Youth poverty usually results from "childhood deprivation and parents' chronic poverty" (Moore, 2005, p.4). Kruey, Kim and Kakinaka (2010) found that 6.3% of poor people in Cambodia are chronically poor; and 18.5% are transient poor. Chronically poor refers to those who are poor and highly vulnerable, while transient poor refers to those who are poor but less likely to be vulnerable. The authors' empirical results further found, among the chronically poor, that 0.2% are in Phnom Penh, 5.2% are in urban areas, and 7.3% are in rural areas. Out of the transient poor, 7.5% are in the capital city, 14.3% in urban areas and 20.6 in rural locations. Kruey et al. (2010) added that the chronically poor are likely to fall below the poverty line, whereas the other group might successfully move themselves out of poverty in the future.

Poverty reduction

Kerbo (2011) has stressed the key factors that contribute poverty reduction and economic development, namely government efficiency and the capacity of the state. Kerbo (2011) has further suggested that one effective approach to reducing poverty in Cambodia is to ensure that any wealth from oil is not stolen by people in positions of power and instead that the whole country benefits.

Female-Headed Households

As stated earlier in chapter one, it is common to see a great number of households headed by females in Cambodia. A female headed household refers to a household

where a woman is solely in charge of the whole household, ranging from housework to decision-making for the sake of the family (Hang, 2012). According to the Cambodian 2008 census (as cited in Hang, 2012), 25% of Cambodian households are headed by women.

Miwa (2005) provided an insight into the conditions of female-headed families in Cambodia. Female-headed families comprise families headed by a single mother who is either unmarried, widowed or divorced or whose husband is unemployed. The number of households headed by women in urban areas is higher than that in rural locations (Miwa, 2005). In terms of divorce, men frequently leave the children for their wives to take care of without providing financial support.

Miwa (2005) also discussed the ways the women fight for survival. However, the author focused on only one village for her case study. In this village, women make their living from silk and rice production. Silk production brings them extra cash income, while rice production is for their daily diet. The common obstacle the women face is a lack of labour for rice production.

2.4.4 Inequality

It is noticeable that there are many different views on the poverty and inequality in Cambodia today. Kerbo (2011) has suggested that based on the World Bank 2006b report, Cambodia has had a rapid increase in the gap between the rich and the poor. This gap maps reasonably closely to the divide between the incomes of rural and urban populations. However, in contrast, the World Bank (2007) has argued that the biggest gap in income inequality occurs in urban rather than rural zones, and that the number of people suffering from income disparity is higher in the urban population than in the rural population.

Kerbo (2011) provides a summary of the types of inequality that exist in Cambodia by dividing the situations into three categories: unequal distribution of recent economic growth, land and education.

Unequal Distribution of Economic Growth

As seen in the World Bank (2006b) data, food and non-food consumption by the poorest 20%, mostly rural residents, increased by only 8% between 1994 and 2004 compared to the 45% increase for the richest 20% of residents for the same period.

Kerbo (2011) stressed that the increasing land loss of small farmers accompanied by the rise of large farms possessed by the elite groups are the main causes of such inequality. The author further explained that tens of thousands of poor farmers have been evicted and the lands are being leased to the large agribusiness companies owned by foreigners or the close friends of the Prime Minister. Such rising inequality suggests that Cambodia's economic development is unlikely to continue, Kerbo (2011) added. This view is shared by Rumble (2007) who has also argued that an increase in inequality within a society is an indication of worse economic growth.

Kerbo (2011) argues that the following is evidence that the recent economic development only benefits a very small division of the population while the other 90% are unreached:

- Ninety per cent of the population still live with no access to clean water and electricity.
- The majority of poor families do not have enough land to produce to sufficiently feed themselves and their children.
- The rich are becoming richer, while the poor are getting poorer.
- The lives of the large poor population have got worse since many of them lost their homes and land as a result of personal debts, alongside the 2001 economic boom and period of building growth in the capital city. Since 2003, 250,000 people have been forcibly evicted and had their lands removed from them. Since 1990, over 10% of the total population has suffered from forced evictions in Phnom Penh. In comparing the ways in which the Cambodian government treats its people with the ways that neighbouring governments treat their people, Kerbo (2011) concluded that while economic development inevitably results in dislocations, it does not need to be done in such a brutal fashion; for example, the Cambodian government has transferred people in the middle of the night, beat people, threatened people and burnt down people's homes.

Ing (2012) also confirmed the unequal distribution of recent Cambodian economic growth. This growth includes a rapid growth of inequality during 2004-2009; a quarter of the population living below the poverty line; and insufficient jobs and social services, such as education and health care, being available to rural residents. The author further explained that insufficient employment and education contribute to the limitation of people's economic prosperity.

However, the World Bank (2006b) claimed that income inequality has not grown like others thought and that poverty in Cambodia has somewhat dropped since 1990. Such a different view has resulted from the different estimates of inequality used in their studies more recently.

Land inequality

Another type of inequality resulting from the economic growth is land inequality. Kerbo (2011) reviewed inequality of land occurring in Cambodia by citing the data from Amnesty. The number of landless farmers has increased from only 3% in 1993 to 23% in 2008. This is accompanied by 45% who are nearly landless, which means their land is less than one hectare. Next, by 2004, the poorest 40% of the population owned only 10% of land, while the richest 20% to 30% occupied approximately 70%, 10% of which is owned by the Prime Minister's Pheapimex Corporation. These figures matched Kerbo's (2011) observations during his field work. For example, the number of large plantations being increasingly leased for 99 years to foreign companies, such as Vietnamese, Korean, and the Arab countries, through significant bribes. Additionally, Kerbo (2011) argued that the PM's speech to Cambodian about future food deals with the Middle East indicates that more and more poor farmers will lose their land to large plantation corporations.

Engwal et al. (2007) also see the need for large pieces of land to be used for development and the improvement of physical infrastructure, such as roads, as a contributing factor in the transfer of land from the poor to the rich. As a result, the poor end up with insufficient land to sustain their livelihoods.

Educational Inequality

In terms of inequality in Education, there is a large amount of literature written by scholars, Non-Government and Governmental organizations, about education inequality in Cambodia. This literature includes unequal access to education, its causes and recommended solutions.

Rumble (2007) viewed education as one of the main human rights for which the state must take responsibility to ensure maximum choices are accessible to its people.

The United Nations (2007) underlined disparities of education that urban and rural young people receive in third-world countries including Cambodia. The inequalities include differences in the standards and quality of infrastructure and public services, such as schools and teachers. For example, well-equipped schools and qualified

teachers are scarce in rural zones. As a result, rural students do less well academically, mainly in mathematics, information technology, and international languages, compared with the urban students despite their determination.

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS) (2010) has identified a decrease in the gender disparity and geographical disparity of school enrolments, while also acknowledging the rise of an economic gap in the enrolment rate. As a result of the implementation of Article 31 of the Education Law (UNESCO-IBE, 2011): “every citizen has the right to access quality education of at least nine years’ duration in public schools free of charge” (p. 2), the gender and geographic disparities in the enrolment rate have decreased rapidly (MoEYS, 2010). However, the Ministry also found a big gap between the enrolments of the rich and the poor; one reason for this gap is the extra charges that students are asked to pay by some teachers (VSO Cambodia, 2011; Kerbo, 2011).

The International Institute for Education Planning (IIEP) (2011) emphasized the unequal access to education between the rich and the poor. Due to the existence of corruption, poor and rural students who do not manage to pay the extra payments to teachers, are usually excluded from education. The IIEP (2011) also mentioned another cause of this inequality which was that “parents do not yet see the value of education” (p. 36). Cheng (2010) also sees corruption, economic coercion, inefficient legal and court systems, and household responsibility as the main obstacles preventing young people from having access to education.

Additionally, the UNDP (2009) found that access to secondary education is still limited for young people in rural areas. There are still a number of illiterate young people aged between 15 and 24, in particular girls. The barriers highlighted in the UN study include distance from home, family commitments which include obligations to help with housework, and household factors, including wealth. The study also revealed the lack of quality of education in Cambodia.

Pou (2012a) has also provided a summary of the obstacles contributing to unequal access to education. These include poverty, distance between schools and homes, lack of secondary schools in rural areas, different quality between rural and urban teachers, and the shortage of governmental funding. For example, there are no schools in 187 communes. In terms of government funding, Pou (2012a) stressed that the government spending on education is only 1.6% of GDP.

In relation to the difference in quality between primary school teachers' qualifications in remote and urban areas, Pou (2012a) explained that primary school teachers who wish to be placed in urban areas are required to have higher secondary school certificates, whereas teachers for rural areas are only required to have lower secondary school certificates. These different requirements clearly reflect an inequality in the teaching that students from different areas receive.

Unlike other authors, Pou (2012a) and Wallquist (2002) highlight the barriers that students face in enrolling in higher education. Despite the growth of higher education institutions, not all young Cambodians are able to enrol due to a number of constraints. The authors claimed that poverty is the main obstacle preventing young Cambodians from enrolling at tertiary education. However, the distance between homes and universities is also an obstacle for young female students (Kerbo, 2011). Kerbo (2011) found that students who live in remote areas do not have access to high schools if they cannot cover the cost of the daily trip and the additional "informal" fees charged by teachers. One of his participants said he cannot see any way that his daughter, who dreamed of becoming a doctor, can achieve her dream since his family cannot pay for higher education for her. Kerbo (2011) further compared the situation to that in Thailand. If a Thai village girl got a good grade from high school and wished to become a doctor, she can apply for a government scholarship to become a nurse prior to the enrolment in medical school. This situation is very different to the situation in Cambodia where there is no such program available.

Pou (2012a) recommends a number of solutions to promote education equality in Cambodia. These include investment of more resources in remote and rural zones with clear policies, the provision of additional scholarships to poor students and the elimination of extra fees charged by teachers.

Gender Inequality

Wallquist (2002) discussed a set of traditional rules which prevent Cambodian girls from enjoying equal rights to men. The set of rules is called 'Chbab Srey' which means "rules for women" (p. 14). The rules describe how a girl should behave in order to be a well-behaved girl and a good wife for her future husband; for instance, good girls are not supposed to speak loudly or walk quickly; good girls are expected to control their behaviour at all times and be tolerant and obedient to their husbands and parents, and so on. These rules clearly reflect the inequality between men and women in Cambodia.

Although the Cambodian Constitution in 1993 highlights equal principles for men and women, to assure equality of rights for women and eliminate any different treatment towards women, the author added, this does not help much. Cambodian women still experience discrimination, an abuse of their rights and many kinds of obstacles.

However, Dev, Sharp and Costa (2010) have also outlined the progress of the government's promotion of gender equality. Tasks that have been achieved include the enforcement of the prevention of domestic violence law in 2005; the promotion of female participation in leadership training courses and the encouragement of women to become candidates in the elections at local levels. In the employment market, the labour participation rate for women is becoming higher than that for men. This increase results from the growing number of garment factories, along with the rise of agricultural exports (Dev et al., 2010). This data suggests that job opportunities for women are limited to unskilled, low-salary ones and those with difficult work conditions (Royal Government of Cambodia [RGC], as cited in Dev et al., 2010). For example, the majority of women in Cambodia receive a salary that is 33% lower than the majority of men receive (Dev et al., 2010).

At the political level, the proportion of women holding political seats in parliament is still far lower than men at only 9.8%. However, it is noticeable that there are now more women holding senior positions in government offices. For example, the rate of women holding Ministerial positions increased from 6.6% in 2003 to 7.1% in 2009; in Secretary of State positions, it has increased from 7.1% to 8.8%; and in Under-Secretary of State positions from 7.5% to 15.1% (Hang, 2012). At the national level, only 9% women hold a position of General Directors compared to 91% men, according to the same source. In the Judicial sphere, there is an equal proportion of women and men holding the position of "General Prosecutor"; however, far fewer women hold other positions in the Judiciary (Hang, 2012).

In the domain of education, significant progress has been made at primary school level. As seen in Table 9, although the enrolment rate is a bit lower for girls, the completion rates for both girls and boys are identically high at 90% (World Bank, 2012b). However, despite the identical completion rate between girls and boys at primary school level, the United Nation Development Program (UNDP) (2012) reports that there is an unequal rate of enrolment for girls in higher education. Although the rate of boys and girls who attend school until the age of 14 is almost the same, it is noticeable that a smaller number of girls further their education. One factor that contributes to this lower

rate for girls is that parents tend to be more concerned about their daughters losing connection with traditional values than their sons. Additionally,

Wallquist (2002) further added that Cambodian girls face more challenges than boys in terms of an access to higher education. These challenges include responsibilities for housework, taking care of siblings, and more importantly the location of universities which are usually located in town. Unlike boys who usually have access to alternative accommodation, such as staying at the Buddhist temples if their houses are far from the university and they cannot afford rent, girls do not have such alternative. In recognizing such constraints, according to the Prime Minister recommended universities build female dormitories to enable young female students to access to tertiary education (Wallquist, 2002).

Table 7: Indicators of Gender Equality in Cambodia

Population		
	Female	Male
% of total population (2011)	51%	49%
Urban (2010)	1,520,627	1,406,183
Rural (2010)	5,808,158	5,567,811
Life expectancy at birth (2011)		
Years	64	62
Literacy (2010)		
Adult age 15+	69%	85%
Youth (15-24)	86%	88%
School enrolment and completion rate		
Primary schools enrolment	97% (2011)	100% (2011)
Primary completion	90%	90%
Secondary schools	33% (2007)	37%
Higher Education	11% (2011)	18% (2011)
Labour force		
Total labour force	50% (2010)	50% (2010)
Labour force participation (aged 15-64)	82% of female pop.	88%
Age 15+	78% (2010)	85% (2010)
Age 15-24	71%	70%
Employees		
Agriculture	75% (2008)	69% (2008)

Industry	9%	8%
Service	16%	23%
Wage and salary employees	14%	21%
Self-Employed		
% of employed female/males	86% (2008)	79% (2008)
Vulnerable employment		
% of female/male employment	86% (2008)	79% (2008)
Unemployment		
% of female/male labour forces	2% (2008)	2% (2008)
Age 15-24	3%	4%
Positions in parliament		
% seats at the Parliament	9.8%	81.2%

(World Bank, 2012b; Hang, 2012; Dev et al., 2010).

2.4.5 Human Rights and Youth

A range of literature focusses on youth and human rights in Cambodia (Flauss, 2009; Parsa, 2011; United Nations Country Team, 2009; Yong, n.d). Flauss (2009) has highlighted three elements of freedom of expression; these include “the freedom to express opinion, freedom to communicate information, and the freedom to receive information” (p. 809). Parsa (2011) further discussed forms of expression which include either verbal or written or action.

The United Nations Country Team’s (UNCT) (2009) study analysed youth rights to participate in decision making in development processes. The UNCT (2009) study also found that young Cambodians in their study had a desire to participate in their community development processes but did not have any chance to do so. This study agreed that youth participation in politics is low. Yong (n.d.) found that the government imposed restrictions on political discussions in educational institutions. However, the author found youth expression in political issues did exist when it was arranged by certain NGOs.

State Duties and Human Rights

Hang (2012) provided an overview of the human rights situation in contemporary Cambodia. The Cambodian government has employed and endorsed almost all of the international conventions on the protection of human rights. The author also stated that human rights education for the Cambodian people was important to the government. He provided a few examples of how the government respects human rights. For

example, the press, political parties, and labour associations are liberally operating; there is an assurance of freedoms for individuals and collective groups; and both local and international media also delight in their freedom in the country. He also acknowledged the hard work of NGOs, particularly to raise the awareness of social issues in Cambodia.

According to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, any state that endorses the covenant accepts that they will protect and respect human rights (United Nations Human Rights, n.d). While Article 31 of the Cambodian constitution says that Cambodia will respect and realize the rights outlined in this covenant and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Cambodia Centre for Human Rights, n.d), human rights in Cambodia have declined in terms of freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly and association, and land rights (Cambodia Centre for Human Rights, n.d).

Levers of Social Change in Cambodia

In recent years, the space for influencing social change appears to have narrowed. Kheang and So (2011) found that the public spaces that used to be available for individuals and civil society groups to express their concerns over the policies of the government have been tightened after the CPP's consolidation of power in 2003. However, the authors discovered that to prevent public resentment and avoid the loss of votes, the government did not implement forced evictions in the period during the elections. This decision implies that the government really needs citizens' votes and that this reality may allow citizens to apply pressure on the government to change their current practices by a voting boycott. This implication is supported by key findings of The World Bank's (2006a) case studies conducted with people affected by the justice system.

For rural communities, land expropriation is a common concern. The World Bank studies (2006a) outlined how those who were affected by land expropriation would go directly to the Prime Minister to solve their problems if a solution could not be found at provincial levels. The norm of the local authorities' non-responsiveness has increased the trust that the citizens have in NGOs and reduced their trust in the authorities (World Bank, 2006a). Additionally, the studies further confirmed the implication that the pressures for the government to respond to the interests of the poor derive from firstly, the Prime Minister's concern with preventing social instability that could emerge from land grabbing in 2002 and 2005; secondly, the party needs to maintain its legality to

gain votes from the large rural population; and thirdly from the government's desire to be seen as a responsible state in the eyes of international donors.

Furthermore, the World Bank studies (2006a) found villagers were successful in getting the state to respond around land disputes with local companies, not through laws or official dispute and resolution processes, but by placing political pressure on the main decision makers. The willingness of the villagers to take part in joint claims was attributed to the degree of dependence that villagers had on the land for their livelihood; the willingness of local informal advocates and their ability to organize; the accessibility of advocacy support, such as reliable information and human rights NGOs; the successful claims of neighbouring villages; and the availability of space for citizens and NGOs to process their claims.

Finally, the World Bank studies (2006a) suggested structures to promote the joint claims and improve their effectiveness. The structures include the advancement of grassroots leaders' facilitation and coalition-building skills; the improvement in accessibility of trusted information and advocacy resources; and the reduction of fear of expressing opinions in dialogue between residents and government officials, through the creation of local public forums and the enhancement of interactive media. However, only disputes with small scale companies were discussed in this study.

The Ricigliano (2009) found that young Cambodians have a different attitude toward change compared to the older generation. The latter views contemporary Cambodia as acceptable in comparison with what they had during the Khmer Rouge period; while the former perceive the current circumstances as the "status-quo" that needs to be changed to be less corrupt, with more political freedom, better standards of living, more economic opportunity, better education, and better government services. In sum, older people fear change whereas younger people are optimistic about their future, and have high expectations and desire for change. The analysis further predicted that violence and instability are more likely to happen if the patron-client system is disrupted because the growing youth dissatisfaction is likely to lead to a mobilization against the government.

Civic Participation, Democracy and Human Rights

In relation to civic participation, democracy and human rights, the BBC World Service Trust collaborating with the United Nations for Development Program (UNDP) conducted a study in 2010 focused on youth civic participation focusing on knowledge,

attitudes, practices and media. The study found that 95% of Cambodian youth are proud of the direction in which Cambodia is moving and of being Cambodian. However, according to the study, most of them have low awareness of the terms related to democracy and human rights; a reluctance to talk about issues related to politics; and do not know about local social issues and do not participate in the solution of these issues. The latter results are supported by studies conducted by Pact Cambodia (2008). The most interesting finding of the study is the fact that a majority of youth think that “all Cambodians are respected equally” (BBC & UNDP, 2010,p. 11), which is in apparent contrast to the situation outlined in the following sections.

In addition to the BBC survey (2010), Mansfield (2008) and the United Nations Country Team (2009) found a very low level of youth activism. The factors influencing this low level include governance structures, the absence of the rule of law and the social emphasis on wealth, status and age, particularly the hierarchical nature of Cambodian society which requires the young to respect their elders. The study of the United Nations Country Team (2009), through interviews with the commune council members, further found that youth hardly participate in commune activities due to their daily life activities.

2.5 Social Mobility

Hang (2012) has stated that social mobility is caused by economic development progress. The emergence of a middle class is an example he provides for social mobility in Cambodia.

Swann (2009) stated that social mobility, before the 1970s, was developed at an urban level since the opportunity for increasing socioeconomic status was seen as minimal for people in rural areas in Cambodia. He explained that a Cambodian man can elevate his status through starting monkhood or education; and then serving in civil or military service when he wanted to increase it further. He further added that the government job opportunities were regarded as extremely valuable by young people; however, the number of young people exceeded the available positions.

2.6 Limitations of Economic Development

Kerbo (2011) highlighted the factors that limit economic development and poverty reduction in Cambodia. These include corruption, state incapacity, and a shortage of physical and human infrastructure.

Corruption

Cambodia was ranked by Transparency International (as cited in Kerbo, 2011) in 2006 as one of the most corrupt out of 163 countries. Surprisingly, Laos was among the less corrupt, coming in after only 50 countries. The same source in 2007 surveyed businesses in the same countries and concluded that 90% of companies in Cambodia take bribes (Transparency International, as cited in Kerbo, 2011). Additionally, Cambodian households reported the highest rate of bribing in the 12 countries surveyed in the Asian region at 47%, following by 29% in Indonesia (Transparency International, as cited in Kerbo, 2011). What was worse was that the practice of bribing existed from the top to the lowest levels of government institutions as well as in the private sector.

Kerbo (2011) claimed that, based on the World Bank indicators, the level of corruption in Cambodia has not changed between 1996 and 2006. Although an anti-corruption law was approved in 2009, Kerbo's (2011) participants, both government staff and international NGOs, believed there were no tangible actions taken. Kerbo's informants included high-ranking officials who underlined the lack of business law which produced a situation where foreign and local corporations are taking advantage of Cambodians and that inequality is growing rapidly (Kerbo, 2011). Low salaries paid in the government sector contribute to corruption, inefficiency in government function and a lack of competent staff in government's key institutions. Kerbo's (2011) interviewees admitted that they are forced to use bribes due to their low salary.

Kerbo (2011) found that corruption operates at all levels of Cambodian society. Firstly, at the highest level of government official, including the Prime Minister; for example, Kerbo (2011) found that in the forced eviction case at Boeng Kak Lake, according to a European organization's evidence, the lake is a secret deal between a government official at the highest level and a Cambodian-Chinese corporation. The lake was acquired for \$78 million while the estimated cost of the lake was two billion dollars (Kerbo, 2011).

The second level at which corruption operates is through international aid. A large fraction of the total aid goes to high-ranking officials' personal accounts before any reaches the real programs at community levels. One of Kerbo's (2011) participants gave the example of the leader of the National Museum who had claimed personal payments from lending Cambodian items to a European Museum.

The third level is in the employment sphere, ranging from high to low levels of government departments and in private companies. Kerbo (2011) found one example of such corruption from an informant whose relative had to pay \$20,000 to be promoted to a higher position. The relative took the deal after figuring out that he could earn that amount in a year. At lower levels, especially at garment factories, one has to pay a one-month bribe to obtain a job. Kerbo's (2011) academic participants also confirmed that it is a common practice in academia in Cambodia. However, bribes for jobs are rarely required at Non-Governmental Organizations Kerbo's (2011) participants reported.

Another sphere where corruption exists is that of education. According to his interviews, corruption in the education system includes bribes paid to pass the entry examination at public universities; bribes paid to get more attention from teachers; and informal fees paid to schoolteachers (Kerbo, 2011).

Last but not least, there is the corruption in health care system. Kerbo's (2011) informants admitted that approximately 60% of the healthcare budget has gone missing due to corruption, and only a small amount of the government's healthcare budget reaches patients. This corruption is a great barrier preventing poor rural people from improving their lives because they have to sell their assets to pay medical bills.

Hang (2012) has recommended that anti-corruption policies must exist alongside the improvement of public service quality. The policy should consider improving the following areas:

- Conditions at workplaces and homes of judicial staff.
- Legal procurement procedures for the public sector.
- Market effectiveness through the elimination of exploitive controlling arrangements.
- Reforming services for civil society by focusing on the enhancement of efficiency, training government staff to become professional and giving them encouragement to do so.

Hang (2012) highlighted that the Cambodian government has acknowledged the suggestions from its development partners that an integrated approach is needed to combat corruption. However, he added that the implementation of anti-corruption strategies should be followed by a strict taxation system and the elimination of unnecessary bureaucratic procedures.

Institutional Incapacity

Institutional capacity or state capacity is defined by the World Bank (as cited in Kerbo, 2011) as “the ability and the existence of government institutions to do the normal things governments are supposed to do all over the world” (p. 171). Omano (as cited in Nieuwenhuis, 2010) defines “state capacity” as “the ability of the state to act authoritatively to transform the structural basis of the economy to achieve economic growth, reduce poverty and income and wealth inequality” (p. 278).

In order to highlight the incapacity of the Cambodian state, Kerbo (2011, p.197) defines “a real government” as comprised of a number of capable and independent institutions that are supposed to address, in a rational way, management issues of all kinds for its citizens. Such independent governmental institutions can maintain the country functioning despite the existence of incapable and corrupt politicians. Kerbo (2011) sees that Cambodia is a country currently lacking such institutions.

The World Bank (2012b) has measured the level of government efficiency across the globe; the results indicate that Cambodia’s score is 25% which means Cambodia was among the countries that have the lowest rate of government efficiency, it is just a bit higher than Laos. Government effectiveness/efficiency embodies “the quality of public services, the quality of the civil service and the degree of its independence from political pressures, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the government's commitment to such policies” (World Bank, 2012c, p.1). Levels of government efficiency are strongly correlated to economic improvement and a reduction of poverty in third world countries (Lange & Rueschemeyer; Chibber; Weder; Evans, as cited in Kerbo, 2011). The higher the score on measures of government effectiveness, the higher the achievements of poverty reduction and economic development.

Kerbo (2011) confirmed that the government of Cambodia lacks institutional capacity, especially at the grassroots level. Through his field visit and interviews with government officials at grassroots level, he discovered that the village chiefs are not professional and do not know much about government support programs since they receive little training. However, at higher levels, there are government officials who truly have strong determination to achieve economic development and poverty reduction, particularly at rural areas. These people clearly comprehend that development in the capital city must be accompanied by economic development in

rural zones. However, many of their plans for development are abandoned due to the influence of corruption in eating away at the budget; while 65% of the total budget is allocated to rural development, in reality only a small percentage actually gets used for the planned activities. In sum, those people who care about national interests are less influential, while those who are influential are not willing to protect the interests of the poor majority.

In relation to the incapacity at the grassroots level, there is actually a certain program providing capacity building training to government officials at low levels so that they can effectively perform their duties without corruption (Kerbo, 2011). However, this program has had little achievement since these rural officials do not have enough education and experience to comprehend what the project is teaching them (Kerbo, 2011).

Kerbo (2011) further underlined another element of state incapacity which is the lack of independence and professionalism among government ministries. His academic and government official informants confirmed that Cambodia is unlike other Asian countries where their government ministries are independent of the elected statesmen. What Cambodia is currently facing is an inefficient and dysfunctional government operated by “the big man form of government” (Kerbo, 2011, p.163).

Kerbo (2011) additionally explained the harmful effects of government inefficiency on national benefits through foreign investment. Kerbo (2011) claimed that the Cambodian government is unable to protect long-term benefits for the country. The author believes the current situation where government policies are under the control of only the top influential and corrupt elite brings only short-term interests to the nation. This dominant elite, in order to attract foreign investment for their own personal sake, usually do not have clear policies or restrictions or a rational taxation system. This lack of a system limits the national revenue that can be used to develop human capital and infrastructure, and increase government staff, such as teachers and healthcare staff (Kerbo, 2011).

Human Capital and Physical Infrastructure

Human capital or infrastructure refers to well-educated people who are trained to run government institutions, while physical infrastructure refers to good quality roads, electricity, schools, health care centres, waste management, and communication structures (Kerbo, 2011). Kerbo’s (2011) research revealed the shortage of well-

educated and well-trained of governmental staff in Cambodia. To be employed by the state universities, bribes are needed rather than true competence. The lack of human infrastructure leads to a situation where the government cannot impose certain rules on foreign investors that bring benefit to the country. As a result, the profits from foreign investment go to the investors rather than Cambodia's future (Kerbo, 2011).

The Cambodian Government's Strategy for Growth, Employment, Equity and Efficiency

To fight with poverty, improve economic growth, create employment opportunities, ensure efficiency of the public sector, and promote social justice and equity, the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) introduced the Rectangular strategy in 2003 (RGC, 2004), followed by the Rectangular Strategy Phase II⁸ (RGC, 2008). As shown in Figure 2, there are four main priorities emphasized in the strategy: enhancement of the agricultural sector; the restoration and building of physical infrastructure; the development of the private sector and the creation of employment opportunities; and the building of capacity and development of human resource (Ing & Ghebreab, 2012).

The development plan looks marvellous. However, Kerbo (2011) discovered from his informants that in reality this plan is rarely implemented and the budget usually disappears through corruption. Kerbo (2011) further claimed that the current development strategies are not able to bring growth for the whole country and that this situation allows only a few people to enhance their livelihoods while the majority cannot. The author clarified the factors that prevent people from climbing up the economic ladder are not Cambodians' personal and familial features. According to his observation, Cambodians, especially those who live in rural areas, are strongly determined and hardworking people. Yet due to the lack of opportunities, these characteristics do not pay off. He further stressed it is the government's duty to create the opportunities available for their citizens through fair economic development policies. Through this fair policy, people are able to generate the prospects for themselves.

Figure 2. Rectangular Strategy Chart(Samdach H., S., 2009)

⁸ Rectangular Strategy Phase II ran from 2008 to 2013 (Ing & Ghebreab, 2012).

Weakness of Current Economic Development Policies

While a study done by the BBC World Service Trust collaborating with the United Nations for Development Program (UNDP) in 2010 found that 95% of young Cambodians are proud of the direction in which Cambodia is moving, Kerbo (2011) viewed differently. After his observations during his field research across Cambodia, the author argued that Cambodia is not moving in the right direction. The recent economic developments have only benefited a very small proportion of the population. He compared the development progress he saw in Cambodia with that in Laos, its poor neighbouring countries. For the last ten years, Laos was known as a poorer country than Cambodia, but nowadays even small farmers in Laos are making more progress than those in Cambodia. So what does the figure of economic growth in Cambodia really mean? The growth is largely from international low-skilled production manufacturing businesses in Phnom Penh and the tourism sector in Siem Reap province, the famous tourist site. Kerbo (2011) viewed Cambodia's recent economic development policies that concentrate only on the two sectors as unsustainable. The policies enable the rich to become richer, but there is no mechanism created to help the majority poor improve their living standard. The policies enable large foreign-owned agricultural companies to exploit small farmers and force them to sell their farm land. Additionally such policies produce only a small consumer class.

For a country that is rich in natural resources like Cambodia, Kerbo (2011) further recommended Economic 101 policies. First, the economic base at rural areas must be strengthened. This strengthening can be done through the improvement of the living standards of poor farmers by the provision of electricity, and relevant infrastructure such as irrigation and roads. When the economic base in the countryside is strengthened, the government can begin the next policy, that of import substitution. Import substitution involves minimising the amount of imports into the country and saving the money that is generated by doing so. This money can then be invested to produce items that used to be imported. This strategy will create more jobs for local people as well as profits for Cambodian companies. Then Cambodia can start the development of their own manufacturing industries that produce goods to export to wealthy countries. The policy sounds simple, but it does need both capacity and willingness by the government to implement it (Kerbo, 2011).

2.7 Poverty and Aspirations

Definition of Aspirations

The term aspirations refers to “a strong desire to achieve something high or great” (Merriam-Webster Online, as cited in Gutman and Akerman, 2008, p.2). However, Quaglia and Cobb (as cited in Gutman & Akerman, 2008, p.3) define aspirations differently. They define an aspiration as “an ability to identify and set goals for the future while being inspired in the present to work toward those goals” .

According to Gutman and Akerman (2008), aspirations are multi-faceted. These include aspirations for careers, education, other personal needs and social responsibilities. The authors added that the aspirations of individuals are drawn from the lives of the people surrounding them. This means that individuals have an “aspiration window” (Ray, 2003, p.1).

The term “level of aspiration” refers to the ultimate social status or outcomes that one aims to achieve (Dalton et al., 2010). According to Dalton et al. (2010), the higher the degree of aspirations, the higher level of effort a person will choose to achieve the aspirations. They further explained that the level of effort put in is influenced by internal factors, such as beliefs, and/or external factors, such as social status. Those who believe that their level of effort determines their aspirations, will, all the time, put in a high degree of effort to achieve the best outcomes. As a result, such individuals aspire to high status outcomes. However, those who do not believe that the achievement of their aspirations is linked to the amount of effort they put in, tend to have lower level aspirations (Dalton et al., 2010). In addition, these researchers found that individuals whose social status is low but have high aspirations will do better than those whose social status is low and have low aspirations. Actions influence aspirations. For example, an increase in one’s achievements leads to an increase of one’s expectations.

Effects of Poverty on Levels of Aspirations

Dalton et al. (2010) linked low levels of aspirations to poverty through three different ways: “opportunity channel, informational channel, and internal channel” (p. 7). Firstly, the level of aspiration is affected by poverty through the opportunity channel because fewer objective opportunities ultimately result in low aspirations. For example, a lack of financial support for study fees might prevent a deprived person from desiring to be a doctor. In other words, being a doctor is an unachievable goal for him/her; therefore it’s reasonable not to aspire to such a goal. Secondly, poverty affects the level of aspiration through information channels. The poor see fewer successful life stories around them so they do not see ways that guide them to success. Hence, they have

less chance to set high ambitions. Lastly, poverty affects aspiration levels via internal channels. This is because poverty negatively affects people's beliefs about their personal ability to improve their situation. As a result, poor people do not aspire to be higher (Dalton et al., 2010).

Another way to explain the determination of aspiration levels, according to Dalton et al. (2010), is through the locus of control. A person's locus of control is defined as whether the person believes that results are influenced by internal or external forces. Those who believe that outcomes are the consequence of their personal actions have an internal locus of control, and those who consider that results are mainly caused by destiny or others have an external locus of control. The former usually put more effort into changing their situation than the latter. There is a great amount of evidence from psychological research that poor and marginalized groups usually hold a higher external locus of control than higher status groups (Dalton et al., 2010). This research implies that the poor do not put much personal effort to change their status and that is why they are poor.

2.8 Globalisation and Youth Subculture

Globalization refers to the "the process of economic, social, cultural and political activity that goes beyond national borders" (Beck, as cited in Đukić, 2012, p. 5). Globalization occurs in various dimensions (Tranmošljanin, 2012). These dimensions include economics, politics, culture, information, science, technology, language, terrorism, social and environmental pollution, and injustice (Tranmošljanin, 2012).

The United Nations (UN) (2007) states that globalization has brought a variety of opportunities to people across the globe, especially in the Asia region. These opportunities include new education, employment and the improvement of productivity as a result of advanced technology. However, the author acknowledges the negative effects of globalization that contribute to poverty, inequalities, unemployment and social fragmentation in particular locations through related changing processes. The changing processes, such as changes in types of work, skill requirements, new employment that might be more or less secure, severely weaken young people's capability to gain benefit from globalization (UN, 2007). The UN (2007) further explains that financial barriers, poverty, insufficient education and the lack of access to information are the key factors preventing young people from gaining access to the opportunities generated by globalization.

The UN (2007) also discusses specifically the unequal distribution of opportunities brought by globalization that rural young people in Asia, including Cambodia, receive. Rural young residents are mostly deprived and do not have access to standard infrastructures and public services; and therefore, inevitably they suffer from disparities of education. By being educationally poor, they inevitably experience a limitation on employment options during their transition into adulthood; and thus they continue to experience poor living standards throughout their lives, the UN (2007) explained.

The UN (2007) has added that the situation where more education and employment opportunities are generated in urban rather than in rural areas has rapidly increased the number of migrants from rural to urban areas. However, not all of them get such opportunities and subsequently, the majority of them fall into poverty and social exclusion the UN (2007) clarified.

Another sphere affected by globalization is cultural and social values (UN, 2007). Globalization includes urbanization which transforms youth culture, values and their daily lives. It transforms them negatively, through the flow of imported merchandise and the advancement of information technology, young people are exposed to new lifestyles and Western cultures which ultimately stimulate them to experience new culture and lifestyles which might put them at risks of diseases and other social ills (UN, 2007) explained. However, positively, globalization also brings opportunities for young people to become independent and strong through a reduction of traditional family rules which has resulted from the change in family structure (UN, 2007).

The UN (2007) provided the government with recommendations to address the negative effects of globalization on young people. To address educational inequality, the government should improve the quality and availability of education in rural zones. This improvement should include the provision of equipment and other related resources so that key subjects that are important for the expansion of rural students' job opportunities, such as science, technology, mathematics and foreign language, can be taught.

Lingua Franca

"The term 'lingua franca' is usually taken to mean 'any lingual medium of communication between people of different mother tongues, for whom it is a second language'" (Samarin, as cited in Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 7). English as a lingua franca (ELF) is "a contact language between persons who share neither a common native

tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication” (Firth, as cited in Seidlhofer, 2011, p. 7). As a result of globalization, English has become a common second language of many non-English speaking countries (Altbach, 2005). Cambodia is one of those countries.

English has been chosen as the second language, used to communicate and do business with foreigners, international organizations and companies in Cambodia since 1993 (Igawa, 2008). There are two important events that led to the nationwide use of English: the arrival of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) between 1992 and 1993 and Cambodia’s admission to the Association of Southeast Asia Nations (ASEAN) in 1999 (Clayton, 2008). Therefore, most of the universities use English to prepare students to enter job markets and that poses difficulties for some of the provincial rural students who do not have access to English Schools.

Swann (2009) highlighted the growing number of foreign visitors as a contributing factor to the widespread use of the English language in Cambodia. English is not only spoken, but also taught at numerous schools he added. The author further mentions the use of this language in rural areas where this language is usually taught by local monks at village Buddhist temples.

Moore and Bounchan (2010) studied English language status and the perception of university students, lecturers and academic staff at the Institute of Foreign Languages in Cambodia. The authors underlined the different statuses of the English language in Cambodian society. These include English as a foreign language, English as an international language, English as a second language, and English as lingua franca. By foreign language, the authors meant that English is not widely spoken by the majority of Cambodians in Cambodia. English as an international language refers to the fact that the language is used in communication in Cambodia but between Cambodians and people from different countries; while English as a second language means the language is used among Cambodians as well as to communicate with foreigners. However, they did not explain what they mean by English as lingua franca. English was viewed as a foreign language in the 1990s since it was spoken by only a few people. Nevertheless, by conducting a survey among year four university students and focus group discussions with lecturers and administrators of English training programs, most of them perceived English as a second language and as an international language respectively. This finding suggests that the status of the English

language in Cambodia has suddenly evolved since the 1990s (Moore & Bounchan, 2010).

The researchers further clarified that English is spreading mostly in urban areas, rather than rural zones.. In urban zones people, particularly the middle class, usually use English in their daily lives and in their communication at home in order to prepare their young children for their future education (Moore & Bounchan, 2010). The authors also found that their informants acknowledged the strong demand for English language skills across the more developed zones in Cambodia.

Clayton (2008) argued that Cambodia needs the English language to provide a bridge to worldwide knowledge and markets as well as in its own economic development since English is a worldwide language in various sectors, such as business, communication, science and technology. The author came across many Cambodians in the capital city ranging from government officials to sellers at tourist markets, to street children learning English for employment and communication purposes. It was reported that 70% of the work of the Secretary of State for the Ministry of Commerce is in English (Clayton, 2008). This extensive need has contributed to a rapid growth of private language schools in Phnom Penh as well as in other developed regions of Cambodia. The author also stressed that English is not only taught in private schools, it is also in the curriculum at State schools, including both lower and upper secondary schools (Clayton, 2008)

Clayton (2008) identified that there were three circumstances shaping English as a second language choice in Cambodia, at both individual and institutional levels. These circumstances included the formation of the Cambodian English Language Training, funded by the Australian government in the 1980s; the English training that took place in refugee camps at the Thai borders between the 1970s and the 1990s; and the entry of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) into Cambodia in the 1990s.

The choice of English as a second language has enabled Cambodia to develop its economic benefits from globalization. One simple example is that employees who are proficient in English earn more than those who are not. However, the capacity to benefit from this fact is also influenced by the differences in current status, political backgrounds and the locations where people reside. Thus the choice of English as a second language by policy makers only benefits those who have the opportunities to

and can afford to gain this language skill, particularly those who live in urban and developed areas of the country, leaving those who do not have access to and cannot afford to study English and live in remote areas untouched (Clayton, 2008). Although English is included in study curricula at lower and upper secondary schools, the unequal secondary enrolment rates means that Cambodians in rural areas do not benefit equally from this teaching. Given the growing number of private English language schools has occurred in the capital city and developed areas, not to mention the study fees, this second language choice clearly reflects an “urban bias” (Clayton, 2008, p. 159). The author concluded by arguing that Cambodia was offered only “one development choice” which resulted in the choice of English as the dominant second language; this choice has significant implications for those who do not have access to studying it (p.161).

Definition of Culture and Sub-Culture

According to Clarke et al. (as cited in Epstein, 1998), culture refers to “the distinct patterns of life, choice and taste of [a] social group” (p. 8). There are two types of culture: hegemonic culture and common culture (Birmingham school, as cited in Epstein, 1998). Hegemonic culture refers to the culture propagated by the social groups that are influential in a society at any given time (Epstein, 1998), while common culture refers to an aspect of other groups’ daily lives (Willis, as cited in Epstein, 1998). When an opposition to hegemonic culture is expressed by common culture, the resistance, which is believed to be a sign of ‘at risk’ behaviour, is marked (Giroux, as cited in Epstein, 1998). This resistance, namely a subculture, when it is chosen as a way of life, is usually expressed by options that are available to young people via the mass media, such as movies, TV, the Internet, and consumerism (Tranmosljanin, 2012; Giroux, as cited in Epstein, 1998). In other words, these young people oppose the existing dominant culture and articulate their subculture via the media (Epstein, 1998). For example, the majority of young Cambodians have resisted the hegemonic culture with their new cultural behaviour, such as fashionable and sexy dress. Although such opposition is not considered harmful to society as a whole, according to Epstein (1998), it is harmful to that group.

According to Langman (2003) and Epstein (1998), styles of dress and fashion are one of the features of self-identity. Such features can place the self either inside or outside a certain group (Langman, 2003). In this case, my participants belong to this young Cambodian group who challenge the dominant culture and when they mention “the

youth”, they are referring to themselves. Their fashion and appearance are considered a resistance to the dominant culture in society (Langman, 2003).

Images of the body and practices are important in every culture (Langman, 2003). Cambodian young girls are not supposed to display their bodies through sexy dress. However, the majority of the Cambodian young generation are seen to oppose these values and norms of society through the way they dress and behave and that my participants see it as a major threat to the loss of Cambodian identity (Langman, 2003).

2.9 Social Justice

Definition of Social Justice

One definition of social justice is “the entitlement of individuals and groups to fair and equal rights and participation in the full range of economic, social, political and legal opportunities” (Asthana, Halliday, & Gibson, 2009, p. 204). The Australia Association of Social Work (AASW) (as cited in Solas, 2008, p. 816) provides a similar definition, but the AASW emphasizes the equal distribution of resources. The AASW states that a society is just when fundamental human needs are satisfied; the resources to meet such needs are equally distributed; the rights and liberties of individual and community are recognized and protected; residents are equally treated and protected under laws; and, lastly, development is made in the interests of human welfare.

Rawls (1993) took a different perspective, arguing that if income and wealth are not equally distributed, it is not a problem as long as this unequal distribution benefits those that are vulnerable, marginalized and in social positions of lower standing. In other words, Rawls (1993) was concerned with equity rather than equality; such that, as long as everyone has an equitable opportunity to access the institutions that produce and influence the distribution of income, wealth and resources, then it is possible for the unequal distribution of these resources to be “socially just”.

With regard to the equitable treatment of citizens, Rawls (1993) focused on the marginalized groups that have less assets and are situated in highly vulnerable social positions. He argued that those who are more fortunate have a moral obligation to help those that are not where their disadvantage is through no fault of their own. For example, in the context of the current research, the fact that the marginalized in Cambodian society are forcibly displaced from their homes to benefit the profit margins of private companies is unjust (Jackson, 2010).

Although social justice has different meanings defined by different authors, the most suitable definitions for my thesis are those of Asthana et al. (2009) and the AASW (as cited in Solas, 2008) because they are particularly appropriate to the characteristics of developing countries, especially Cambodia. These characteristics of Cambodia are discussed in the following section.

Smith (2012) claimed that a society is just when everyone is free to use their potential in order to prosper without discrimination. Nieuwenhuis (2010, p.269) further contends that “access to resources and opportunities” is needed for poor people to utilize their abilities and talents to live a fully human life.

Nieuwenhuis (2010, p.283) acknowledged that “international treaties and declarations” are vitally important tools to promote social justice; however, he argued that it is not met solely by the existence of those conventions. He also believed that social justice is an internal condition, not an external one. He explained that to obtain social justice, every individual's responsibility is needed to ensure the protection, advancement and improvement of its values, principles, and standards.

Principles of Social Justice

Noonan (2011) provided a summary of the social justice principles of Rawls and Sen. Rawls' principles of social justice focused on social institutions and primary goods. He believed social institutions play an important role in structuring citizens' lives through ensuring access to resources and opportunities. Rawls' primary goods comprise of “rights, liberties, opportunities and income and wealth” (Rawls, 1999, as cited in Noonan, 2009, p.2). These goods must be distributed to citizens in accordance with the “two principles” and the “different principle”. The “two principles” include:

1. People are to have equal rights to the most extensive share of equal liberties compatible with a similar scheme for others.
2. Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are reasonably expected to be everyone's advantage and attached to positions and offices open to all.

The “different principle” includes:

Inequalities are permissible as incentives for the wealthy to act so as to ensure that the economic process is more efficient; and innovation proceeds at a faster pace and becomes more productive and creating more wealth overall and therefore a larger pool of resources for the poorer members of society.

Noonan (2011, p.3) took primary goods to be “resources, practice, institutions, and relationship that support and enable life-activity or development of its vital capacity”. She claimed that society is just when individuals have access to such primary goods.

Social Justice in Poor Countries

Nieuwenhuis (2010) argued that we must consider social justice from the social realities of the situation, not from an idealized theoretical angle. He used third-world countries as an example. He argued that these countries might not be able to afford or manage what they are required to do by international treaties, such as “Education for All”, one of the requirements of the UN convention on the Rights of Child. For example, theoretically, parents are entitled to select quality schools for their children. However, in real life, there are no such schools available in rural areas and thus there is inequality in the education that these children receive. To put it more simply, the practices at local levels limit the rights of children to education. However, the author claimed that the government does not fulfil its obligation for “human dignity” and the social justice model when it fails to solve social issues such as poverty, inequality and unemployment (Nieuwenhuis, 2010). The author argued that poverty and unemployment are the main constraints stopping a society from achieving social justice.

Young (2000, as cited in Nieuwenhuis, 2010, p.279) believed that social justice needs the creation of institutional and structural settings through which citizens are able to promote their self-development. The author listed five factors that hinder human’s ability to improve their self-development. These involve exploitation; marginalization; powerlessness; cultural imperialism and violence. The author further argued that the barriers to getting fair institutions are domination and oppression (Young, 2000 as cited in Nieuwenhuis, 2010, p.279).

2.10 Social Capital

There are a large number of studies discussing the forms of social capital in Cambodia (Harris, 2012; Steinberge, 1959; De Muro & Tridico, 2008).

Harris (2012) described the birth of civil society and Buddhist temples in Cambodia. International and local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have actively emerged in Cambodia since the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) era of 1993 (Harris, 2012). In early 2000, via those NGOs, there was about US\$80 million in international aid flowing into Cambodia. As a result of these NGOs’ work, the life of Cambodians has changed at every level, ranging from local to national.

These changes have included “medicine, human rights, banking, art and culture, the rewriting of laws, urban planning, environmental matters, women’s issues, education, disarmament, de-mining and religion” (Harris, 2012, p. 323). Religion was affected because NGOs needed to convey their activities via monks because monks have influence on Cambodian people all over Cambodia.

The official religion of contemporary Cambodia is Theravada Buddhism, implemented by almost 90% of Cambodians (Harris, 2012; 2005). Historically, Buddhist practice was abolished during the Khmer Rouge Regime/Democratic Kampuchea era (1975-1979) when a great number of monks were killed. However, it was restored step by step in early 1979 when the People’s Republic of Kampuchea regime fell. In April 1989, under the State of Cambodia, Buddhism became an official state religion. What followed was an era of rapid growth in the number of Buddhist temples and monks. This growth was followed by the re-emergence of the Buddhist Institute in 1992, which was initially established by the French authorities during French Colonialism. The re-establishment of the Buddhist Educational Institutions was financially supported by two International NGOs, the Heinrich Böll Foundation, a German NGO, and the Japanese Sotoshu Relief Committee, while the reconstruction of pagodas was supported by Cambodians living abroad (Harris, 2012). These institutions are supposed to play a key role in higher education and research; however, due to the shortage of financial supports and “bureaucratic interference”, “they are a shadow of their own selves” (Harris, 2012, p. 333).

According to Steinberge (1959), the Buddhist temples and monks are independent from the state and do not get involved in politics. However, it is evident that in contemporary Cambodia, high ranking monks are involved in political matters (Harris, 2012), although temples are not. Since a theme of this thesis is the key role of Buddhist temples in rural students’ lives, this topic is discussed further later on in this thesis.

2.11 Youth Development and Related Theories

Lerner and her colleagues (as cited in the US Department of Education Mentoring Resource Centre, 2007) discussed five human qualities that are relevant to youth development, which were abbreviated to the “5Cs” (p. 3). They include competence, confidence, connection, character, and caring/compassion.

Competence is defined as “the view of one’s actions in specific areas, including social, academic, cognitive and vocational” (Lerner, Fisher & Weinder, as cited in the US

Department of Education Mentoring Resource Centre, 2007, p. 2). On the other hand, competence was explained by Pittman, Irby, Tolman, Yohalem, and Ferber (as cited in Hamilton, Hamilton, & Pittman, 2004) as the “skills” and “knowledge” that allow humans to achieve what they aim to do, but also depending on positive external conditions.

Confidence means the sense, from within, of self-worth, self-efficacy and future beliefs. Confidence allows people to show and develop their character and competence in difficult circumstances (Hamilton et al., 2007). Caring/compassion means the sympathy and compassion that human beings have for others. For example, when obtaining such qualities, they share it with others as well. Character refers to the feature that leads people to do what is right and what is wrong. It also includes obedience to social and cultural norms. The last quality is connection. Connection means positive relationships between people and the environment surrounding them. This environment includes institutions, families, peers, and the community.

According to the model of youth development published by the US Department of Education Mentoring Resource Centre (2007), the 5Cs are usually developed through services, opportunities and supports (SOS). Services refer to those who provide basic needs such as shelter, food and other services to young people who are in need. Services play an important role in the alleviation of obstacles that inhibit youth from prospering. Opportunities refers to the means that allow young people to develop their talents and advance their skills. Supports refer to the helpful relationships between young people and their peers, families and institutions that provide them shelter, inspiration, development, and direction which enable them to learn, move forward and give back.

Social Cognitive Theory

Bandura (2001) identified what he called the “self-regulatory capability” (p.267) in humans. He claimed that people’s actions are motivated and guided by “proactive control” (p.268) in two steps. First, people set challenging goals for themselves; and second, they mobilise, their available resources, skills and efforts to fulfil these goals.

Self-Efficacy Theory

Self-efficacy refers to “the confidence of a human being in their capacity to solve problems and perform tasks” (Bandura, as cited in Eccles & Wigfield, 2002, p. 110). The self-efficacy theory of Bandura emphasizes individual’s expectations for success which

are divided into two different types, outcome expectancies and efficacy expectancies. Expectancies for outcomes refer to “the beliefs that certain behaviours will lead to certain outcomes” (Bandura, as cited in Eccles & Wigfield, 2002, p. 111). For example, the belief that practice will lead to the improvement of an individual's performance. Expectancies for efficacy refer to “the beliefs about whether one can effectively perform the behaviours necessary to produce the outcome” (Bandura, as cited in Eccles & Wigfield, 2002, p.111). For instance, I can study hard to pass the final exam. One may think that their particular behaviour will lead to a particular outcome, but they might not think that they can achieve this particular behaviour. According to Bandura's suggestion, “individuals' efficacy expectations are the major determinant of goal setting, activity choice, willingness to expend effort and persistence” (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002, p. 111).

Control Theories

Eccles and Wigfield (2002) have provided an explanation of factors affecting how humans achieve certain tasks by identifying three types of beliefs: “means-ends beliefs”, “control beliefs”, and “agency beliefs”. The authors explain the three types of beliefs as follows: means-ends beliefs refer to the belief that specific outcomes are produced by specific causes; agency beliefs refer to the belief that specific outcomes are produced by having an access to various means; and control beliefs refer to an individual's expectation that the desired outcomes can be produced by them.

Self-Determination Theory

Geldhof and Little (2011) offered a summary of three psychological needs that humans are striving for: “autonomy”, “competence”, and “relatedness”. When individuals need autonomy, they need initial actions of their own; autonomy is instantly affected by “agent-oriented belief”, “control expectancy”, and “agency”. People need competence to help them achieve their aspirations and goals. The “competence need” is influenced by “action control beliefs”. The need for “relatedness” means that people require bonds connecting them with society and is attended by “control-expectancy beliefs”. White (1959) also believes that competence is a basic need that humans require and DeCharms (1968) adds self-determination to this list of basic human needs.

White (1959) and DeCharms (1968) claimed that a fundamental need for competence leads individuals to search for ideal “stimulation” and puzzling actions which are

“intrinsically motivating”. They further believed that “intrinsic motivation” is sustained simply when individuals experience themselves as “competent” and “self-determined”.

However, Ryan and Deci (2000) argued that the desires for “competence” and “self-determination” are more related to extrinsic motivation than intrinsic. The authors explained their argument as follows: a student chooses a particular program of study that will enable him or her to get a high-paid job. An extrinsic factor motivates this student’s choice; nevertheless, his/her fundamental need for “competence” and “self-determination” guide him/her.

In relation to these human needs and motivating factors, it is of note that Kerbo (2011) argued that self-determination and competence do not pay off in Cambodia, where opportunities are not equally available for all.

2.12 Future Orientation, Optimism and Hope

McWhirter and McWhirter (2008) suggested that positive views about the future are associated with long-term goal setting; feeling certainty in higher education values; confidence about jobs; “better social and emotional adjustment in school”; and “self-rated competence”. Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak and Hawkins (as cited in McWhirter & McWhirter, 2008) indicated that believing in the future is a mixture of “hope” and “optimism” about the likely consequences.

Snyder (1995) provided a review of the theories of hope, optimism and self-efficacy. The author first differentiated optimism from hope; optimism is defined by Scheier and Carver (1985) as an expectation that the future will bring satisfactory outcomes.. In contrast, hope is “the process of thinking about one’s goals, along with the motivation to move toward ‘agency’ and the ways to achieve (pathways) these goals” (Snyder, 1995, p. 355).

Snyder (1995) referred to “agency” as the will to achieve certain goals; whereas pathways refer to the perceived ability to develop ways to meet these goals. Hopes cannot be achieved without both the will and the way, the author clarified. Snyder (1995) added that the will and the way are both influenced by external factors. As noted earlier, the theory of self-efficacy proposes that there are two types of expectancies, “outcome expectancies” and “efficacy expectancies”. Outcome expectancies refer to one’s beliefs that certain actions will generate the desired outcomes, while efficacy expectancies refer to the self-confidence that one can successfully perform the tasks

that will bring the desired results. This theory focuses more on efficacy expectancies which are similar to the agency element in the theory of hope.

Finally, Snyder (1995, p.358) provided suggestions to improve both agency and pathways, based on his findings of what individuals with high hopes said and do. These include:

1. *Learning self-talk about succeeding*
2. *Thinking of difficulties encountered as reflecting wrong strategy, not the lack of talent*
3. *Thinking of goals and setbacks as challenges, not failures*
4. *Recalling past successes*
5. *Hearing stories of how other people have succeeded*
6. *Cultivating friends with whom you can talk about goals*
7. *Finding role models that you can emulate*
8. *Exercising physically since body and mind are connected, and*
9. *Eating properly .*

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the methodological approach of my research. The chapter starts with an explanation of how I approached the university to carry out the research, followed by what research paradigm this thesis sits within; finally, I outline the methods used to collect the data, to select the participants and to analyse the data.

3.1 Protocol

The research was conducted after receiving approval from the Unitec Ethics Committee. Before beginning the research, a letter in the Khmer language was sent to the President of the selected university in Battambang province. The letter set out the objectives of the research, the research process, and included a translation of the original letter from Unitec's Social Practice Programme Leader. The university I selected for the research was the one that I attended for my undergraduate degree. I still maintain contact with the President and senior academics there. Once the President had approved the research, I visited the university to begin recruiting participants.

3.2 Research Paradigm

This research was conducted within a Transformative-Emancipatory paradigm. The project fits most of Mertens' (2003) ten criteria of the Transformative-Emancipatory paradigm. These criteria are:

1. The researcher references a problem in a community of concern – I explored the important issue of how young people engage with the future, in the context of Cambodia's recent history.
2. The theoretical lens was openly declared by the researcher – I used a social constructivist lens.
3. The research questions have been written from an advocacy position - I explored key social problems that are currently occurring in Cambodia and affecting the lives of participants, including inequality; drug use; deforestation; domestic violence; unemployment; and traffic accidents.
4. The literature review includes a discussion of oppression – for example, the discussion of land appropriation and the lack of representation for poor people that I included in my literature review.
5. The community will benefit from the data collection and research outcomes – there is little research in this area, so this data will be useful.
6. The analysis provides a clarification of power relationships – I explored in the analysis how power is situated in the lives of my participants.

7. The results of the research will facilitate social change – the use of this research will help young people to find productive ways to engage with a number of possible versions of the future.

In addition, the data was collected using the epistemology of social constructivism. According to Creswell (2007), characteristics of social constructivism include:

- The reliance on the views of the participants of the situation as much as possible.
- Subjective meanings are socially and historically constructed. These meanings are generated via the interaction of factors in the interviewees' situations.
- Not starting with a theory about how the world is understood by my participants (other than that it is socially constructed).
- Allowing an inductive development, from the data, of a pattern of meaning or theory.

3.3 Methods of Data Collection

3.3.1 Sampling

I interviewed 18 young Cambodian university students aged between 19 and 30 at one university in Battambang province in the Khmer language. This university attracts both rural and urban students and this combination ensured that I got access to both groups. These students are through their transition into university and thus better equipped to reflect on their journey.

After receiving the letter of consent from the university, I made an announcement during a monthly Assembly requesting volunteers to participate in my research. I also visited nine classrooms in two days with the company of the university's academic staff. I introduced myself to the students and asked for volunteers to participate in my research. All students were invited to complete a form, indicating whether they wished to participate or not; the forms were then collected by the class representative and handed over to me at the academic office at the end of their class. The form was a questionnaire asking them to answer four questions:

1. Where they are from;
2. How old they are;
3. Sex; and
4. If they are willing to further participate in the research.

Of the 164 forms returned to me, 45 said No, 41 said yes and 78 were blank.

The method of sample selection was non-probability quota sampling; participants were split into the categories of place of growing up (urban and rural), gender (male and female), and faculty (for example, Faculty of Business, Economic Development, Information Technology, and Education) and then selected to fill quotas for each category. I divided the participants proportionately in relation to sex for rural and urban groups; for example, two males and two females of each group. It was my intention that my sample represent the views of both urban and rural young men and women. Finally, I randomly selected 18 participants and then contacted the selected students by phone to make an appointment.

The interviews took place at various places that were convenient for the students. The locations included a Café shop, the university, their home, and Buddhist temples where they stayed.

3.3.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

To incorporate a social constructivist perspective into my research, I used Davidson's (2003) model for semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews allow the interviewer to use a set of guiding questions which enable participants to tell the story of their lives around the broad subject of the interview (Creswell, 2009). According to Cohen and Crabtree (2006), semi-structured interviews contain open-ended questions that allow for a discussion one-on-one between an interviewer and the interviewees and ensure that important information is not missed. The one-on-one setting helped the participants feel more comfortable, particularly in speaking about sensitive issues that might be hidden if other methods were used – for example, a focus group discussion or a questionnaire. In order to capture everything my participants said, a digital voice recorder, in addition to taking notes, was used, followed by the transcribing of the recordings for data analysis (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006).

My interview questions were constructed in accordance with Davidson's (2003) strategies for interviewing, and included a sequence of descriptive, evaluative, solution-oriented and demographic questions. Davidson's (2003) strategies helped me to not interfere in my participants' responses, to provide plenty of space for them to tell their stories and allowed me to gradually gain their trust. Gaining their trust was achieved by avoiding questions that asked for significant judgments early in the interview, and allowing participants to walk through (frequently in a chronological sequence) the key events that may be subject to judgment later in the interview. Given

Cambodia's recent history and current situation, the interview began with one or two very broad descriptive questions which allowed me to obtain rich data about the historical life experience of my participants. These broad questions were followed by a simple evaluation, such as a "how" question; for example, "how do you think the social conditions have changed in Cambodia in recent years?" Then, there was a question about their likes and needs in relation to their social setting, which could be urban or rural, and around a comparison of their life now and in the past. Finally, I asked a question about solutions to the issues emerging from the interviews. Although my questions were very broad (thus allowing the participant to start where they felt most comfortable), each question had a number of prompts to ensure that I got coverage of all the topics I needed to explore, if these were not raised by the participants themselves. For example, to get more detailed information from the participants who did not really answer the first question in detail, I paraphrased my questions very often. For instance, the question of why they enrolled at the university was usually followed by a question about the advantages or the benefits of studying at university. Additionally, I asked questions to clarify what they really meant by what they have just said. For example, to gain more understanding about social issues, I asked them to provide me with some examples of what social issues they had gained more understanding about. Lastly, when my participants did not understand my question, I used another question that led to the information that I might have got from the original question. Please see appendix 1 for a copy of the interview questions.

3.4 Data Analysis

I used the thematic analysis model suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) to analyse the interview transcripts. Prior to analysing the data, I transcribed the data, and allowed the participants to check the accuracy of the transcription by sending the transcripts to them via email. Then, I re-read the transcripts and, after familiarising myself with it, I searched for themes that were present in the data and also referred to in the literature.

Next, a semiotic square was used to create synonyms and antonyms for each theme and to establish thematic continuums and to engage in the exploration of paradox where this was useful. A "semiotic square" refers to a structure of rules based on "opposition" through which meaning is generated (Chandler, 1994). Basically the semiotic square is a process that turns themes into continua around contradiction, contrariety and complementarity and sometimes demonstrates the paradox of the opposing positions being held in the same space or time (or both). Its function is to enlarge the possibilities of a theme.

Techniques of deconstruction were also used to identify metaphors, myths and narratives of power, and to deconstruct these so that alternative voices could be heard. A process of categorisation was used to create a hierarchy of themes and sub-themes and a clear definition for each theme and sub-theme. Additionally, I asked my supervisors to check my themes against samples of transcript that represented those themes. I also checked each transcript for the presence or absence of each theme and sub-theme. Finally, in my analysis, I paid most attention to themes that were most frequent, or unexpectedly, most absent, as well as themes that, although less frequent, contributed strongly to theory production.

3.5 Summary

This research was conducted with the approval of the Unitec Research Ethics Committee. The study was done within the Transformative-Emancipatory paradigm. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather data from 18 provincial university students who were from rural and urban areas. The participants were selected on the basis of non-probability quota sampling and thematic analysis was used to analyse the collected data.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings from the interviews conducted with 18 rural students of a university in Battambang province, Cambodia. The chapter begins with an introduction, followed by the participants' profiles, and then presents the findings arranged by the key themes that emerged from participants' interviews.

4.1 Introduction

The themes that emerged include various obstacles that the participants encountered during childhood, at high school and at the university; as well as the opportunities, means and motivating factors they had for dealing with the obstacles and constraints they encountered, and their future aspirations.

4.2 Participants Profile

As shown in Table 10, 16 of the participants were under 25 years old and the remaining 2 were 27. The name of the university and the names of the students are not mentioned here for confidentiality reasons.

I interviewed equal numbers of female and male participants so that I could see if there were differences in the views between genders. Although half of my participants identified themselves as being from urban locations, I subsequently discovered that they were all originally from rural areas and other provinces. Therefore, the location criteria originally established (and outlined in chapter 3) were not met. However this omission does not affect the content of this thesis.

The participants were from different university faculties, including the faculty of management, law and economics, business administration, banking and finance, agriculture and rural development, and civil engineering. Eight of them were studying at year one level, seven at year two and three were at year three level.

Fifty per cent of these participants were only studying at the target university, while seventeen per cent were also studying at another university while studying at the target university, and the remaining thirty nine per cent were involved in either part-time or volunteering jobs.

Table 8: Participant profiles

Gender	Participant s	Age	Location	Occupation	Course	Year
Female	A	20	Rural	Student	Accounting	2
	C	23	Other province	Student and trainee teacher	Banking	3.5
	D	20	Rural	Student	Management	1
	E	27	Rural	Student and NGO worker	Human resources management	3
	M	23	Rural	Student	Accounting	2
	N	20	Rural	Student and part-time Video Jockey (VJ)	Banking	1
	O	21	Rural	Student	Laws	1
	P	19	Rural	Student, 2 universities	Laws	1
	Q	23	Other province	Student and NGO worker	Accounting	1.5
Male	B	24	Rural	Student and volunteer	Economics	2
	F	23	Urban but rural as a child	Student	Agriculture and rural Development	1
	G	24	Rural	Student	Marketing	3
	H	25	Other province	Student and NGO worker	Management	2
	I	22	Rural	Student and part-time waiter	Project management	2
	J	20	Rural	Student	Law and teaching	1

	K	24	Town, but rural as a child	Student	Civil engineering	1
	L	25	Rural	Student and medical student Year 3	Economics	1
	R	27	Rural	Student and government teacher	Human resources management	1.5

4.3 Challenges in Childhood

The most common challenges that emerged from the interviews involved poverty, lack of education, domestic violence, and not having their human rights fulfilled.

4.3.1 Poverty

When being asked to describe their childhoods, the majority of participants described childhoods of struggle and were proud of it. The most common themes that emerged from this question comprised livelihood, education and mental states, such as experiencing domestic violence and discouragement, as well as tall poppy syndrome and positive deviance.

Twelve out of the eighteen participants had experienced poverty throughout their childhood and teenage years. The majority of them mentioned a related lack of means to attend school. For example, one of the participants said he did not even have a school bag when he studied at primary school. He used a plastic bag or sometimes made his own school bag from banana leaves.

When I was a child...when I went to school, I did not have any bicycle...travelling to school, I got up at 6:30am...I did not have a school bag like others...I used a plastic bag and banana trunk to wrap my chalk board...and then I just continued my study from walking on foot until I got a bicycle when I was at grade 7... (Participant B, personal communication, May 24, 2012).

Another participant mentioned a similar story. His family could not afford a bicycle for him so he had to ask his friend for a lift in order to go to school which was located very far from his village. More interestingly, he and his neighbourhood friends had to swim to school during the rainy season due to the poor infrastructure. However, the participant described his childhood as remarkable and full of struggle and was really proud of it.

Actually my life condition...it was remarkable...because life appeared to be a kind of struggle because when I was a child, the school was around 5km from home. So I had a long-distant trip and the road was so bad. In sum, the road was cut off and always flooded during rainy season and sometimes I swam...sometimes I fell and wet my trousers all along the way...yes my study as I told you earlier I'm proud of it...It is not anticipated that I would have had today (Participant L, personal communication, June 3, 2012).

Participant R also experienced difficulty in getting to school due to poverty:

When I was at secondary high school, I travelled for up to five kilometres to school. The livelihood of my study life was not like others

Because I am not from a business family...we did a business, but not a large scale. It was just for daily livelihood... But in terms of study life, I had insufficient livelihood since my mum was the only one who earn to feed the whole family (Participant R, personal communication, June 10, 2013).

Interestingly, one participant reported his involvement since secondary school in working outside his family to bring in further income. This involved pumping water. Since childhood, he had to work after school to earn some money for study materials and tutorial classes because his mum could not afford it.

At secondary high school, we had class the full morning and in the evening we finished at 4pm. I worked as... and I got paid 3,000 riels per day. 3,500 riels at that time was much because to convert it in to USD, \$1 was only 2,500 riels...my mum was so old so when I saw that she was that deprived, I could not ask more money from her...in sum it was hard...the livelihood was so poor (Participant R).

According to participant R, extra tutorial classes were necessary to pass exams. For example, he might have passed his high school exams if he could have afforded the extra tutorial fee.

...I failed high school exams. I decided to quit because I did not have money to study tutorials. I think if I had money to attend tutorial classes, I might have passed. But since I did not have money for the following year, I quitted.

More interestingly, in addition to financial poverty, participant O experienced discrimination from her teacher because she could not afford the extra fee at primary school as other students could. As a result, she got lower marks than her other classmates who could pay the extra fee.

When I was at primary school, I did not have money at all to go to school. At that time, the teacher needed to collect 100 riels⁹ per day from each student, but I did not have it and she blamed me. I got the lower mark (Participant O, personal communication, June 08, 2012).

Besides financial poverty, two participants, one male and one female, reported malnutrition childhood:

The saddest thing when I was a child was the fact that I got a headache very often. I was 17 or 18 and my weight was only 47kg...so I looked too thin...so my parents were also very worried about me. Within a week, I had a traditional massage (Kuas kjourl)...because I felt dizzy so often so I had a traditional massage almost seven days a week. Eventually, even when I went to school, I had a balm with me...whenever I got a headache, I applied it until my skin was peeled and became dark spots...dark spots as a result of the balm...too much

⁹ 100 Riels equal US\$0.03 (Ostermiller, 2014).

headache and dizzy made my health weak...frankly speaking the food at the country side we did not eat much enough...our livelihood was also deprived, but I wondered...I was the thinnest in the family (Participant H, personal communication, May 31, 2012).

Participant F mentioned a number of difficulties he faced while he was studying at his hometown which was located in the far west of Cambodia. This included land mines and a lack of schools, especially secondary schools. As a result, he had to move to Battambang province where he reported there were many schools and where he could study without interruption up to high school. Nevertheless, when he transferred to Battambang province, he had to start from the beginning of school although he was already in year three in his hometown. This situation highlights how, if he did not move to the province, he would not have been able to access his full rights to education.

In relation to studies, when I studied over there, I faced some problems such as the lack of schools. When I studied there, there were only primary schools because there were lots of mines which were not solved yet.

... Then I moved to study in Battambang. Transferring to Battambang at that time, there was no paper work for the transfer. So I studied here by starting from year one again, in 1999. Then I studied here from year one up until year twelve, but I did not face a problem of school shortage as such because there are abundant schools here (Participant F, personal communication, May 30, 2012).

Worse than that, participant F also experienced serious disappointment at a very young age which made him lose focus in his studies:

When I was at grade three, my mum passed away. So I lost state of mind to study so I deferred my study for a year to cease thinking about my late mum. Then I moved to study in Battambang. Transferring to Battambang at that time, there was no paper work for the transfer. So I studied here by starting from year one again, in 1999.

Unlike others, participant R expressed sadness about not being educated at home due to his mother's low level of education. However, he said due to his mum's hard work, he and his siblings were able to attend school:

At that time, our education was still limited...my mum had low education. She put much efforts to bring up us. We could attend school, but it was like only being able to attend school, like we haven't received...like when we were at home, no one educated us.

The remaining participants, A, C, D, F, J and K, all described themselves as coming from a medium-level livelihood during childhood and not really poor.

When I was a child, the livelihood was a bit bad, but not really bad it's medium. If comparing to other families', ours was better (Participant J, personal communication, June 2, 2012).

I was happy when I was with my family and look like a happiness family...that is we did not lack of something to eat (Participant A, personal communication, May 24, 2012).

It's been just like that...nowadays I am also like that...not rich but also not extremely poor...but it's only that I lack some materials (Participant D, personal communication, May 27, 2012).

My livelihood when I was a child was medium (Participant F, personal communication, May 30, 2012).

However, despite saying that there was sufficient food for her whole family and that her parents were able to send all of their eight children to school, participant A also mentioned the financial difficulties her parents faced due to the large number of family members.

4.3.2 Female-Headed Households

Out of the 18 respondents, seven grew up in a single parent family. Six of which were from female-headed families. Out of the six participants, one was from a medium-level income family.

I was a son whose father is no longer living (Participant R).

When I was a child...was at rural areas...still have both mum and dad, the livelihood was normal, medium...but in 2004 when my dad passed away, there is only mum (Participant K, personal communication, June 2, 2012).

Participant D's mother was the sole supporter for her family and for participant D's study, although both her parents were around. .

...but he was not the one who provided me financial support...but nowadays the financial supporter was my mum alone...I have a mother who provides financial support...so I have an opportunity to study much.

4.3.3 Domestic Violence

Sadly, six of the participants had experienced domestic violence in the form of physical and emotional abuse. Physical abuse was experienced in the form of hitting; while emotional abuse was experienced in verbal abuse, quarrels between their parents, being ignored and neglected. When I asked about the cause, the most common response was the father's alcohol consumption. Another cause was gambling.

Participant B reported his experience of physical abuse in the form of hitting from his dad. However, he also acknowledged that he thought it was done for the good of his academic life:

...but before enrolling at school, my dad taught me all of the alphabets...but before I knew all the alphabets, I was hit so hard (laughs).

Participant B also expressed his feelings of shame as a result of the verbal abuse committed from his mum:

There were many sad situation...such as bad words that mum used to curse her children...she cursed for me to be good, but when she cursed...it reached neighbours...so it was shameful...shameful because of such violence...mostly it was about domestic violence... I felt shameful especially the violence at home. Mum loudly cursed me although she cursed for the good purpose, but it is heard by the neighbours so it is shameful.

Participants C and O reported that their sadness resulted from their parents' quarrels which disturbed their focus on their studies:

Frankly speaking, there was a family problem...related to mum and dad...they had quarrel very often. When I was at primary school, there was not such issue...but when I was at secondary school, they had verbally quarrel with each other ...so...at that time I had more grown up...sometimes while sitting in class, I was thinking...thinking just about both them...what would happen next? Would they end up with getting along with each other? Thinking and studying at the same time. Until now I still think about it...they were separate...my brother and I stayed with mum (Participant C, personal communication, May 27, 2012).

Mum and dad never got along each other. They had quarrel every day. (Crying), but, I still studied... (Crying)... for my bright future. Because dad consumed alcohol, so when they made quarrel everyday like that I did not have encouragement to study. I thought I should have dropped out of school (Participant O).

Participant D also experienced domestic violence, but what made her case different from the others was the fact that she used to ask her parents to stop arguing with each other, but they did not. She described herself as the youngster and that was why her parents did not listen to her:

Talking about family, my parents usually had quarrel with each other...in sum, I was young...they did not listen to whatever I said...even now they don't listen to me either...it's like speechless...so now I just regard it as normal (Participant D)

She further added that her family would live comfortably if her dad was not around, saying

My dad is kind of selfish...he only thinks about himself...he doesn't listen to our comments...I'm saying that he's completely bad...but my family, without him, can live comfortably.

On the other hand, she also experienced neglect from her parents and discouragement. She said that this feeling continued today.

I felt discourage sometimes...like when I do something, no one says something to encourage me. I mean...my mother was not that bad, but my father...it's like he's never asked me about my study progress...but he did not ban me from attending schools either...but he was not the one who provided me financial support... was not the one who asked me how my study's going, where am I up to...he's never known about it and has never asked me...but nowadays the financial supporter was my mum alone.

Participant A, although she had not experienced domestic violence herself, suggested ways to raise awareness of the issue at grassroots levels:

Domestic violence occurs mostly at rural areas...the society should take measure to send people to educate them or publicize...although there is publicized program some do not watch TV. But that would be great if we go and educate them directly at rural areas or villages so that they know well...some are not really considerate...like near my house, domestic violence occurs much.

In relation to the cause of domestic violence, most of the above participants highlighted alcohol consumption as the main cause. For example, participants B and D said,

Domestic violence...the causing factor is related to alcohol...it would be great if they don't consume alcohol...as per my observation, my family and others in various communities...especially via news mostly it is related to alcohol...if there is no alcohol consumption, domestic violence is likely to be less (Participant B).

Let me talk about domestic violence...when I was a child, my neighbours had fighting very often ...mostly due to alcohol consumption... (Participant D).

Interestingly, participant D explained her dad's involvement with gambling was the cause of the domestic violence:

Before, my dad was gambling so much...something like wealth was lost by him so much...but he's still not aware of it...we have lost that much but he's still gambling...but not much because there's no more wealth for that gambling...but he's still gambling...it's like to get rid of his boredom.).

4.3.4 Human Rights not fulfilled

Sadly, some participants talked about infringements on their human and personal rights. Participant O described with tears the violation of her right to education due to the fact that her mum asked her to discontinue her studies because they were poor:

When I was at primary school, I did not have money at all to go to school. At that time, the teacher needed to collect 100 riels¹⁰ per day from each student, but I did not have it and she blamed me. I got the lower mark.

Participant J described his sadness about the violation of his rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly:

When I studied at high school, I organized an event which was not relevant to politics, but people get confused, there were many things involved with that issue. It seemed like they really restricted my freedom... so in relation to political issues, even at home, my parents also banned me...so I feel very depressed.

In contrast, another participant also had an interest in talking and discussing social issues, but did not mention any problem resulting from such discussions:

Mostly my interest is having a chat with my friends because I like to discuss analyse and challenge...when I was at grade 11 I used to discuss social issues (Participant L).

4.4 Obstacles after High School

4.4.1 Poverty

After their high school exams is the time when most students have to find the pathways to build their future lives. Some were able to enrol at university soon after completing high school, while some were less fortunate due to their poor livelihood.

Participants A, C, D, and J who all reported having medium-level livelihoods were able to enrol at university straight after successfully completing high school:

I finished high school in 2009...After high school, I enrolled at the university soon after that (Participant C).

Participant N also enrolled at university soon after completing high school, but it was due to support from a Korean teacher in a Christian church in Battambang province. Unfortunately, the teacher imposed some conditions that the student could not accept, so the support only lasted for one semester.

¹⁰100 Riels equal US\$0.03 (Ostermiller, 2014).

While the above students could enrol soon after completing high school, the following students were not able to do so. This inability was mainly due to lacking the financial resources to pay the fees.

My high school friends, they have money, they had already gone to study in Phnom Penh (Participant H).

Participant H had to work at a restaurant for a year before seeking further education:

When I finished high school, I took an entry exam at a school of technology Don Bosco...it is a vocational training school...but I passed on waiting list...I was on waiting list for a major of electric and electronic skills...but due to the hundreds of candidate...they selected only four or five more...so I did not pass...I decided to come to Phnom Penh...in Phnom Penh, one of my aunt was a cleaner at one restaurant called Baitong...she asked the boss to employ me...at that time my physical body looked funny...my weight was only 47kg...thin and dark....after working for a year, I bought a bicycle which cost 40,000 riels¹¹ and rode it around Phnom Penh... when I knew almost every part of Phnom Penh, I started seeking for a place to study.).

Likewise, due to financial constraints, participant E could not enrol at university straight after completing high school. It took her seven years to be able to enrol at university. Interestingly, the financial constraints she mentioned were not tuition fees, but transportation costs and daily living expenses.

After high school completion, I could not further my study for a year due to hard economy...tuition fee did not matter, but if we spent on daily livelihood, transportation cost, fuel costs...they cost much more...so I did not study at the university for a year...in 2002, I enrolled at the university for a year, but due to my dad's sickness, I differed my study until 2009 when I came to work here in Battambang where I re-enrolled (Participant E, personal communication, May 27, 2012)

In relation to "pocket money" during their childhood education, two participants shared similar stories:

At primary school, mum didn't give me much...from grade one to six she gave me 200 riels¹²...200 riels Khmer. When I was at grade 7 to 9, she gave me 500 riels¹³...starting from high school, it was 1,500 riels¹⁴ per day...and now at university... 30,000 riels¹⁵ per week (Participant B).

¹¹ 40,000 riels equals US\$10.04 (Ostermiller, 2014).

¹² 200 Riels equal US\$0.05 (Ostermiller, 2014).

¹³ 500 Riels equal US\$0.13 (Ostermiller, 2014).

¹⁴ 1,500 riels equal US\$0.38 (Ostermiller, 2014).

¹⁵ 30,000 riels equal USD7.53 (Ostermiller, 2014)

At primary school (before 2000), mum gave me 100riel. When I studied at junior and high school, she gave me 500riels (Participant H).

4.4.2 Embarrassment

Interestingly, one participant revealed that she felt ashamed and dared not meet up with her high school classmates after they enrolled at university while she could not. She also admitted her anger toward her mum for not being able to support her studies:

Frankly speaking, when I finished high school, at first I was so sad...did not dare to come out side of the house because all my friends who studied at grade 12 with me, after the exams they were all gone and further their studies. And I, I had to help mum sell things like that so I dared not to go out until I enrolled at the university...but after deferring my study, I dared not to come out of home even more because I was shameful because we did not have money. At first, I was angry with my mum...why she could not support my studies (Participant E).

However, her challenging feelings were relieved after her involvement with the community through volunteering with a local NGO in the capital city:

I was asked to represent my dad at the meeting in Phnom Penh...that's when I knew what the community was. After that, I started thinking why those who had more difficulties than us could survive...it's just only about not being able to further my study, why I got angry with mum? Since then, I felt much relief.

4.4.3 Discouragement

Unlike others, one female student described her sadness when her parents asked her to drop out of high school because they could not afford it:

She asked me to drop out of school because she could not afford it, but I told her no. Although no money, I still study because I want to study (Participant O, personal communication, May 24, 2012).

She reported feelings of discouragement during childhood due to the unforeseeable future prospects and guidance from others.

At that time what made me sad the most was that I did not know how and to where to lead my life...furthermore my life path was like in an open space...did not know where the target was...just continued it...that is I did not know what my real goals for the future were at that time...that is there was no one to enlighten...I only studied hard...did not know what I could do...so I sometimes felt like discouraged and motivated sometimes.).

4.4.4 Long Distances between Home and School

Four participants reported the long distance between their village and school.

One difficulty was that my house is far from school so it was difficult to travel to school...that's it...whenever it is rainy season, it's hard to travel (Participant A).

One participant reported that he dropped out of school due to the long distance between his home and his high school, but started school again after moving back to his aunt's house in town.

At that time, my house was far...I came to stay with my aunty since 2001 when I was little boy...in 2008 I went back home...so at that time I rode a bike to school...but not long after that I dropped out of school (Participant K).

This participant expressed his regret for dropping out of school for two years:

I feel that...before, I was also like...I used to drop out of school once as well...after I dropped out of school, I felt very regret...I really wanted to study again...so I just started school again in 2010).

While long distances between school and home led some participants to drop out of school, it was not the case for participant L, in spite of difficulties like roads in poor condition. He managed to get to school thanks to his friends from the same village.

The nearest school had only up to grade four...I had to further to grade five...it was far... to the commune so I had to do a long-distance trip so it was hard. At that time the road was cut off and sticky during rainy season...during dry season it was not that bad.....I studied from grade five, six then further to grade seven to nine. So I had been far away from home for five years...after lower secondary school exams (diploma exams), I further my study at a district...because at first at commune, and then at district...it was remarkable...struggling...staying at pagoda...with a number of friends...so if at that time there was only me, I might not have managed to struggle this much.

The participant explained the important role his friends played in him completing his studies:

Humans when we go together...we push each other and become an encouraging factor mutually...so we just kept on doing it all together... (Participant L).

As can be seen from the above quote, Buddhist temples play an important part in the lives of students, particularly males, whose homes are far from schools.

4.4.5 English Language

It was of note that the majority of young people from rural areas acknowledged that their level of English proficiency was lower than that of young people from urban areas. This difference is due to the lack of English teachers in rural zones. As a result, rural citizens fall behind the urban citizens. However, thanks to several institutions, such as the Christian church and NGOs, who provided English teaching at low cost and even free of charge, some poor participants had a great opportunity to absorb this useful language competency.

Because I am from rural areas...I have learnt very little English because at rural areas there were not English teachers...yes there were, but until I started high school that there were English teachers...secondary school...so my livelihood was also poor, I didn't attend extra tutorials until I started high school...at first, I studied free of charge...the teacher invited me to study...after studying longer, I paid 3,000 riels¹⁶ per month, only 3,000. So I had studied for several years...studied at night at teacher's home...at rural areas for one to two hours per night...upon the completion, I got some basic English...when I came to work in Phnom Penh, communicated with customers including Khmer and foreigners...so I was able to use my English...until then I started finding place to study...sometimes I studied at Jesus Church...church I did not care...no matter what kind of place it was, as long as I could study that's it. Sometimes I studied at mixture of places wherever it was free of charge; while some places, such as Student Resource Organization based in Boeng Keng Kang high school, the charged \$2, \$3, \$5...so whenever I saw cheap fees, I enrolled for it (Participant H).

Participant R revealed that he missed out on studying English because he could not afford it. However, he expressed a strong commitment to saving money to afford the study fees when he got a job:

I wanted to study English like others. The fee was only R5,000 per month, but I could not afford it because I had no income...because I did not have daily income. So I...I said to myself I have already had a job like this. If I wanted to study....If I wanted to know English like that but I did not know how to...I thought to myself if I got a job, it was quite far from the town...At this point, I tried...I tried to save. What I have achieved... It was like a plan, but it was only in my head, not put it in writing. So I could afford a motorbike, school fee.

One female participant, from a neighbouring province, reported that she had learned English since childhood. She explained that it was because her parents were both NGO workers.

I felt warm because my parents usually took me to and picked me up from schools...especially English language, they encouraged me to learn it since childhood...to... because they were workers (NGO) so they wanted me to comprehend English...they always motivated me to study it ...to study hard. Whenever it involves studies, they always encouraged me...I rarely faced any barriers (Participant C).

4.5 Constraints at University

There were different challenges that the students faced while studying at university. These included time constraints, the quality of lecturers, study-related expenditure including travel costs, and their personal capacity. Only one participant reported that he did not face any constraints during his study life at university at a time of interview.

¹⁶ 3,000 riels equal US\$0.75 (Ostermiller, 2014).

The themes from the participants who did experience constraints are outlined in the following section.

4.5.1 Time Constraints

Almost half of participants who were working while studying or were studying at two different universities simultaneously mentioned time as one of the constraints affecting their study performance. For example, participant H complained about time constraints due to working fulltime while studying at university. Due to his difficult experiences, he suggested that those who have the option to graduate prior to looking for a job should do so.

I don't have enough time for even study. So I don't really have time to read books because I have to attend GEP (free English class) class at 6am and then the university classes until 11:30am when I have lunch. Then I go to work at 12pm until 6pm. From 6:30pm I have to study other languages until 8pm. After cooking and having dinner, I felt exhausted. So I do not have enough time to read or do assignment or homework. I also work on Saturday. So I only have one day off, Sunday when I work on my assignment and homework (Participant H).

Participant E also mentioned clashes between university and her work schedule as one of her time constraints:

Because sometimes I have a workshop in other province for a long period of time which I cannot attend class at the university. So I need to read at home a lot.

However, she added that she felt she benefited from using time in a useful manner by comparing her situation to that of her neighbours who were not studying:

Nowadays, in my area, there are not many young people who are studying, so I make a comparison that when I am working and take a chance to study; I have a clear goal; which is better than spending times uselessly at home. I turn think that there are only three hours for study time a day, but if we don't use those three hours to study and do something else, it's not beneficial. But if we study, we gain knowledge. And if we do not come to study, we don't have knowledge.

Those who were only studying had more time to study than those who were studying while working. For example, participant D said that time was not a problem since she only studied and did not have a job yet.

Nowadays I have much time...I study only half day and do not have any job yet...so I have much free time...I help doing housework as usual.

Time constraints were not universal however, as illustrated by Participant B, who, despite his volunteer job, did not face time constraints while studying like the rest of the participants.

4.5.2 Unavailability of Preferred Majors

Another problem that some students faced while studying at university was the unavailability of their preferred major.

...another issue related to studies is that the major that I want to study is not available here and the major that I want to study if I can afford to study Master degree is not available in Cambodia either...I want to study urban development, but when I search for it, it's not available in Phnom Penh...too small amount of students so I don't know what and if I should further my study in the future (Participant E).

4.5.3 Study Expenses

A majority of students faced difficulties finding their school fees and other related expenses.

School fee is also a concern...like mostly half is from my family's money and another half is from mine...sometimes I have to delay for a while...one or two months to earn more money to fill up...yes, and for study life, money for everyday spending is not usually enough...because it is little...unlike others (Participant B).

Participant J, who had to travel from his rural home to university, indicated that his study expenses at university had increased from those at high school. These expenses included travel and study material expenses.

Even if I do not need to pay the school fee (scholarship), comparing between high school and university in relation to spending, it seems more spending to studying at university; in terms of study materials and fuel for motorbike, I spend more than at high school.

In addition to time constraints, Participant H, who was from another province, complained about study expenses since he was independent from the support of his parents:

...on the other hand, I have to spend a lot...because one of the disadvantages is that I have to cover all of the expenses by myself...in sum, I am independent. I am not dependent on my parents. I don't ask for money from them. I have never made them sad...my happiness or sadness is my own responsibility.

Similarly, participant E also complained about her study related expenses, including accommodation:

Talking about disadvantages, it's a bit hard due to...normally when we study, we need to spend...so when I come to study here, I do not own a house, I rent a house...so I utilise all of my salaries on rent and food and tuition fees...so that's all about disadvantage.

This situation reflects the fact that if rural girls either cannot afford to stay in town or do not have other means, such as Buddhist temples like boys have, then they frequently

do not have the opportunity to enrol at university, even if they could afford the tuition fees. As seen in the earlier quote, tuition fees were not an issue to participant E, but the transportation costs were.

...tuition fee did not matter, but if we spent on daily livelihood, transportation cost, fuel costs...they cost much more...so I did not study at the university for a year.

Participant D highlighted poverty, study related expenses and the lack of technological items, such as a computer, as the main issues causing her to fall behind her classmates in terms of study progress:

...because studying at the university requires much spending and using technological items...since my livelihood insufficient...I cannot catch up.

Participant F mentioned similar constraints to participant D in terms of lacking money for study materials:

...another difficulty is I have little stipend for study because I need to buy lots of study materials such as hand-outs, slide.

4.5.4 Quality of Lecturers

One student emphasized the low quality of lecturers as an issue affecting the level of his comprehension:

First disadvantage is lecturers are not really good. Sometimes when he/she is not really teaching well, I do not really comprehend it. The important point of studying requires students as well as good quality lecturers (Participant J).

However, participant B did not face the issue of quality of lecturers. This difference might have been due to the different majors of J and B.

4.5.5 Classroom Environment

One female did not face financial issues in relation to her study life; however, she highlighted the issue of the classroom environment as a concern that disturbed her study performance.

In terms of school fees, it is ok...it is acceptable for me...but some lessons...for example, there are usually many people so it is a bit hard to study...but the fee is ok (Participant A).

The issue of a noisy classroom environment, where most of the students do not pay attention to their studies, was also mentioned by participant B as an issue disturbing his study.

The negative point does not refer to lecturers...a majority of students in class do not really want to study...always make noise in class...noisy...mostly a minority group...it's like they do not understand about studying...always make noise and disturb others...like those in the front seat...noisy.

In contrast, one male student saw students not paying attention and being noisy in class as people who not be competing with him for work once he graduated, saying

...other students, as I've seen, they don't care because they spend their parents' money. They have motorbike. They come to school just to escape from home. Sometimes they don't study; they only make noise. But I'm different. I think that if they make noise and don't really study, it's my opportunity in return because at job markets I know that all places anyone has ability to pass will be employed...it's like I entered this place because I passed the test, not relying on connection. Someone who has connection, it's only for some jobs...another fragment of jobs require full competency. That's why I said it's an opportunity. If everybody allows time to pass by, that's my chance to grab the opportunity. So if they don't study, but I do; I have opportunities. If I study like this, I might have a chance to pass the test...to compete with other at job markets (Participant H).

4.5.6 Personal Capacity

One female participant mentioned her poor study performance as making it difficult for her to find a job:

I think when I study at the university, because at high school my study performance was poor...when I started university, I did not try all my best to study either...as a result, after more studying, it is hard to find a job (Participant A).

Unlike other participants who faced a range of challenges while studying at university, one participant mentioned that he had not yet faced any difficulties due to the financial support from his aunty:

Difficulties? ...I have not had any difficulties yet because I live with...I have enough money and...and have enough time to study (Participant K).

4.5.7 Poor English Language Proficiency

Participant F admitted that his poor proficiency in English was an issue affecting his study at university:

First, my English language knowledge is poor. The university is trying to meet international standard so all majors are taught in English. That's my difficulty.

4.6 Means and Opportunities

Participants spoke of things that helped them to overcome the challenges that they faced while studying. The most frequently mentioned supports were their peers,

supports from female relatives, Buddhist temples, NGO scholarship programmes, and positive role models.

4.6.1 The Role of Peers

Friends played an important role in some of the participants' educational lives, as would be expected. For example, participant H would not have had the courage to move on without the company of his friends in travelling to school.

One day, the chance came to me...One of my friends who was from the same high school studied in Phnom Penh. He passed a scholarship for a major of IT. That school called CIST, but now it is changed to PNC Cambodia...on the day I went to his flat, he had already gone to my hometown to inform me about the scholarship information...so he allowed me to enter his room to take an application form. I filled it and left it in his room. The next morning when he was back from my hometown, he took and applied it for me through his teacher. I took the exam and passed.

Friends also played a role in facilitating participant R's educational life, in particular through loans:

My family sent me 80,000 riels per month. I spent 60,000 on meal. I had 20,000 to spend on other things such as contributing to group work at school. Sometimes they sent me only for covering meal expenses. But when I really needed money, I borrowed from friends but would pay them back because I already committed to be honest with them.

Participant L stressed the importance of his friends who helped him get through the challenges of his study life:

At that time, if there was only me, I might not have struggled this much.

4.6.2 The Role of Civil Society

There were a number of civil organizations mentioned by the participants. These included Buddhist temples; an NGO previously called "CIST" which is called "PNC Cambodia"; the Christian Church; and low-fee language schools. Additionally, relatives such as grandmas and aunts are also spoken of by a number of participants as key donors who supported them by paying for their school fees and helping with accommodation.

4.6.2.1 PNC Cambodia

PNC Cambodia was described by two participants as the main actor that provided them with opportunities to further their studies after high school. The organisation helps by providing scholarships in Information Technology as well as jobs to the poorest, but capable, Cambodian students. It was founded in 2007. PNC Cambodia provides

scholarships to the 50 poorest students nationwide per year. Each year, PNC Cambodia conducts an exam at every high school across Cambodia to select poor, but capable students. Then they visit the homes of each candidate who has passed the test in order to inspect the conditions in their homes, including their parents' occupations (Participant H, personal communication, May 31, 2012).

Their study program is two times more intensive than those of private universities. The mission of this NGO is to enable their employees to get a Bachelor degree. This mission is achieved through the provision of financial support covering 50% of the total school fees.

One participant provided a particularly rich story illustrating the process as follows:

Their target was to select the poorest students...for those who do not have enough money to further their education at the university...to be trained to be capable at job markets...and they allowed us to further our education at the university...They select only 50 students nationwide per year. Their programs are available across the country, not only in Phnom Penh. So it is in every province...they select only 50, so I passed that term...so I had studied for six months. Six months equal one year for normal program because I studied eight hours full time but I studied only six months...within that program, they taught me various courses, such as Business Life, English and History. We studied only for six months for that term, but English and computer skills had been taught for six months. After completion of the courses, I was sent to Battambang. There are two offices, Battambang and Phnom Penh...Battambang lacks of staff, but they didn't recruit more because they wanted poor students from rural areas to have an opportunity to work for the society...to help those who do not have opportunity in the society to have it. So I was one of them...now I worked permanently after three-month probation...I have become permanent...so when the new school year start, I decided to enroll at ... (the university name)...My organization paid 60% for me...so I loan them 100% and for the rest 40%, I paid in instalment from my salary...that's my educational history (Participant H).

Participant H also described how her life significantly changed due to her scholarship.

After high school, my life has not changed at all. My life has changed because of that school, funded by foreign aid. I am a poor student who cannot afford the enrolment at the university. However, they required us to pass an entry exam. This really changed my fate and other poor but capable Cambodians. Now I've got a job and has been pursuing for a bachelor degree.

That school called CIST, but now it has been changed to PNC Cambodia...I took the exam and passed. There were a two-year and one-year program...oh no...a two-year and six-month program. At that term, they urgently needed a staff...they selected from only the six-month program...studied for only 6 months...I passed...they

interviewed me two times. One was conducted at school and another was at my workplace because their target was to select the poorest students...for those who do not have enough money to further their education at the university...to be trained to be capable at job markets...and they allowed us to further our education at the university. So they went to take picture at my workplace because I worked as a waiter and was paid US\$60 per month...in Phnom Penh so they witnessed the real situation...they said I could not afford to enrol at university that's why I worked as a waiter in Phnom Penh ...that's why I was not able to save enough to study at university.).

4.6.2.2 NGO roles

Participant E strongly stressed that the circumstances that changed her life were her involvement with the community at grassroots level through an NGO.

Talking about event, it was when I involved with the community. Before involving with the community, I didn't know how to use my life...I felt like I did not take things serious at all. What I only knew was going to school and coming back home and sleep. But when I started involving with the community, I started thinking that they haven't study this high like me, why they can make their living, why they can work...how about me? I have studied this much, why don't I struggle against my life like that? So since I worked with the community, I have corrected myself a lot.

4.6.3 The Roles of Buddhist Temples

According to the interviewees, Buddhist temples play a vitally important role for rural male students' educational lives whose homes are located far from schools.

So I had been far away from home for five years...after lower secondary school exams (diploma exams), I further my study at a district...because at first at commune, and then at district...it was remarkable...struggling...staying at pagoda...with a number of friends...(Participant L).

Buddhist temples are important not only for the provision of free accommodation, but also for self-motivation for male students:

When I felt discouraged, mostly my motivation was from, frankly speaking, I am a Buddhist...you are also a Buddhist, aren't you? (laughed)...mostly can comprehend Buddhist principles (dharma)...therefore it was like an encouragement...that means when I was discouraged, I listened to dharma and read various books that are related to the philosophy of scholars. So it was like a motivating factor so my encouragement was pushed back (Participant L)

4.6.4 The Role of Accommodation

Dorms at the government's teacher training school were found to play an important role in facilitating a poor male participant to pursue his education after high school:

Since my livelihood was poor, the school had student dorm so I applied for a room there. I told them my house was in XX district so they considered it as long distance from school...so they allowed me to stay at dorm (Participant R).

4.6.5 The Role of State Scholarships in the Province

State scholarships were found to play a major role in fulfilling poor students' educational rights. Participant O reported her hopelessness at being unable to enrol in higher education due to poverty. However, due to the availability of state scholarships provided at university, she managed to further her education:

After high school, I did not think I could study at the university because I did not have money. When a state scholarship was available, I applied. But I did not know which major to choose...I applied for nurse and law. But now I passed Law major (Participant O).

4.6.6 The Role of Female Relatives

Relatives, especially female ones, played a very important role in participants' educational lives. In some cases many of the students would have had difficulty completing their study if it had not been for the support they received from their female relations.

After my mum's death, my dad felt discouraged to continue his crop farm work and me too. When my grandma saw the situation where I stopped going to school, she brought me here to continue my study (Participant F).

Based on the above quote from participant F alone, it is clear to see how important the role of female relatives was to young people's lives. His aunt not only provided financial support for her children's studies, but also for him as her nephew:

My dad live in Samlot so I came and live with my grandparents, uncle and aunt...the problem is they pay tuition fees for all, and her children who are under her burden are many...to much burden...like me as her nephew...her children also study...she has to spend a lot...because all almost finished, two are studying at university, one at high school and another is studying at primary school...so spend lots of capital.

The life story of participant O also reflects how important female relatives were in supporting her educational life:

I dropped school for year due to my sickness. After recovering, my aunty seeks for a job for me, and I stayed with her. It's a sewing job with my grandma. After sewing for around a year, my grandma asked me if I want to continue my study and she gave some good advice. So I told my aunty that I wanted to study. And she supported me.

Participants H and K also had the opportunity to further their education due to the intervention of their aunts:

When I was a child...was at rural areas...still have both mum and dad, the livelihood was normal, medium...but in 2004 when my dad passed away, there is only mum...until now I live with my aunty here (Participant K).

At that time, my house was far...I came to stay with my aunty since 2001 when I was little boy...in 2008 I went back home...so at that time I rode a bike to school...but not long after that I dropped out of school ...so in 2010 I came back to stay with my aunt ...I just started my school again in 2010 (Participant K).

I decided to come to Phnom Penh...in Phnom Penh, one of my aunt was a cleaner at one restaurant called Baitong...she asked the boss to employ me...at that time my physical boy looked funny...my weight was only 47kg...thin and dark....after working for a year, I bought a bicycle which cost 40,000 riels¹⁷ and travel around Phnom Penh and seeking for a place to study (Participant H).

Financial support from his Aunty in addition to his desire to obtain a skill were the factors that led participant K to enrol at university:

I have an aunty who supports my study...and I also want to find a skill for myself.

In a similar way, participant E mentioned financial support from her relatives as one reason for her enrolment in university. More interestingly, due to the financial reliance on her relatives, she did not have the right to choose her preferred major. Because she was not able to choose her preferred major, combined with her family's monetary difficulties, she had to defer her study.

At that time, financial support was supported by my uncle...what I was studying did not suit what I wanted to study...I did not have right to choose...what I wanted to study was Tourism and Laws but he had me studied Accounting...it's like something I did not want to learn so I was behind in class...plus my family had some problems, I had to defer my study and go back home...and the leftover money had to be spent on my dad's hospital bill so I could not continue my study since then.

In brief, many of these students had experienced personal crises such as a death in the family, accidents and illness and would possibly have ended up living a very different life if their female relatives had not intervened to help them.

4.6.7 Positive Role Models

Other people's study achievements also played an important role in inspiring some participants to study hard:

At school, I studied hard... when I saw my classmate became an outstanding student so I tried my best to achieve outstanding study performance like them too... (Participant B).

¹⁷ 40,000 riels equals US\$10.04 (Ostermiller, 2014).

One participant who used to be in a gang described his success in offering good advice to some of his friends in the gang. This example indicates that the participant was a positive role model to his friends who still belonged to the gang:

I offer a gentle warning to them that if you still make friendship with me and want me to continue doing like that, I cannot do it; but cannot separate the friendship between you and me anyway. They acknowledged what I have advised to them. They said 'Listen to him because he is a scholar and what he has done did not affect villagers and other residents'. They accepted what I said (Participant I).

Another participant also cited the positive role model of his lecturer as a motivating factor to study:

Sometimes I imagine to myself when I saw the teaching style of my lecturers or seeing that he's good at talking, I can have an interest to learn how to speak...and learn and want to do what I think is amazing to show...in sum I eager to become a popular and well-known person...and I have like a greed thought to become that high-ranking like others (Participant H).

The visibility of tertiary students and their graduation ceremony were an inspiring factor for some participants. For example, participant H highlighted:

When I worked at a restaurant, every evening I stood in front of the door, I looked at people...I looked at them along road. I saw some rode a bicycle to study. Some whose parents are rich drove a motorbike to universities...at that time my tears suddenly started falling...I said to myself despite any circumstances, I had to study at university, although I had to walk...I thought to myself I was not sure if I could be that fortunate like them.

Participant B was inspired by the dress of graduates and the process of graduation during the graduation ceremony:

At that time my priority purpose was to enrol in a short course at one university. But when I saw students wore hood...graduation hood to receive degree...I felt that it was amazing...since then I really wanted to study...saw that hood and committed myself I have to wear it in the future...at first, I did not want to study. But since I saw them graduated, I felt excited and desire...desire to study.

When I saw university graduates, it really inspired me to be graduated too. At first, I did not enrol at the university soon after high school, but as soon as I saw those graduates, I felt very excited and decided to enrol at the university immediately.

While visibility of graduates and university students had a strong influence on the participants' educational aspirations, the success of the neighbourhood youth who were employed also had power to change villagers' perceptions towards education.

For example, participant R revealed the changes in villagers' perceptions towards education in his village as follows:

Before they did not value workers. They believe running business makes them richer than working. But now, since they see the society is growing, they send their children...and they see their neighbour's children being employed from one to another so they also send their children to school.

Additionally, the visibility of employed people, such as teachers and policeman, inspired participant R to become a government employee despite their poor livelihood.

...I wondered to be a teacher, what have they people done in order to become a teacher? A police man...what have they done to become a policeman? Are they selected without recruitment process? And that I want to work like them too...the war just ended and the educated who survived from the war were selected to work without recruitment process. Seeing such situation, I wanted to work like them as well. . I wondered; so I suddenly eager to study.

Unlike others, the first inspiration for participant L was not what he expected. Participant L was inspired to study nursing thanks to the visibility of nurses, but he discovered after beginning his nursing training that it would not enable him to advance his degree in the future:

...I'm talking about my own interests...my study goal...at that time I did not realize that the society...I mean in relation to the environment of studying nurse and how it is taught...I didn't really know...just see them studying and I've become wanted to study it too...so I want to...I had not studied about the information very well...it's only about the fact I like it and I came here and enrolled. My goal at that time was that after I graduated I would continue to doctorate degree...that was my set goal. But later on, I found that...when I got into social environment involving with studying medical science directly, I realized there are many difficulties for me...why?...we are studying nursing therefore we cannot pursue to become doctor...we have to start all over again for eight years... seven or eight years...that's the first reason. Second, it's because I foresee such medical community that in the future... we cannot do anything...that mean every tasks, before we was allowed to cure...but since the society has been advanced, we are not allowed to cure patients like others. So in the future we will become a nurse, a care giver...who is paid the arranged salary like USD100 or 200 ...so it's like other general job. On the other hand, it is involved with facing diseases...because we stay near patients all days and nights...day off...not really happy. On the other hand, we have to face the laws-related issues...if we manage to cure patients...that's ok....and now citizens know more about laws...so if there's any problem occurring during the treatment...it doesn't need to be the treatment at home, even at the hospital, if they have found our mistake, we will be charged. Because now patients do not need to sue by themselves, it's the laws who will find the mistake by themselves. Yes, that's the points...it is the fact that I see all of these aspects that has made me to turn my mind to

study this field...on the other hand, if I only study nursing, my future degree will be only undergraduate degree.

4.7 Motivating Factors

4.7.1 Encouragement

The majority of participants mentioned that their parents' encouragement to attend school was the main factor contributing to their study success. For example, participant C stressed that the fact that her parents took her to school and brought her back home each day was the main factor that encouraged her to study hard and achieve good study results:

The happy thing was the fact that I have parents...when going to school both going to school and coming back home, it was both of them who took me to school and picked me up from school...that's the reason I studied hard and felt warm...it brought me with good results, always...and they were also proud.

Participant F also expressed similarly:

The good thing was that I was happy being with my mum and dad. First, I lived over there, I was able to study; I had enough time to study because my mum and dad sent me to school...and I had enough time to study....I was happy with studying.

Participant R mentioned his mother's wish to see him in a job as one of the encouraging factors pushing him to try harder for educational success:

When I failed the exams, I asked my mother why she sent me to school? She said she did not want to see me selling snacks across the village as other children. When I heard that, I tried all my best until high school.

Despite being happy that he had enough time to study, participant F also felt a lack of warmth when his parents had to leave him at school for the whole day.

First, I was separated from my parents...not really receive warmth from mum and dad because they were busy with farming...they only came back home in the evening. So I had to stay at school alone... with teachers...with other children...because they kept me at school so aunty offered me meals, but I could not come home because I stayed at school...so I had to stay at school the whole day. So I lacked of warmth from mum and dad.

While the majority of the participants, such as participants C, J, and B, mentioned the encouragement from their parents as contributing to their study success, some reported differently. For instance, participant J said that it was his parents "pushing him hard" that significantly contributed to him attending school:

If mum and dad did not push me hard to attend schools since grade 1, I would not have had today.

Another participant reported a similar situation to participant J in relation to his parents contributing to his learning:

...but before enrolling at school, my dad taught me all of the alphabets...but before I knew all the alphabets, I was hit so hard (laughs) (Participant B)

Participant R said that his mother's blaming and complaining when he failed his high school exam as a factor that encouraged him to succeed in his educational and work life:

When I failed the exams, I only stayed at home...did not know where to go because my knowledge was limited...so just stayed at home...could not figure it out what to do so I just stayed at home, enduring mum's blaming and cursing...she would not kick me out since I am her child, but it's just normal within a family...whenever complicated issues existed, she just blamed. So it affects me...and that I just tried harder and struggled. I missed an exam a year...so in 2005 I took the entry exam to be trained as a primary school teacher and passed.

However, this participant's life story reflected his self-determination as supporting him to succeed. For example, although he failed secondary school once, as well as lived in poverty, he did not quit and he succeeded by working while studying until he passed:

I tried all my best by myself until high school....at high school those who had class in the morning would be free in the afternoon. So I took that available time to earn money to support my study expenses...I had a bicycle but daily spending was not like others. So my spending was limited. I spent what I earned...having poor livelihood, but I eager to study badly...if it's not my eagerness, I would not have had today.

4.7.2 Self-Determination

While the majority of participants reported encouragement from their parents, others spoke of motivating themselves to achieve their educational goals. For example, participant L said,

I did not expect that I would have had today...reflectively; at rural areas in addition to...a majority such as my family and the rest of villagers mostly do not understand about education. So not many people push us...So my life path is completely dependent on my own path...That is I just did it...no one showed or guided me; for example to do this or do that in order to succeed...this means even my family who are farmers, every study was based on an open space where there was no exact direction yet...So my life...I did not yet...just walked all the way through that life path...in addition I did not even know what I did study for

They had quarrel every day. (Crying), but, I still studied... (crying)... for my bright future. Because dad consumed alcohol, so when they made quarrel everyday like that I did not have encouragement to study. I thought I should have dropped school.

Participant B expressed his desire to study even though he did not have a school bag like others.

I got up at 6:30am...I did not have a school bag like others...I used a plastic bag and banana trunk to wrap my chalk board...and every time I went to school, I really wanted to study.

Similarly, desire to study was also a factor contributing to participant R's success:

The livelihood was poor, but I was still curious...if not curious, I would not have had today.

Participant L mentioned the experience of older students as a significant contributing factor to helping him succeed in his studies:

Mostly my study was accomplished...my struggles are typically...asking other experienced seniors...ask them how they studied, how they did it, how their pathway was...and so on...mostly senior students...when I visited other villages and senior students, I mostly asked them some advice.

One female participant reported a smooth educational life like her seven siblings.

I have eight siblings...10 members includes my mum and dad...when I grew up, all of my senior siblings attended schools; so I also need to attend school...throughout my study life, from primary school until now, there has been no problems happened to my life (Participant A).

Self-determination could be another key factor that brought participant H to achieve this far.

Actually, my goal...I wished before leaving home that I had to study at university...it's a must; although I had to walk or ride a bicycle.

Despite the difficulties, I think it's a chance...when I get older...if I don't catch the chance at this time and allow time to pass by like other students do...other students, as I've seen, they don't care because they spend their parents' money. They have motorbike. They come to school just to escape from home. Sometimes they don't study; they only make noise. But I'm different. I think that if they make noise and don't really study, it's my opportunity in return because at job markets I know that all places anyone has ability to pass will be employed...it's like I entered this place because I passed the test, not relying on connection. Someone who has connection, it's only for some jobs...another fragment of jobs require full competency. That's why I said it's an opportunity. If everybody allows time to pass by, that's my chance to grab the opportunity. So if they don't study, but I do; I have opportunities. If I study like this, I might have a chance to pass the test...to compete with other at job markets.

Participant L also believed in having strong determination to achieve his goals:

...on the other hand, I have set what I have determined to be...it is I don't want to work for others...what I have determined...I need to create a job, my own career...yes...and in terms of studying nursing, it means if we continue to study this field It is inevitable to work for others forever. So there is only one way to avoid it.

4.7.3 Parents' Warnings as Motivating Factors

The fear that his parents might take him out of school was a motivating factor for participant B to be successful in finishing his twelve years of general education.

The sad thing was I worried about high school exams...when took exams at grade 9, I was scared...if I failed, mum would stop me from studying...so I just keep studying hard...and took exams...when I passed, I was very happy...grade 12 came, I started being worried again...so I tried hard...scared of failing...because if I failed, she would have stopped me from studying.

For other participants, getting good academic results was a motivating factor that kept them going even though life was difficult. For example, participant L said,

There are many things that I was happy about...when I was studying, sometimes it was like I felt excited in relation to the result of my study...sometimes I was among the outstanding students...because I am a child of rural farmers and competed with those of city dwellers. So it was a bit hard...thanks to academic reward I received at the end of school year...that was also my pride.

And participant B said,

...since grade 7, I had an ambition which is during study, I had to become a leader...now I am...I've been a chief for two years now.

4.8 Social Mobility

Some participants experienced change in their livelihoods, both for better and worse. Participants J and A both experienced a change for the better:

From childhood up until now, I see there are a number of developments including my family's livelihood. When I was a child, I spent too little; but now they can afford sending me to study here and give me between R5,000 to R10,000...better...so I think my family's livelihood has been much improved (Participant J).

...and in relation to family's economy, it is better than before so I can study (Participant A).

However, some participants experienced a change for the worse. For example, participant K's livelihood got worse after the death of his dad:

When I was a child...was at rural areas...still have both mum and dad, the livelihood was normal, medium...but in 2004 when my dad passed away, there is only mum...until now I live with my aunty here.

Although for different reasons than those causing participant K's change in circumstances, participant E's livelihood also dropped when she was a teen:

When I was a child, the livelihood was ok since my grandma was a government official. But when I was 13-14, my family's livelihood started dropping down due to the robbery. So all of our wealth in the house were gone so it made our livelihood fell down, but it did not matter much until I enrolled at the university which put more burden on my mum... since my dad was a farmer, the yield was collected only once a year. So the income was seasonally. Whereas my mum was responsible for all household expenses...in 2002, after studying at the university for a year, my family's economy dramatically dropped due to the illness of my dad.

4.9 Education: An Opportunity for Social Mobility

The stories of these students depict clearly their desire for education, as well as their beliefs in education as an opportunity for them to have a bright future. Although they had been through many obstacles that prevented them from fulfilling their dreams smoothly, these participants did not give up their desires and beliefs. The factors that had brought these students to university were varied. They included the expectation that employment opportunities would be better; positive role models; and others, such as their employer's mission, or financial support from relatives.

4.9.1 Job Prospects

All of the informants mentioned job prospects as the main reason why they decided to enrol at university. They perceived higher education as a very important pathway to better employment opportunities. For example, participant J believed that a high school degree did not equip him with enough ability to get a job:

To gain more knowledge...if not further my education at university, I cannot find a job. If I discontinue at grade 12, I do not have ability to work.

Additionally, he held that a higher level of knowledge was widely required in the job market:

I step one step further than those who do not enrol. I gain more knowledge than them and more hopeful for employment prospects. Nowadays, they need people with much knowledge.

Likewise, participant C saw job orientation as the main reason for her enrolment at university; and assumed that those who decided to enrol at university wanted a job, not to run a business.

My purpose is automatically like that...after finishing high school, I'm going to continue my studies...frankly speaking those who further their education want jobs...they don't want to run business.

Student H, in order to fulfil his job prospect, outlined his clear plan as follows:

...because I thought only studying at universities enabled me to get a job...because nowadays, after high school completion, we knew nothing...our general knowledge is also low...English competency is also poor...and I thought deeply and I started studying...I started working...I started saving...and my mum and dad told me prior to my departure that work and earn and kept for myself for my study, don't need to send it to them...they would not take it...they said I had to manage to feed myself...they did have money to support me except some rice.

After witnessing a graduation ceremony, participant B changed his mind and decided to enrol in university to increase his job prospects, as well as to contribute to society and his family.

Since then, I really wanted to study...I have to wear that hood in the future...for jobs or contribution to the society and family...that's my only goal (Participant B).

4.9.2 The Need for Well-Educated People in Society

Participant F mentioned the need for well-educated people for the upcoming ASEAN integration as the reason that he enrolled at university:

Yeah because if I discontinue my study after high school...I think the contemporary society needs well-educated people...because they almost integrates ASEAN in the upcoming 2015...all of 11 countries in Asia will be integrated. We can travel freely and they need well-educated people. We work in our country or we go to work in their country. That's why I enrolled at the university.

4.9.3 Aspirations and Ambition

Participant L had changed his mind about doing a three year nursing degree and enrolled at university due to his ambition to advance:

Yes, that involves aspiration and ambition of human as well...because I think if I study that field (nursing)...I only get this much...but if I turn my mind to university, this will enable me to further to Master or likely to Doctorate degree...reach my goal...it's much easier...If I study this field (nursing), this means it's too narrow for my life pathways...yes...on the other hand, I have set what I have determined to be...it is I don't want to work for others...what I have determined...I need to create a job, my own career...yes...and in terms of studying nursing, it means if we continue to study this field It is inevitable to work for others forever. So there is only one way to avoid it...that's it (laughs).

4.9.4 Employer's Policy

Other factors that brought some participants to enrol at university included the organisational policy of their employers, financial support from relatives, ambition, and being willing to go further.

...on the other hand, it is my organization's mission...they require all staff to finish Bachelor degree...the major is selected by ourselves (Participant H, personal communication, May 31, 2012).

4.9.5 The Representation of University Degrees

The representation of a degree as evidence of knowledge was another aspect of why participant L enrolled at university:

Why I enrolled at the university, I thought...that's what I see in the future...I think that our country is a developing country. On the other hand, it's also an industrious country...and investment is also important. So it's important to get a higher education degree...are highly knowledgeable...and...so we become influential...it can be said that we are able to get into the society as well as knowledgeable. And on the other hand, if we have knowledge, but we don't have a certificate to show them, we don't have evidence. So it's beneficial to us for the future.

Similarly, participant F mentioned the importance of a university degree and linked it to salary scales, saying,

...for example, to work somewhere, as long as we have a degree issued by certain university, it's easier to be selected than having high school certificate. Yeah, even at government departments, although they are working with not university degree, they have to pursue their degree at university to gain higher salary because now salary is increased based on degree or skills.

Participant E mentioned the desire for equality with her colleagues in terms of having a degree as a driving factor for her completing a university degree:

...to make comparison at my workplace, a majority of staff have Bachelor Degree...and to compare with them, I want to be as equal as them so I have to try all my best to get one too.

4.9.6 Improvement of Livelihood

Participant D enrolled in university because she believed that higher educational knowledge would improve her livelihood. She said,

First, enrolling at the university is good for my future. If I do not further my study, I would stay at home, we do not have large rice farm and my family is poor...if I don't further my education, I will be like this forever...no bright future like others.

Participant F perceive education as the only way for him to free from poor livelihood.

My solution is that since I see my family work in the farm day by day, very exhausted...so I have just thought gradually. Then I chose education to move out of those difficulties so I have to study hard to get high salary (Participant F, personal communication, May 30, 2012).

4.10 Issues affecting their lives

Issues affecting the participants' lives that emerged from the interviews included poverty, time constraints, English as lingua Franca, unemployment, rights not being fulfilled and alcohol.

4.10.1 Current Level of Poverty

The majority of participants mentioned money as one of the main problems affecting their tertiary academic life. This issue included money for school fees and study materials.

School fee is supported by my parents 50% and I had to pay from my saving 50%. Sometimes I have to ask for the late payment, to pay school two or three months late. Mum and dad had to live in debt to get money for my school fee and some study materials (Participant B, personal communication, May 24, 2012).

Participant B further revealed family debt is an issue affecting his family.

Mostly, the issue that affects my family is the fact we are in debt...the fact that we borrowed someone's money at interest to study or to buy study materials...owing like that and with interest as well...with interest like that I have to tightly spend...and mum and dad have to work to pay debt.

Only a minority said they did not have any problems with school fees.

Only study, other than that, nothing to worry about..... (Participant K, personal communication, June 2, 2012).

Participant K, although money was not an issue, admitted his involvement with alcohol:

Honestly, I also drink alcohol...whenever we have a gathering, we mostly drink alcohol because without alcohol we do not feel happy (Participant K).

4.10.2 English as Lingua Franca

A minority of participants expressed that their main concern in terms of what will affect their job and/or future promotion opportunities was the use of English as an official language. Their somewhat poor proficiency in English resulted from the lack of teachers of English in their rural hometowns.

At the present, as far as I see, even here they also require English language. Everything is in English. This affects students who are poor at English. No matter what, as long as the society use English as an official language, it poses problem to me because my English is poor. In relation to my skill capacity to take the test, I am never worried (Participant H).

However, they also saw the advantage of having English as an official language; for example, one participant said that English is an international language so it is useful for business and other communications.

4.10.3 Unemployment

The majority of interviewees said that unemployment was their main current and future concern. After graduation, a majority of graduates were not 100 per cent guaranteed of being employed. Participant B viewed employment as a priority for him to address his livelihood problems:

The solution to my livelihood is to get a job, but now I have not managed to get one and get only volunteer jobs. I am working as a volunteer at three organizations now. I cannot earn money yet. I am continuously searching for jobs.

Participant F highlighted the difficulty in getting a job as an issue affecting his life today, saying,

A problem for my life is first it's hard for me to get a job...because I am study at year one so I have to look for a job.

4.10.4 Corruption

Participant B highlighted the effects of corruption on his employment opportunities due to the need for bribes, saying,

At all institutions...almost everywhere...it causes difficulties...for example, that job, our capacity is good enough to do it...if we do not pay bribes, we cannot pass...mostly.

4.10.5 Rights not fulfilled

One individual revealed that he felt that his rights in relation to freedom of expression were not fulfilled.

There are many problems, but the important issue is the fact that I love politics... but the society, the place where I live; they do not like what I love. Like when I studied at high school, I organized an event which was not relevant to politics, but people get confused, there were many things involved with that issue. It seemed like they really restricted my freedom... so in relation to political issues, even at home, my parents also banned me...so I feel very depressed (Participant J).

Young people who showed their interest in political issues experienced discrimination from their teachers, friends and even their parents. For example, participant J said,

So politics...even studying at the Faculty of Laws, my parents also banned me from studying it...that's why when I was at high school, a number of teachers did not like me so I felt so sad too.

It may be that the government has a controlling system at grassroots level to prevent and discourage all types of collective action; if that is the case, it would be a major barrier to Cambodia developing a strong civil society.

When I was at grade 11, my friends and I had a will which was to organize a Women's Day in a class level. Due to the growing number of supporters, I submitted an official request letter and it reached the ministry. And the Ministry banned me not to organize it...and the district governor also did not allow me neither; and there are many problems because he said I organized a movement against the government...I wondered. He accused me as an activist who acted against the government politics. I wondered. So since he is a high ranking official, a district governor, and his saying reached teachers who did not know and believe what he said was true. So they hated me so much. At that time I really got lost...I did not know how come. And my friends also hated me much; they said I was with certain political party. I was not like that... it was just about an event (Participant J, personal communication, June 2, 2012).

What the authority did to the participant really hurt him as a young innocent student:

At grade 11, I really got lost. I could not focus on my study until grade 12, mid-year of grade 12 that I started studying hard again. What I thought so far seems wrong so I was able to refocus on my study. Before I felt like getting lost...so sad that people got confused on me...what I have not done wrong, but being accused like that, I felt hurt.

Most young Cambodians might not like talking about political issues in Cambodia, possibly due to the control system that participant J experienced:

Mostly, talking about politics, they do not like it. But to me, I really like politics.

One participant mentioned what prevented him from getting involved with politics. He felt that it was risky to enter politics. Perhaps that is why young people living in Cambodia are not encouraged, mainly by their parents, to discuss or get involved with political issues:

My obstacles are many...according to others' opinion, if one wants to become a politician, one must be ready to die firstly...that is the biggest obstacles that I am thinking of...whether I dare to die or not. Another thing is if I want to become such a politician ...faced by my family...I think my family cannot live safely if I do like that...because to get involved with politics there can be many oppositions. Additionally, in the future I will have a wife; it will affect my wife, my children too. So that issue is so big for me....Now I even haven't, I only like politics...I love it...only talk about it like that, I have already been affected that bad...continuously there were friends and teachers discriminated me that much already. What if I do such a bigger task? (Participant J, personal communication, June 2, 2012).

This participant also highlighted how the structure created by the government to monitor citizens closely, prevented any uprising from the grassroots level up to the higher ones:

There are opposition parties actually but there is no hope for such opposition...before I also thought I like that but since I encountered that issue, I just understood...I have a feeling understanding that actually they already arranged the structure. Before, I thought that it could not be that serious at my schools...I did not reckon. But as soon as I encountered that issue, I realized the structure had already been set. Among teachers, there is also an arranged structure...now in a particular school, they set up one political party chief...and teachers and students...so they already set up a structure.

He went on to clarify that the structure has been arranged from grassroots through to the top level:

And at the village level, there is also a party activist. So they already set up. And among business people, if they want to become rich, so those rich people already have a back-up connection...they must find a connection within a political party...so they have many connections...many roots...so it's not easy...before I thought that such tied connection existed only with high rankings, but actually the lower ranking also have it...they already arranged it ...so it's hard.

At a very young age, this participant's desire for political association was destroyed by the closed system of the government. He felt lost and confused.

4.10.6 Duties not fulfilled

Participant E found that her inability to help poor communities that were affected by land grabs was one of the other issues affecting her life:

Talking about the effects, when I first started working, my work involved with 'red land' community and Boeng Kak lake, something like...so I did not know what my roles exactly were...for example, when I was there, I really wanted to help them, but did not know in what ways...so the longer I work, I do not see things getting better, I feel unsatisfied with my job...I almost give up sometimes.

4.10.7 Pressure from Parents on Children's Decision Making

It is important to note the pressure that some parents put on some participants when they desired to follow their interests and aspirations. This pressure might affect their futures if they are not strong enough to stand firm in their aspirations. However, these participants were very determined to follow their aspirations and ambitions. For example, Participant J still enrolled in the faculty of Law despite his parents forbidding him to do so:

Even studying at the Faculty of Laws, my parents also banned me from studying it...that's why when I was at high school, a number of teachers did not like me so I felt so sad too.

Participant L stood firm against his parents and friends advice that he finish his nursing degree before enrolling in another university:

It's normal...at that time there was much pressure both from my family and friends. First, they said I almost finish my degree, why do I need to enrol at the university? Second, my parents asked me I should have finished one field before I started another one...but I have managed to stood firm...it means it's because this is the goal that I've already set...that means if we see the road that is too small to walk across, we should turn from it (laughs).

Participant D experienced a pressure of a different sort; she highlighted her father's gambling as an issue affecting her life through the loss of wealth. Due to this loss, she described her father as selfish. Her family would have been better off if her father had not been around:

I am not saying he's bad, but I just don't like certain action of him. If he's not existed, my family would have lived better. I like gambling and our wealth was devastated by him.

4.11 How University has changed the Lives of the Participants

Participants highlighted various benefits they had gained from university. The most common theme was gaining more knowledge about social issues. This theme was followed by the themes of more opportunities, an increased level of confidence, being independent, social adjustment and knowing more people.

4.11.1 Gaining more Knowledge and Skills

The most common change mentioned by the participants was gaining more knowledge. This knowledge included knowledge about social issues:

Comparing high school to universities, it is completely different. To look back into the past, at high school, we studied like a frog in the well. After studying at the university, we've been through much experience...lecturers talk much...it's different. The knowledge is broader than that at high school. It looks so broad (Participant H).

It has been changed...first is gaining more knowledge. Second my brave exists everywhere...I am not really scared of others...I can speak in accordance with circumstances...Next I am not really scared...then I can live alone by not dependent on parents...it's like before I usually live with family, but now can live separately from them (Participant B).

By gaining more knowledge, participant B meant:

We have gained more knowledge; for example although we selected one major, but within that major, it is accompanied by other courses...Economics for example, we can learn history or English...something like that...we gained another knowledge as well.

Studying at university is quite good. If we want to become someone in the future, we can enrol at the university and we will obtain a specific

skill after once we graduate...gaining more understanding about employment and social issues. There are many advantages. Frankly speaking it enables us to have lots of ability in the future (Participant J).

Participant D also described her life changes in terms of the advancement of her knowledge after just one semester studying at the university.

...my knowledge is also much advanced than before.

One female participant mentioned knowledge of how to do business in addition to knowledge about society and job choices; the knowledge that she gained at university was different from that she gained at high school.

When we studied at high school, we did not know what job or what to do...did not know about those...when we studied at the university we felt much different from when we were at high school because...it's like knowing a lot about the society and how to do business...its procedure...which ministry should we contact ...what we should have...we need capital to run it. (Participant A).

In relation to job choices, she explained as follows:

When we studied at high school, we did not know what we should do...when we studied at university like this, we reckoned to look for a specific job to make our living, for the nation and family to be prosper...at high school, we focused on only study...at university lecturers explain us a lot so we knew a lot about how to run business.

Participant L, while acknowledging that gaining new knowledge is an advantage of studying at university, also thought that the benefits that students gained from this new knowledge depended on how they refine and use their new knowledge:

When we study at the university, we can gain new knowledge of society. It provides us with research skill...in other words, self-learning. Mostly, as you know, at the university they don't teach us in details. They only teach key points for us to do more searching...so it's a key to lead to success...mostly...this is just my opinion in relations to studying at university...what is important is that we refine it my ourselves...what we have learnt from school is just something like a whole...so it depends on how we refine it...yes then it becomes beneficial....normally, if the teacher provides you certain knowledge, it's a whole...so if you don't know how to analyse and refine it for usage then we might not benefit from it.

4.11.2 Knowledge of Social Issues

Some participants spoke of gaining a better understanding of social issues from having studied at university. For example, participant K:

Slightly self- improved...know what is right and wrong than before...more comprehension on social issues when we enrolled at university...for example, at the university, whenever there's an event,

the university send us to attend it. And when we study there we know more...through learning, lecturers as well as friends...the benefit can be gaining more knowledge.

Participant F mentioned briefly that he gained more understanding of social issues after one year studying at university:

...my family society encouraged me to get more understanding of social issues.

4.11.4 Social Adaptation

Participant B mentioned similar things to the above participants in terms of how university had changed their life, but also added that he is now more able to adapt to both study and work environments; he also described being more obedient to his parents:

I can know more about the society. And I have become to adapt to the society, both study and working atmosphere...yes...another change is that before I did not really obey my parents. But since I enrolled at the university, I listened to them a lot...I like them to tell me which pathway is good...which one is bad...I like them to tell me...not only my parents, my neighbours I always acknowledge their opinions...not like this: since I have gained more knowledge, I no longer need their opinions...no.

Participant D spoke in a similar vein about how she now knew more about people and society and how people communicate in society, saying,

I know many people in the society...humans' characters in the society...know more...unlike studying at high school which was simple...my knowledge is also much advanced than before...understand more how people communicate each other in the society.

4.11.5 Increased Levels of Confidence

The majority of the participants talked about how their levels of confidence had increased during their time at university. For example,

Now I can talk confidently no matter where I am. My confidence is very where now (Participant B).

Participant B clarified his thoughts by comparing himself with his friend who had dropped out of school, saying,

My friend dropped out of school at grade 7...when being with many people he was not really brave...if there are only one or two friends, he could participant in discussion...for crowded situation, he became not good at talking much. But in relation to farming skills, it's his specialty.

Participant H spoke of an increasing capacity to present in front of others:

From group work, I worked alone sometimes so I did the presentation most of the time. I start gaining experience and being brave. The more audience I have, the more desire to do the presentation I have. It seems like I am proud to show off my capacity (Participant H, personal communication, May 31, 2012).

4.11.6 Critical Thinking Skills

One participant described an improvement in the way she saw things and the development of analytical skills as the main changes she experienced from enrolling at university.

Change a lot in terms of the way of thinking...before I did not think broadly...but now I am thoughtful...I know how to analyse things through the explanation of lecturers...lecturers raise various social issues to explain us...it's possible...we see the realities so we are able to analyse...before nothing...we only studied theories...never seen the realities so we haven't analysed much (Participant C).

Participant F also mentioned changes in their ability to see things critically as a result of studying at university:

...it made me to thinking more profoundly....to think ahead.

4.12 Future Aspirations

Although the students in this research had been through numerous difficult circumstances, they clearly showed optimistic views about their future. In response to my questions about their future plans, three main themes emerged covering aspirations and hopes and fears or obstacles.

When being asked to describe their future plans, five subthemes arose. These included aspirations for career; education; contributing to positive changes; and personal fulfilment. Barriers to achieving these aspirations were also outlined.

4.12.1 Aspirations for a Career

While listing a set of clear plans that he had to be ready for his future career, participant I also highlighted barriers that might prevent him from achieving his goals:

I want to work for an NGO or private company. I have plans to achieve this by studying hard, communication and seeking for opportunities. By studying hard, I focus on studying English language. I think in general, all jobs require English and computer skills. So I have to focus on both of them so that I manage to achieve it. Another thing is communication. Because I am still ill-mannered, have no good communication with neighbours...how can I ask them for help? So I need to change. I have

to have a good communication with people surrounding me (Participant I, personal communication, June 1, 2012).

Participant F planned to work for an NGO in the rural development sector as well as running his own business in order to earn enough money:

My future plan is I want to work for a certain NGO in rural development sector and I will run my own business in the future to improve the livelihood of my family because I love agriculture and animal raising.

Unlike others, participant D revealed her uncertain goals in both childhood and after high school, saying,

I had lots of dreams when I was a child. Before, people asked me...asked me often that going to school every day like that, what I wanted to be? Hearing that question, it was hard to answer. I just answered without thinking that I wanted to be a teacher. When I passed high school exam, I took the entry exam for teaching trainees. I did pass, but at reserve. At that time, I did not really want to...other schools also provided scholarships with entry exams...I considered all of the opportunities. So when I took the entry exam, I passed only at reserve...so I regretted. If I tried a bit harder, I might have passed. I just think I might re-take the exam in the upcoming year.

However, this participant revealed another goal which was to run her own business and at least half of her believed that she would achieve it:

My hope is 50%, sis. If I have a job...gradually I will be there. Because saving from little capital first in order to achieve the big one.

Interestingly, participant E had a different aspiration from many other participants. She wanted to run an NGO working with youth in rural areas:

After that, when I come back, I will mmm....I might run my own NGO at rural areas.

Participants A and B wanted to run their own businesses:

When I graduate, I will run a business. If I don't have enough money, I will work for others for a while. When I earn enough money, I will run my own business...because working for others is not as easy as we own business by ourselves...run a small business for a while, when I earn more money I will expand it (Participant A).

My future plan is to open a business...a small farm...chicken and mushroom farms...my village does not have such farms...so I want to do it (Participant B).

4.12.2 Contributing to Positive Changes

The participants expressed different ways in which they hoped to contribute to social development in Cambodia. These included: becoming a leader, job creation through establishing companies; and sharing knowledge through the provision of advice and teaching. One participant revealed his aspiration to be a country leader as follows:

I want to be a country leader...but gradually, I want this career as a teacher and then when I get master degree I will find another job in the government sectors (Participant I).

Other participants viewed establishing a company as a way to create more jobs:

I don't know what I can do...but if I have ability, I want to gather my friends to establish a company, a very large company...if there are many companies, our country is full of jobs...that's what I think (Participant K).

Participant A spoke of her willingness to contribute to society through the dissemination of knowledge through seminars:

I think I might be able to contribute...normally we can contribute some so that the government can change their uses of...it's like we should contribute so that they know...it's like in a form of seminar...we contribute to explain them so that they know what is right what is wrong, what they should and should not do.

The same participant also talked about another way to contribute to social development; through training her prospective staff so that they gained more understanding about domestic violence, corruption and ethics. She said,

When I have much money, I can...like...normally when I open a business, I have many staff. If my staff is not knowledgeable, I can hire a teacher to teach them to understand issues such as domestic violence, corruption in the society, or something relevant to society like what is bad,...so we can explain...or personal ethics...it's like humans, they are acceptable as long as they have ethics and good manners. We have to hire a teacher of someone to train our staff to gain more understanding.

Participant B talked about contributing to social development through providing advice and teaching:

Participate...through raising an awareness of deforestation or drug issues to neighbours or teaching students...providing advice to friends to be good...if they've something wrong, don't blame them but encourage them to behave good.

Donations would be a way through which participant D would contribute to society, especially for people with blindness and orphans, if she had the money. She further added that she was willing to support poor people because she was also poor:

Mostly through the radio, they created a programme for kind people to donate in a form of cash mostly for blind people and orphans as such. I want to help marginalized people because I'm also marginalized...if I am rich enough, I would help them.

4.13 Optimism

When being asked to compare themselves to others in terms of what they have been through so far, most participants' comparisons were based on income and levels of poverty, alongside how these aspects impacted on the opportunities they had. Participant K, using livelihood as a measure, saw himself as lower than others when he lived in rural areas. However, he felt as equal as others when he moved into town to live with his aunt.

When I was a child, I was totally lower than others because my livelihood was poor. But since I came to live in town like others, I feel that I am like others...not much lower than others...now they can study, I can also study.

In a similar way, participant F perceived his life during childhood as inferior, compared with to others in terms of livelihood and the level of warmth received from parents. However, after studying at university, he felt superior in terms of knowledge:

Since childhood...at childhood I felt inferior to others. But since I enrolled at the university like this, I think I am more educated than those in my village because a majority of them, especially male dropped out of school. So there are only a small number of villagers, including me and few of my friends who have tried hard. It means I have high consciousness and I am more knowledgeable than those villagers living nearby my house. On the other hand, it promotes my family's face...yeah it advances my family's face...because nowadays well-educated people are respectful.

Participant E felt lucky being able to make a living by herself, but sometimes she felt upset about her hard life:

Sometimes I feel like that...sometimes I think I am lucky because I spend money that I earn by myself and no longer a burden for my parents because I make my living by myself now. On the other hand, I felt a bit upset for the fact that I've been so tired, why being born at this life, I've been this tired, this hard? Why can I not experience something easier/more comfortable?

When being asked to express their view of those who do not have the chance to study participants said:

I feel that...before, I was also like...I used to drop out of school once as well...after I dropped out of school, I felt very regret...I really wanted to study again...so I only started school again in 2010 (Participant K).

Comparing to my friend...she studied at high school with me, but her family is poor; additionally she could not comprehend well, so she may discontinue...so I am like better...being able to study here is my fortunate...mum has money...can afford sending me to study here...comparing to others who are not able to study here, they upset that they cannot come to study like me (Participant A).

When considering levels of opportunity, participants themselves as having more opportunities than those who did not study at university.

Studying here, we have lots of opportunities....when they only stay at home, they don't know much...don't understand...when we come and study we know more than those who live in rural areas (Participant A).

The current job market in Cambodia is still not good, nevertheless I feel I am hopeful...if we enrol at the university, we have more opportunities to obtain (Participant J).

However, participant E also stressed that opportunities stemmed from ability, as well as efforts to seek them out:

Oh if I compare myself with my relatives, I have more opportunities than them. In sum, I was seeking for opportunities myself. Although...I have studied at the university for a year, but it's like a high school degree; it's nothing amazing. But I've tried to look for opportunities by myself...seeking until people know me and they will provide me with the opportunity...so it's related to my efforts (Participant E).

Nevertheless, one female participant expressed concerns about whether she could get a job after graduation, saying,

When I graduate, I am not 100% hopeful that I can get a job. Some do not have a job...that is one problem (Participant A).

Another female student wanted to own a house in the town near where the economic centres are located and would bring her parents to live with her.

4.13.1 Hope

When asked how much hope they had that they would achieve their plans for the future, responses varied. Generally, participants expressed hope in the 50% to 60% range, and their reasons for hope included existing capital and a true willingness to achieve:

Like now I'm studying Accounting, I'm not sure if I can make it. But I hope I can make it because if others can make it, I also can make it too (Participant A).

I have much hope...it is related to my family...we have money to run a business, the small one...but it's possible that we can earn much money (Participant A).

I hope...60%...because the money I've saved is almost enough...additionally, it's my own willingness...I want to do it (Participant B).

Participant E said she was 70% hopeful of achieving her educational aspirations and 50% of achieving her plan of running a youth NGO:

The stage that I am hopeful the most is to pursue a Master degree. It's 70% when I think of it. For running an NGO with youth in rural areas, I can say I am 50% hopeful to achieve it. I will gather resources that I have and create a working group between my close friends who used to work with me before to work on it.

Participant F said he had 90% hope of achieving his plans of running his own business and working for a rural development NGO:

My hope is 90% that I will achieve it.

4.14 Perceived Barriers and Concerns

While describing their future aspirations and expressing their optimism about their lives, the participants also highlighted challenges that might prevent them from achieving their aspirations. The most common barriers perceived were material (poverty), a lack of knowledge, and discouragement from their family members. There was only one participant who did not foresee any future barriers. However, the majority expressed sentiments similar to participant I, who said,

For example, livelihood; as I rose earlier about studying computer, normally to study it, I need to have my own computer. So the problem I am facing is that I do not have money to buy it and I do not even have money to study it. I can only study at cheap places. When I want to study at quality place, I cannot afford it.

When being asked about how they can contribute to the country's development, the participants described a range of different ways. One participant provided a very clear set of steps to enter political sphere, saying,

In relation to social development...if I am involved with politics, I participate, I will observe parties...which party that has a guidelines to development the country...if I do not manage to enter it, I will work...mmm...work with the government sector but not under party conditions...so like that I will much ability...capacity to work in whichever sector I want. Because if I enter other parties, I think parties in our country are not capable. So I have to join government sector first and that I have more ability to go further (Participant J).

Participant A viewed capital, location, materials, competitors and procedures for registering a business as potential obstacles to running a business:

There are many barriers...first, I do not have much money; place for business and materials...in relation to social issues, normally business has competitors...so in our society there are many educated people...so they can compete...possibly our business cannot succeed...when we run a business, we need to register at the ministry so we do not know clear procedure...so it's difficult.

Similarly, participant F saw capital, supplies and the market as the main potential barriers to achieving his future plans, saying,

First, capital. Second, supplies to run animal breeding business. Third I have to conduct market research and the difficulty is market...to find the market to sell my products.

Participant E also saw the need for human resources, material resources, funding and location as the barriers to successfully running an NGO:

Normally, when we want to run an NGO, we need human resources, material resources, budget, and venues...all sorts of thing...so the problem is who's going to join the cause...and when we start operating and during our implementation, will our expectation that we have set meet the results? Because sometimes when we run an NGO, it might not reach the results that we want and they want...that's a problem.

Participant B saw insufficient knowledge of chicken and mushroom farming as a potential barrier, but kept trying to change this state of affairs by attending relevant seminars:

The first obstacle is that I haven't had sufficient knowledge about chicken raising and mushroom growing. I am learning or seeking for places where relevant seminars are organized...I am always attending such seminars to improve my knowledge so that it easy to run it.

Participant B also clarified that his obstacles were not external since he did not need to register his very small farm business at commune or ministry level.

When being asked about their future worries, some participants mentioned unemployment. Participant A expressed his concerns about being laughed at by villagers if he was unemployed after graduation:

In the future, the first worry is after graduation I don't know what job to do...don't know what to do...somebody will say study and but don't have a job...villagers will laugh at me for the fact that I have studied at this high level but no jobs.

Another participant, whose interest was in politics, mentioned a lack of knowledge, including lacking English language proficiency, as worries for him as well as his friends.

He also mentioned the resistance to change of the government leadership as a concern for Cambodia's future:

To me, talking about the nation, talking about my friends, what is more concern is our knowledge which is still poor...even I myself, my knowledge is still really poor. So I think when ASEAN Integrates, our knowledge is still poor...we are not literate in English language either. So it is hard. One more thing is the resistance not to change of the government leadership...it is just the same again and again...so I think if it is still like that there is no progress because there is no opposition. If changes occurred, then there would be a competition so there is progress. But now there is no longer competition so the upcoming problems for Cambodia are hard...because we only have material development, but do not have money to spend...that is a disadvantage for us (Participant J).

Participant A expressed her concerns about gangsters who might hinder her future business:

...because when there are abundant gangsters, our business might not be advanced...in terms of fighting in front of our shop...customers will not dare to have a visit.

Participant D said her parents' age concerned her:

As I said earlier, the only supporter is my mother...and now my parents are getting older. I am this young and they are that old because they got married when they were already old. So their health condition is not so good. I think I am worried that I lost them before I achieve my goal...my barrier is like that, sis.

Participant E seemed to have different future concerns from the other participants. She was worried about her major not matching or contributing to fulfilling society's needs, saying,

...I am worried that the major I learned cannot be used for the society's benefits and afraid that it did not match the society's needs.

As noted, one participant, participant K, was not worried about his future because he received enough financial support to finish his studies.

4.15 Issues Affecting Youth

External factors, such as globalization and unemployment, plus internal factors such as unclear goals, drug and alcohol consumption, were perceived to be the main problems affecting youth in contemporary Cambodia.

4.15.1 Globalization and Materialism

Six participants identified materialism as one of the main problems affecting Cambodian youth. Participant E highlighted the cultural flow from other Asian countries, not to mention Western culture, as an issue affecting young people's lives in Cambodia, especially high school students and younger:

There many cultures flowing into Cambodia from certain region...let's talk about Asia, don't need to talk about European culture, the Europe ones does not really have strong influence now. I see that most youth are not really interested in study issues. For those from university levels are ok. But from high school levels downwards seems lamentable. This is because they watch some broadcasting channels which makes them not to consider deeply, but to imitate...imitation makes them to use their available time for studies to do something else. So I feel like I want to change the attitude of those surrounding me...but I only put my efforts at those who wish to change...for those who don't want to change, I would not say anything...just let them be.

4.15.2 Dropping out of School

When asked to compare themselves to others such as friends or relatives, dropping out of school commonly emerged as a difference between the participants and their friends, neighbours or relatives. There were a range of factors identified by participants as contributing to people dropping out of school; they included: poverty; a lack of interest in studying; laziness; not being able to see the value of education; migration; a lack of encouragement from parents; and the unemployment of previous graduates. Four students mentioned poverty as a barrier for their friends to continuing their education.

Participant D said poverty was the main factor contributing to her friend's decision not to re-enrol after failing the high school exam:

One of my friend, studied at the same high school with me, but she failed the exam. I encouraged her to re-enrol, but she said her family did not have money...did not have money to buy books for her to study. Her family situation was bad. Her dad has now lost his memory due to serious fainting. Her mum is also unemployed...and they are gambling most of the time. Now she is looking after her senior sibling's children and her sibling paid her certain amount of money.

A lack of means for travelling to school was another issue that prevented participant D's neighbour from furthering her education. However, a lack of transportation was not a barrier to others, such as male participant L.

My neighbour who studied at the same primary school as mine dropped out of school when she was at grade seven...she said she did not have a bicycle to ride to school. (Participant D).

Laziness, the influence of peers, lack of encouragement from parents, not seeing the value of education, the unemployment of previous graduates, and migration were reported as causes leading young people to discontinue their studies:

Some of my neighbours whose parents are busy with their business outside the province did not go to school.

One of my neighbour dropped school because they thought study did not benefit him.

My friend did not continue his study like me...he dropped out of school at grade 7...he stopped...mostly because he did not enjoy studying (Participant B).

The problem that prevented them from continuing their education was firstly they hung out with friends too much...their friends invited them to go somewhere...so when they were absent for three or four times, they felt ashamed, they told me that (Participant F).

Migration for job opportunities outside the country was another reason reported for young Cambodians to drop out of school:

Talking about my cousin...his family members have not studied that much like me...mostly they dropped out school to find a job in Thailand...my siblings, 3 of us continued our study, except my sister who did not want to study and got married (Participant B).

4.15.4 Unemployment

Unemployment was also mentioned by some participants as another issue that affected young people's lives in Cambodia. One participant highlighted the lack of employment opportunities in Cambodia compared to other countries as the main cause of unemployment among youth in Cambodia:

And as a majority, those who graduate do not have a job...it's hard...the employment in our countries is not as the same as other countries (Participant K).

Similarly, participant F saw the lack of attention from the government in relation to the minimum wage and working conditions of garment factory workers as an issue of unemployment in Cambodia:

...but in relation to unemployment issues, the government did not pay attention to salary...the salary in our country is too low...US\$80 per month...low salary. On the other hand, some factories do not think about workers' health and that leads many people to go and work outside the country.

Participant B said that the large number of garment factories alone does not help graduates and others in general:

There is about 30% change, not all...additionally, job markets in Cambodia is not broad yet...there are not many factories...mostly there are abundant garment factories. This makes graduates or citizens unemployed...can't enter such job market.

However, the participants acknowledged that those with true capabilities would not lack for jobs. For example, participant K said,

I said like that because if we talked about unemployment, it is that bad...as long as we are really well-educated, we won't lack of jobs (Participant K).

4.15.5 Drug Consumption

The majority of interviewees mentioned drugs as current youth issues:

There are a number of young people using drug near my house in my hometown. Sometimes they verbally assault my mum with impolite words. When she blames them back they shout loudly at her. So mum does not reply because she realizes they are drug addicts (Participant. One female participant said that drug consumption rarely happens in rural areas:

Drug usage rarely exists in rural areas, but there is more in town (Participant A, personal communication, May 24, 2012).

Similarly, participant D reported quietness in her village in terms of drug consumption, but she was not sure if the villagers just consumed it secretly:

Talking about drugs, my villagers... I don't know if they use or not...my neighbours might not use it...quiet...but I don't know about other villages.

In contrast, participant B reported the existence of drug usage at village levels and surrounding him, saying,

Drugs...when I was a child, it was not an issue since I did not really examine about it...but since I've grown up, it is always a problem at villages or places surrounding me...there are always issues related to drugs...there are more drug dealings in our society.

4.15.6 Alcohol Consumption as a Youth Subculture

Alcohol consumption was viewed as another issue affecting young people's lives in contemporary Cambodia. Interestingly, one participant admitted his involvement in alcohol consumption and reported the influence of his peers as the main cause of his consumption. The same participant also claimed that it has become a youth subculture.

One female student reported the growing number of young people consuming alcohol along with one of its negative effects: fighting.

Before, in rural areas, there were not many young people consuming alcohol...alcohol is also an addictive substance...in rural areas, there

are many problems such as drinking and causing conflicts...disorder (Participant A).

While others described alcohol consumption as the main issue affecting youth, Participant C reported her and her mum's sadness due to her brother's involvement with alcohol:

My brother made my mum sad. During childhood it was not a big issue until he was grad 12, the day before high school exam, he hung out with his friends and drank and didn't come back home....mum was worried so she rang him, he answered but didn't come...so mum went to find him in the mid of the night. At that time dad was not there, there was only mum...we found him at the restaurant...she begged him to come home but he didn't listen...because he was drunk...didn't listen to her and talked loudly at her which made mum cry in front of them...at that time I was there too...I cried too...I pity mum.

Participant K, talked about alcohol consumption, mainly of beer and wine, as the main issue affecting young people in contemporary Cambodian society:

In Cambodian society, it is mostly alcohol consumption because now in our country no matter how young youths are, they all can drink wine. Some can even smoke cigarette and use drugs. So the issues are serious, especially wine, it has become a culture.

He also admitted his involvement with it by explaining that it makes him and his friends happy.

When being asked why he consumes wine and whether he likes the taste of it, participant K said he did not like to drink it, but he has to when there is a party because it has become a culture:

Frankly speaking, I do not like it...I know that it's not yummy, but when there's a party, I have to drink it...it has become a culture already.

When being asked how alcohol consumption affects their lives, the participants mentioned fighting, traffic accidents and health problems. For example, participant K said,

There are many effects...whenever drinking wine, they will become drunk which can cause fighting and traffic accidents...when we are drunk...we become foolhardy (hean)...wine doesn't help human anything...doesn't improve health as such...it only destroys human's health and brings humans troubles.

While acknowledging the negative effects of alcohol consumption, this participant also admitted his involvement in the consumption.

Frankly speaking, I also consume it...whenever there is a gathering; a majority of people drink only wine...without it, there is no joyfulness.

4.16 Perceived Causes of Unemployment

The participants perceived incompetence, lack of connections and insufficient job opportunities as the main causes of unemployment in Cambodia.

...because at job markets I know that all places anyone has ability to pass will be employed...it's like I entered this place because I passed the test, not relying on connection...someone who has connection, it's only for some jobs...another fragment of jobs require full competency. That's why I said it's an opportunity. If everybody allows time to pass by, that's my chance to grab the opportunity. So if they don't study, but I do; I have opportunities. If I study like this, I might have a chance to pass the test...to compete with other at job markets (Participant H).

One female student admitted that her incompetence, in addition to there being insufficient jobs for graduates, will pose difficulties for her in finding a job:

...because at high school my study performance was poor...when I started university, I did not try all my best to study either...as a result, after more studying, it is hard to find a job...we are incompetence...additionally, there are many people as well as universities (Participant A).

Another participant also agreed that competency is important for employment prospects:

...as long as we are really well-educated, we won't lack of jobs (Participant K).

Another perceived cause of unemployment was lack of connections. Participant A perceived that in order to get a job in a government sector, one needs connections:

In relation to job markets, we can get a job until we have connection. Some who are capable they can, but the requirement of connection is so much...as long as we know many people and have good communication with them...ask them and they might find a job for us...to be short, it is about connection.

4.17 Perception of Development Progress

4.17.1 Positive Development

Infrastructure

The majority of participants commented that Cambodia has developed very fast in terms of physical infrastructure, such as roads, schools, private universities and health centres.

When I was a child, there were not many universities. But now there are many universities so more young people can study at the university. Before, because there were not many universities, they were not really interested in study (Participant A).

Participant A also appreciated the booming of universities and that she is able to further her education, while acknowledging that this situation is rather unfortunate for her older brother:

Before, talking about my brother, he did study hard, but he could not further his education due to the lack of university...but at my generation, it has changed. I can study from primary school to higher education because there are many universities or high schools...and in relation to family's economy, it is better than before so I can study.

Participant K mentioned the improvement of road conditions as a positive development in Cambodia, saying,

Generally speaking, roads...like this road, it was not paved before, but now it's paved with asphalt (kao sou)...the roads to Banon are also paved.

Similarly, participant F mentioned the improvement of road conditions, but also added the improvement of irrigation systems:

Much change than when I was a child. Now there are changes in both national roads and small roads which are comfortable and irrigation system is convenient to farmers.

The benefits of the improved roads were also reported by participants A and F whose houses were far from school. These improved roads made travelling to and from schools easier and saving of time and were also considered to contribute to health conditions.

Such changes...first it's good to travel to schools, to get various experience from other agencies or NGOs, second it saves time and third our health is not affected (Participant F).

However, participant F also expressed some concerns relating to his safety on the improved roads, saying,

Affecting travelling...I am scared of being hit (laughs)...scared of being hit only.

The increase in the number of universities and their important role for facilitating the educational life of young Cambodians was also highlighted by some participants as a positive development outcome in Cambodia.

When I was a child, there were not many universities. But now there are many so more young people can come and study. Before, there were not many universities; so young people were not interested in studying. Now when there are many universities like that, people can study. Additionally, they can work. Before, no...but now they know more (Participant A).

Participant A said that the future of Cambodia will be more advanced due to the growth of universities and more educated people:

I think in the future, there will be more advancement because every day the number of universities keep growing like this...there are more educated people like that. So there might be more advanced not getting worse.

Telecommunications and Media

Some participants saw the advancement of telecommunications, such as mobile phones and the internet, as enabling them to get news that is related to current social issues.

Land grabbing...before I did not know much about that...because at that time I did not follow up news as today...before the media was not open...we only listened to the radio so I did not know much. If we had internet like today I might have had searched and known about that (Participant B).

Participant B went on to say that the radios usually broadcast only positive news and land garbs do not fall in to this category:

There were only one or two radio stations. Sometimes they broadcasted only positive news...something like land issues were rarely to be heard.

Through various mass media such as the Internet, the access to both national and international radio channels, I usually have update news related to the reality of current social situation...for example, by attending various seminars that are related to various social issues such as gender, domestic violence as such...I gain more understanding.

The same participant mentioned the benefits of the mobile communication sectors that Cambodians are enjoying, saying,

Mobile phones are also advanced especially various service providers are competing each other which provides people an opportunity for, for example, other communication purposes, such as work, study and so on...it's convenient.

However he also acknowledged that the Internet is not broadly available yet.

Participant D mentioned similarly to participant B in relation to the advancement of informational technology as a positive development in Cambodia, saying,

...because now we can see the world. So we are able to see the current situation happening around the world because we have information technology system...like communication system...we know much...before we had nothing. So it was hard to communicate.

Citizens' Livelihood

Despite such developments, some of them also observed that the livelihood of citizens is getting worse. For example, participant B said,

The livelihood is getting worse...can't be enhanced be...Before, farmers did not live in debt, but now they live in huge debt...because first is fertilizers; second is insecticide; third is borrow others' money in advance. As a result, each year they work hard to pay debt...at the end of the day, they are all migrate.

In contrast, another participant indicated that the livelihood of his family and people in his community was much enhanced. In particular, there is a growing number of people owning modern farming equipment and transportation such as motorbikes. This experience might be because he lives in the area of Battambang province that Kerbo (2011) identified as richly productive for rice. The participant said,

From childhood up until now, I see there are a number of developments including my family's livelihood. When I was a child, I spent too little; but now they can afford sending me to study here and give me between R5,000 to R10,000...better...so I think my family's livelihood has been much improved. And if comparing to the society, I also see others' livelihood has been improved. In my village, in relation to agriculture, farmers have much improve....before, they used cow, but now they use many of machines such as walking tractors (kor yun)...now at every house and I think that is a factor that contributes to their betterment. And mmm many motorbikes, many people can afford a new motorbike. But other issues, it's hard to say...but I see there are a great number of schools and roads for the society (Participant J, personal communication, June 2, 2012).

However, he added that the improvement he noticed is in terms of materials only, not money. Additionally, he saw that the improvement was mostly for people who live along the road, not those in rural remote areas:

...to be short, there is actual improvement along the road. But, if we go to rural areas, we know about their livelihood...I saw they were living a bad live...no water...sometimes during dry season there is no drinking water...the way children go to school is a mess...lives at countryside looks really hard. But if we look here, the improvement is only for people on the streets/roads, but when we go to rural areas, we see how tough lives they have.

The same participant also mentioned that the village no longer has a problem with thieves and this situation might have been reflected in the increase in livelihood in his village.

Another participant spoke of peace. Before, during the 1990's, he had to flee to the Thai border for three years due to internal conflict in Cambodia. However, due to

peace, his parents managed to bring him back to the country and he was able to continue his studies.

Participants described how important the current positive development, in particular the development of a schooling infrastructure, is to them. Some viewed human resource development as the key to the economic and social development of the country:

The positive development is very meaningful to me....now we have lots of schools so we can gain more knowledge...because the development of the country requires human resources (Participant J)

However, this participant also acknowledged that although there are many schools, it is the financial resources of students that is the important factor that brings them the required knowledge to pass or to get a good grade through private tutorials.

The government has built many schools so it contributes to the improvement of human resource development...but from that I see that there are many schools actually, but studying at high school needs to spend lots of money in terms of tutorials (rien kuor). If we don't have money to study additional tutorials, we cannot know well...that is high school. To me, I spent a lot daily otherwise I could not have known well (Participant J).

Unlike others, participant A viewed Cambodia as having been only 30% developed, saying,

There is about 30% change, not all...additionally, job markets in Cambodia is not broad yet...there are not many factories...mostly there are abundant garment factories. This makes graduates or citizens unemployed...can't enter such job market.

Quick Responses from Local Authorities

Participant B highlighted the quick responses from local authorities to citizens' needs as an additional positive development to the improvement of physical infrastructure, such as schools, health centres and Buddhist temples, but added,

First is related to infrastructure, such as schools, health centres, and temples, have been much developed across provinces and towns...particularly at places where difficult situation exist, people make a request to the commune chief, he is able to address it through the government...it's quick.

Reduction in Domestic Violence

Participant D saw the reduction in domestic violence in her village as a positive development:

Let me talk about domestic violence...when I was a child, my neighbours had fighting very often ...mostly due to alcohol consumption...but now since there is a law, they dare not to do so...quiet.

Participant A also reported the recent reduction of domestic violence cases in her village. Participant D said that the factors that contributed to reduced domestic violence were as follows:

I think perhaps because citizens understand clearly and are scared of laws that they no longer commit domestic violence...on the other hand, it might be because of the fact that they might realize they were wrong...turn to love their families. That's why they have changed like that.

International Investment

Participant F mentioned the growing number of foreign investors as another aspect of positive development:

There are more foreign partners coming to invest in Cambodia.

4.17.2 Negative Development

While acknowledging the positive results of development in Cambodia, the participants also expressed their disappointment with the negative developments in Cambodia, particularly corruption. For example, participant J said,

To me, in relation to negative development, I feel disappointed...for example, if we earn money, true that it is for our own family, but some part of it is also contributed to the country development. But, there is not outcome because that contributed money is taken and put in their pockets. So I feel hurt.

This participant also raised the issue of the effects of international loans on the next generation in Cambodia:

Cambodian children are in debt as soon as they are born...because our country, during Lon Nol era, owed much to donors...so as soon as children are born, they are thousand dollars in debt...that feels sad.

Inequality

The participants highlighted inequality as another negative development in Cambodia.

I see what is bad is one problem of the disrespect of laws of some leaders. It is...in sum, the more money they got, the poorer we become (Participant J).

In the current social situation, the rich evicts the poor. The rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer. The rich buy land while the poor live in the forest...it always exists...oppressing...in addition current land issues are cruel...oppressing people, especially land concessions affects too much on citizens' lands...during these few

months, there have been many demonstrations organized many times in our Battambang province...they have organized many times (Participant B).

Corruption

Some participants, while acknowledging the progress of Cambodia's development, also described the negative development of corruption.

The society has been changed truly...but I think our Cambodian society has not changed much...because after I have watched more news...generally speaking, most of people in our Srok Khmer (Cambodia) regard the richer as super/important...sometimes laws can do nothing to the rich...additionally it is full of corrupt people...so far I think things have not much changed. It's changed but little (Participant K).

In relation to society, before, it was not much developed. But it is much improved; but there is much corruption (Participant A).

However, participants B and F perceived differently. Participant B considered that corruption had been addressed by the government through the establishment of an Anti-Corruption Unit:

For example, the anti-corruption institution...now there is something like that...they have strict laws...for example the declaration of wealth...salaries...if it is more than that, the state will confiscate it.

Similarly, participant F saw that bribe-related issues have been reduced:

...then the issue...the issue of bribes have been omitted.

But while some participants think that corruption has been reduced, participant A thinks differently:

I think it was not decreased...the Ministry of Education, for example. Like when we have exam at grade 12...before, people said it was hard; but now I don't see it's that hard. Before, to pass high school exam, it was hard. But now it is full of cheating...it has become easy.

Participants A and B described another form of corruption in the sphere of deforestation:

In relation to forest, it is the same. Now, wood becomes expensive...they use it for form furniture. Those people need money so until there is a bribe...for example, the transportation of fine wood...there are high-ranking people buying it and selling it with high price...actually forest extinct just because of them...they don't think much...they are relying on bribe...so the earn heaps of money (Participant A).

Deforestation...if normal residents who go and cut trees to build such as fence were caught, but for those who cut and collect in a large scale, they are ok...instead (Participant B).

Labour Migration

Participant F highlighted the increased flow of labour migration out of Cambodia as one of the negative aspects of development, saying,

The government cannot the usage of human resources in the country yet which makes too many people to work outside the country. In the country, the economy has not much improved because there are many people left the country which made the residents living in the country difficult to do business.

Participant F further added that poor working conditions and low salaries are the causes of labour migration:

On the other hand, some factories do not think about workers' health and that leads many people to go and work outside the country.

Land Conflict, Deforestation and Climate Changes

One female participant claimed that land grabs have reduced and now only occur in remote areas, not in town since urban dwellers know more about the law:

There are not much as before...now there is a reduction...laws is more strictly enforced. But in remote areas, there are many occurring; not many here...here it's impossible since there is accurate law...people are more knowledgeable so they dare not to commit land grabbing (Participant A).

One participant said that revolution might occur, similar to how the Khmer Rouge regime emerged, due to the growing land conflict issues in Cambodia.

Listening to the news, we did not hear much about land conflict issue before. But now land conflict is growing and it's everywhere. I think land issue can bring revolution. The Khmer Rouge emerged due to a land conflict in Samlot¹⁸ (Participant J).

Participant B also raised land issues and considered them to be cruel acts done to the poor.

Oppressing...in addition current land issues are cruel...oppressing people, especially land concessions affects too much on citizens' lands...during these few months, there have been many demonstrations organized many times in our Battambang province...they have organized many times.

¹⁸ Samlot is a district in the west of Battambang Province. It is located on the border of Thailand.

Participant E who was an NGO worker, working with grassroots communities affected by land grabs, said that although the government had evicted people from the central city to rural areas, they also had social land concession schemes to be distributed to citizens. However, people do not reside in the land in these concession schemes because they migrate to get jobs. As a result, the land has been left idle. Nevertheless, she suggested that the government needs to ensure it provides fair compensation to evicted legal residents who reside in the city:

In relation to land grabbing issues, emm...since there are many issues relating to the fact that the government has evicted urban residents to reside in rural areas as such...but within that issue, there are many social land concession programmes...they have started implementing such programmes at all provinces and towns...so if we make accusation on the government side only, it might be a burden to city residents....but for rural residents, the problem is caused by themselves. When the government provided land to them, but they do not reside there. They turn to work as a labour worker abroad, leaving the land idle. Eventually the land is full of forest again....actually there are many land concession programmes in all provinces and towns, but it's only that they prefer to work in Thailand where they can earn quickly so they migrate, the whole family. For the residents of Boeng Kak lake, the problem stemmed from the fact that the compensation amount paid to the residents is not equal to what they should have been paid...offering them US\$7,000 to 8,000, they cannot buy the land in the city with this amount. That's why they claimed to stay...this is the conflicting issue of which the government and the company should consider.

She further perceived that the negative effects of development issues occurring in Cambodia are inevitable because it is a developing country. However, she suggested an impact assessment should be carried out, including consultation with affected residents.

I think the development... our country is still a developing country like that...so every development has impacts. But when it becomes a negative impact, they need to study the impacts and the study should be done with the residents directly. It's not something like after the study is conducted, when writing a report, it is made in different contents for the higher levels and the grassroots levels. It's not acceptable...so the better way is for both the beneficiaries and the victims to negotiate to reach an acceptable solution.

One participant raised deforestation as another issue of negative development along with its effect on climate changes, saying,

Before, we have lots of forest. But now deforestation is growing despite the bans...before there is abundant rain, but now although there is rain, it's not as the same as before...it's like climate change. Before, farming although there was not much science, it grew well without using

chemical substance...but now if we don't use chemical, it's not grown well (Participant A).

Participant B highlighted climate change as a result of deforestation as follows:

Our Cambodia, as you know, did not have any flood or storm before. But now...flood, especially storms are abundant. One more thing is lightning (laughing)...this year it's strange...flood has just gone...storms started occurring within 24 provinces and towns...four to five provinces have already affected by storm...the big issue is the loss of forest, especially rainforests...nowadays, they are clearing it...almost gone.

Participant B also acknowledged the responses of the government to the deforestation issue:

In relation to deforestation, the government has charged offenders who cut trees for certain years.

Traffic Accidents

Traffic accidents were mentioned by a large number of participants. Most people are scared of being in an accident, one participant said. Participant B said that the rapid increase in the rate of traffic accidents is growing faster than that of HIV/AIDS.

Traffic accidents nowadays, mostly...in one news there are at least five cases a day...its rate is growing faster than AIDS of the early era...now what people are scared the most is traffic accident...the most cruel.

When I was a child, traffic accidents were not really an issue...because mostly I see especially along the road near my house...recurrently there is a fatal motorbike accident...a fatal car accident...hitting people...fatal traffic accident very often near my house.

Participant F also perceived traffic accidents to be one of the negative results of development in Cambodia:

...only traffic accidents, but HIV/AIDS has been decreased. He further added that little is being done to reduce the rates of traffic accidents. According to him, there needs to be a reduction of alcohol consumption and an increase in the number of people studying traffic laws and possessing a driving licence.

Traffic accidents have not successfully reduced yet because alcohol consumption has not been omitted yet; there are not many people learning traffic laws and having driving licence (Participant F.).

One female participant described traffic accidents that were experienced by her family members, including her mum and older brother:

My brother had an accident due to driving under alcoholic influence, got serious injured and paid another victim as a motorbike. My mum also

had an accident on her way back from field work. Now I am so scared that I do not want to step on the road at all (participant C, personal communication, May 27, 2012).

Participant A highlighted that one of the causes of traffic accidents is the improvement of the roads:

When there are good roads, people drive faster, so it affects...us...when drivers drive fast...when children walk beside the road, it causes accident...because the better the road condition is, the more recklessly drivers drive. So it poses difficulties to schoolchildren who walk from schools...thus the traffic accident like that.

She also thought that the current traffic issues have not been well arranged, saying,

Every day in relation to traffic, it has not really been arranged well...although it has, it is still much insufficient....bribes, for example.

However, participant E perceived that traffic issues have been much improved, especially in relation to helmet wearing habits among citizens in Cambodia:

Frankly speaking, I see much improvements in terms of wearing helmet...they get more understanding of wearing helmet...but there is only a small segment that still do not wear it due to concern of damaging their hair style (laugh). But what I have witnessed is the population understand more about wearing helmet.

4.18 Perceived Solutions to Social Issues

When asked about possible solutions and their obligations to the mentioned social issues, four main themes emerged. These were: personal advice, self-responsibility, parental-responsibility, and the government and relevant local authorities' duties.

4.18.1 Self-Responsibility

Seven of the participants emphasized self-responsibility as a means to solving the issues they mentioned.

First, we never ever want to try any kind of illegal drugs. Then we advise our friends not to involve with it because it poses many harmful effects (Participant B).

First, we think from ourselves...whether we like them...whether we to commit corruption like them or not? It starts from ourselves...first we have to be a good role model for other people in general...it is...don't think of corruption....don't think of exploiting others...that is a factor that before guiding others to be good, we need to be good ourselves first (Participant J).

Participants B, F and I spoke similarly in relation to the responses to traffic accidents:

I won't do like that. I won't drive as per my desire. I need to wear helmet and drive with speed limit (Participant I).

When I drive, I don't drink alcohol and drive in accordance with traffic laws, not disobey traffic laws, reduce speed and follow traffic sign (Participant F).

In relation to traffic accident, we protect ourselves...especially wearing helmet...don't wear it just because we are scared of the police...we have to wear it for our safety...for driving, don't try so fast...need to check the speedometer...on quiet roads, we drive at 50 or 60...on crowded roads, we should drive at 20 or 15...be flexible in accordance with the roads (Participant B).

The first obligation is to start from my myself...for example in relation to deforestation, don't clear forest...land grabbing, don't grab land from inhabitants...if I were among the powerful people...we have to start from ourselves...corruption for example, we have to start from ourselves...in sum, if we want those issues to be positively changed in order for our country to be much more developed, we have to start from ourselves (Participant B).

To address alcohol consumption among youth, the participant who also consumes it mentioned self-responsibility and providing advice to his friends about the disadvantages of alcohol consumption:

First is to stop consuming it by myself...and only educate friends that I know, telling them about that...it's not useful...in sum, advise others (Participant K).

To respond to the issue of unemployment, Participant A showed her commitment to put more efforts towards study in order to get a job, saying,

I should put more efforts to study and a certain research to get a job.

Another interesting response to unemployment was from participant B who stressed the fact that seeking opportunities rather than sitting and waiting is an important factor contributing to getting a job. He also considered starting from a lower level job as this would enable him to move up the ladder:

In relation to unemployment issue, as a student or learner, we need to find a job by ourselves...we don't need to wait for someone to hand you a job...whatever the job type is, we have to start from below...don't mind such job...we have to do it in order to reach the higher job.

Participant D also mentioned self-responsibility in relation to solving social issues, in particular the domestic violence that she had just raised, saying,

My duty to solve the problem is not to commit that problem.

According to most participants, the next step after self-responsibility is providing advice to others.

4.18.2 Provision of Advice and Training to Others

Eleven participants highlighted the provision of personal advice to others as a key solution to the problems they described:

...And one more thing is that I will try to explain my friends to make them to understand about politics...how politics is important to us (Participant J).

...One more thing is that I educate people around me. Although not 100%, some of them follow my advice (Participant I).

Participant D also revealed her willingness to advise others using the knowledge she had gained:

...on the other hand, I have learnt this much...I should advise those with less knowledge...that's all.

In relation to the issue of corruption, participant B saw being a good model and teaching others to be good as solutions:

Start from ourselves and teach others to behave like us...to be a good model for others...don't follow the model that is not good.

Personal advice was not seen as a solution to migration however:

I cannot ban them. I cannot say anything. They said if they stay here, what can they do for a living? What benefits can I get since there is not job here? (Participant I).

Although this participant also committed himself to not migrating from his hometown after graduation:

To me, I try all my best to stay at my hometown.

Participant B also expressed his inability to advise someone that is not his friend in relation to traffic accident, saying,

If they are friends, I can advise them...they follow me...for others, as you know, they don't follow us...others especially youth gangs...they might response by fighting us.

4.18.3 Other Solutions

One participant explained that he would address the issues of deforestation and land conflicts as follows:

We have to find measure to protect...like we can cut it, but if we cut one; we have to grow one so that it won't extinct. In relation to land conflicts, our country issued land titles so everybody has to apply for it

which is good...when people want to grab their land we have the titles as the evidence (Participant B).

4.18.4 Government and Relevant Local Authorities

In relation to alcohol consumption, participant K mentioned the role of government in addition to their self-responsibility for addressing the issue, saying,

If we can, we can request to the government to ban businesses that sell alcoholic items...don't allow for too many of such business...because now there are too many.

In relation to unemployment issues, participant A recommended that the government create more companies and factories so that graduate students can get jobs:

The government should create more companies or factories so that graduates can be employed.

In relation to corruption in the educational sphere, she thought that school teachers' salaries were insufficient and suggested the state either increase teachers' salaries or lower the price of food items:

Each institution should increase the salaries...such as issues of teachers; their salary is too little to feed their family without extra jobs...because the salary is very little; so the government should increase their salary to buy...because if the government want to pay low salary, they should lower the price of goods...because the price keep increasing every day; so like teachers...they need to make their living for their family...insufficiently support their family...on one hand; sending children to school...like for the whole family, it is hard...money is little and the price of goods is continuously high... so they cannot afford the goods.

4.18.5 Participation in Education and Community Work

Participants also spoke of accessing education and then being leaders in Cambodia, or of the importance of getting involved in community work, as ways in which they could contribute to the development of the country. For example, participant J said,

One more thing is I make effort to further my study. My goal that I want to be is I want to be a country leader and won't do such things (corruption).

And participant E suggested that

youth should participate in community work...solve problem...normally, within the community where they are living might have some issues, but they don't know how to contribute...if they allocate their free time for the community...for the elderly that have problem in that community, they not only learn something from that issue, but also they can contribute something to their community.

4.19 Summary

Most of the participants had experienced challenges and difficult times throughout their academic lives. The most common challenge was poverty. Over half of the participants had experienced poverty in various forms. These included the lack of required means to attend school, such as school bags, transportation, the extra tutorial fees and the fees required to study English. Besides poverty, these students went through hard times such as domestic violence, unfulfilled rights, a lack of family warmth, and having insufficient time for study due to needing to complete household chores.

Despite early setbacks in life, strong self-determination and aspirations for higher education enabled them to pursue their studies at higher educational institutions. These achievements were due to various means and opportunities, such as the availability of private universities at provincial levels, financial support from relatives, scholarships provided by NGOs and the government, the visibility of positive role models, and free accommodation at Buddhist temples for male students.

There were different factors that brought these participants to enrol at university. The most common factor was an expectation of getting a job which would require a high qualification. Some participants attended university due to their strong ambitions and aspirations for higher qualifications, while others enrolled at university thanks to their employer's policy. Another motivating factor for participants was to be free from poverty.

Although they have managed to enrol at university, there were various issues reported to be affecting their lives. Poverty, English as lingua Franca, unemployment, corruption, unfulfilled rights and pressure from their parents regarding choosing both majors and future careers.

Another interesting finding was the fact that higher education has changed the participants' lives in different ways. These included the expansion of knowledge and skills, including the knowledge of social issues occurring in Cambodia, which was not learnt at high school; an increase in self-confidence; and critical thinking skills.

Although they were facing a variety of issues, the majority of them expressed feelings of optimism and hope and demonstrated the capacity to overcome adversity. The most common aspiration was an aspiration for a career, followed by higher education, running their own business, and contributing to Cambodia's social development.

Nevertheless, these aspirations were expressed alongside a number of concerns that might prevent them from achieving their aspirations. For example, a lack of proficiency in English, computer skills, and insufficient funds to start a business.

To summarize, despite having faced challenges since childhood, a strong determination and the desire to be free from poverty have enabled the majority of these students to enrol at higher education and be hopeful about their futures.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

This chapter seeks to address the main research questions. Prior to the discussion section, section one introduces the key themes in accordance with the research questions. Section two then discusses each of these themes and the related literature that was reviewed in chapter two. The themes discussed include youth development and gender; youth poverty; and young people's future aspirations. Human rights and social justice are threaded throughout the discussion.

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 Major issues affecting young rural Cambodian university students' lives

As presented in Chapter Four, the major issues that affect young rural university students in the provinces in this study included: poverty, which was comprised of poverty of rights, poverty of means, and poverty of opportunity; domestic violence; unfulfilled rights; discouragement; a long distance between home and school; the lack of means to study English language; and unemployment. There was a gender difference in the experience of an access to free accommodation in the province. main difference between rural males and rural females found from the interviews was the fact that the males have more means in terms of free accommodation, especially the accommodation at the pagodas.

5.1.2 How do they understand and respond to the issues that affect their lives?

The most common theme emerging from question two was education. Students in this research believed that education can address the issues that have affected their lives.

5.2 Discussion

5.2.1 Youth Development and Gender Analysis

Overall, the young people in this study have successfully possessed four of the five natures of human qualities (the 5Cs), defined by Lerner and her colleagues (as cited in the US Department of Education Mentoring Resource Centre, 2007). These qualities have been developed through services, opportunities and supports, as mentioned in the model of youth development published by the US Department of Education Mentoring Resource Centre (2007) discussed in Chapter Two. However, the delivery of such services varied in accordance with gender.

Based on the story of the participants in this thesis, high levels of confidence have been gradually developed through studying at university. The best examples

illustrating the levels of confidence of these participants included the ability to show their capabilities, their sense of self-worth, their sense of self-efficacy and their belief in the future, as can be seen in the following quotes:

Now I can talk confidently no matter where I am. My confidence is everywhere now (Participant B).

From group work, I worked alone sometimes so I did the presentation most of the time. I start gaining experience and being brave. The more audience I have, the more desire to do the presentation I have. It seems like I am proud to show off my capacity (Participant H).

The current job market in Cambodia is still not good, nevertheless I feel I am hopeful...if we enrol at the university, we have more opportunities to obtain (Participant J).

In addition to confidence, participants also possessed another human capacity called caring/compassion, or what Pittman et al. (2003) called contributions. Based on their stories and future plans, the participants showed the compassion they have for others and their willingness to contribute to society through different ways, such as providing advice, training, disseminating knowledge, donating to charity and creating jobs for Cambodians. For example:

...One more thing is that I educate people around me. Although not 100%, some of them follow my advice (Participant I).

...on the other hand, I have learnt this much...I should advise those with less knowledge...that's all (Participant D).

Participate...through raising an awareness of deforestation or drug issues to neighbours or teaching students...providing advice to friends to be good...if they've something wrong, don't blame them but encourage them to behave good (Participant B).

When I have much money, I can...like...normally when I open a business, I have many staff. If my staff is not knowledgeable, I can hire a teacher to teach them to understand issues such as domestic violence, corruption in the society, or something relevant to society like what is bad,...so we can explain...or personal ethics...it's like humans, they are acceptable as long as they have ethics and good manners. We have to hire a teacher of someone to train our staff to gain more understanding (Participant A).

I think I might be able to contribute...normally we can contribute some so that the government can change their uses of...it's like we should contribute so that they know...it's like in a form of seminar...we contribute to explain them so that they know what is right what is wrong, what they should and should not do (Participant A).

Mostly through the radio, they created a programme for kind people to donate in a form of cash mostly for blind people and orphans as such. I want to help marginalized people because I'm also marginalized...if I am rich enough, I would help them (Participant D).

I don't know what I can do...but if I have ability, I want to gather my friends to establish a company, a very large company...if there are many companies, our country is full of jobs...that's what I think (Participant K).

The Participants also gained another quality, namely character; the feature that leads people to do either what is right or what is wrong. It also includes the obedience to social and cultural norms.

Slightly self- improved...know what is right and wrong than before...more comprehension on social issues when we enrolled at university...for example, at the university, whenever there's an event, the university send us to attend it. And when we study there we know more...through learning, lecturers as well as friends...the benefit can be gaining more knowledge, but I have not been likely to see other benefits yet (Participant K).

The last human quality, connection, was also found in a number of participants. Based on their stories, these participants had positive relationships with the environment surrounding them, such as institutions, families, peers, and the community.

I can know more about the society. And I have become to adapt to the society, both study and working atmosphere...yes...another change is that before I did not really obey my parents. But since I enrolled at the university, I listened to them a lot...I like them to tell me which pathway is good...which one is bad...I like them to tell me...not only my parents, my neighbours I always acknowledge their opinions...not like this: since I have gained more knowledge, I no longer need their opinions...no (Participant B).

I know many people in the society...humans' characters in the society...know more...unlike studying at high school which was simple...my knowledge is also much advanced than before...understand more how people communicate each other in the society (Participant D).

5.2.2 SOS Model: Services, Opportunities, and Supports

According to the experience of the participants, it is no doubt that their human qualities, as discussed in the previous section, had stemmed from various means, such as institutions and families. Although, apparently, rural males had more means to education than rural females.

As discussed earlier, "services" refers to those that provide basic needs such as shelter, food and other services to young people who are in need. Services play an

important role in the alleviation of obstacles that inhibit young people from prospering. “Opportunities” refers to the means that allow young people to develop their talents and advance their skills. “Supports” refers to the helpful relationships between young people and their peers, families and the institutions that provide them with shelter, inspiration, development, and direction which in turn enable them to learn, move forward and give back.

Looking at the findings of the study, it becomes apparent that elements of the SOS model (Services, Opportunities and Supports) are used deliberately by the Cambodian government, a number of NGOs and private universities, Buddhist temples and female relatives.

As illustrated in Chapter Four, NGOs, Buddhist temples and female relatives were described by the participants as the main factors contributing to the improvement of their lives. These actors have served as both services, opportunities, and some as supports. For example, an NGO such as PNC Cambodia, enabled the poor, but competent rural provincial participants H and Q to nurture their competence and skills through the provision of services, such as shelters in the city; opportunities, such as computers, learning the English language, and business training through their scholarship programmes; as well as supports through the provision of jobs, which allow these students to grow taller.

After high school, my life has not changed at all. My life has changed because of that school, funded by foreign aid. I am a poor student who cannot afford the enrolment at the university. However, they required us to pass an entry exam. This really changed my fate and other poor but capable Cambodians. Now I’ve got a job and has been pursuing for a bachelor degree (Participant H).

Buddhist temples were another example of SOS services that played an important role for the provision of free accommodation and meals for three poor rural students who could not afford the rent in town. However, based on the temple’s rules, the temples can only accommodate male students. This finding indicates that rural and poor female students who do not have alternative means and cannot afford the rent or the travel costs to and from university, do not have the same opportunities to further their education at private higher education institutions as their male counterparts.

The nearest school had only up to grade four...I had to further to grade five...it was far... to the commune so I had to do a long-distance trip so it was hard. At that time the road was cut off and sticky during rainy season...during dry season it was not that bad.....I studied from grade five, six then further to grade seven to nine. So I had been far away

from home for five years...after lower secondary school exams (diploma exams), I further my study at a district...because at first at commune, and then at district...it was remarkable...struggling...staying at pagoda...with a number of friends...so if at that time there was only me, I might not have managed to struggle this much (Participant L).

Female relatives were also a good example of SOS services, providing basic needs and accommodation to three participants so that they were able to enhance their capabilities through higher education. Without these female relatives, these participants would not have had an opportunity to study at university. The best example was from the story of participant K, who reported dropping out of school for two years during the period he returned to live with his mum at his rural home:

At that time, my house was far...I came to stay with my aunty since 2001 when I was little boy...in 2008 I went back home...so at that time I rode a bike to school...but not long after that I dropped out of school.

5.2.3 SOS and Gender

As discussed above, female relatives appeared to be particularly important in supporting poor rural female students, especially when we consider the lack of other accommodation for them. Men have access to free accommodation, the Buddhist temples, while women do not.

5.2.4 Youth Poverty and Human Rights

Twelve out of the eighteen participants were poor in various measures. In terms of being financially poor, some were poor in terms of means to attend school and move out of poverty; two were poor in terms of health and nutrition; and interestingly, one was poor in terms of freedom of expression and political liberty, while not being financially poor. However, these participants were not poor in terms of human capabilities and the determination to get out of poverty. There were four sub-themes that emerged from youth poverty. These were comprised of: poverty of rights, poverty of means, poverty of nutrition and poverty of opportunities.

5.2.5 Poverty of Rights

It was clear from the interviews that a number of participants did not have all the rights stated in international human rights treaties signed by the Cambodian government. The violation of the rights of these young people included the following aspects:

- The right to freedom of opinion and expression without interference;
- The right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association;
- The right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the state is obliged to respect citizens' rights to freedom of expression (Flauss, 2009) and freedom of peaceful assembly (Parsa, 2011). However, it is evident that young Cambodians' rights to freedom of expression and assembly were not respected. As Parsa (2011) explained, expression can be made as a form of action, instead of talking and writing; organizing an event for International Woman's Rights Day as an expression of opinion towards woman's right, for example. The rejection of participant J's request to organize a Woman's Rights Day by the commune chief and the accusation that he was attempting an uprising just because he wanted to hold a public event, clearly illustrated the violation of the student's rights to freedom of expression and assembly.

When I was at grade 11, my friends and I had a will which was to organize a Women's Day in a class level. Due to the growing number of supporters, I submitted an official request letter and it reached the ministry. And the Ministry banned me not to organize it...and the district governor also did not allow me neither; and there are many problems because he said I organized a movement against the government...I wondered. He accused me as an activist who acted against the government politics. I wondered. So since he is a high ranking official, a district governor, and his saying reached teachers who did not know and believe what he said was true. So they hated me so much. At that time I really got lost...I did not know how come. And my friends also hated me much; they said I was with certain political party. I was not like that... it was just about an event...so I feel very depressed. (Participant J).

This finding confirms that of Yong (n.d.) who found that freedom of expression in relation to political discussion was restricted in schools.

5.2.6 Poverty of Means

Another aspect of poverty that most of the participants in this study had been experiencing was financial. Money is very important for facilitating their educational lives in terms of school fees, study materials, and time to fully absorb the knowledge from university:

School fee is also a concern...like mostly half is from my family's money and another half is from mine...sometimes I have to delay for a while...one or two months to earn more money to fill up...yes, and for study life, money for everyday expenses is not usually enough...because it is little...unlike others (Participant B).

Lack of transport also meant that some could not attend education. According to participants I and J as quoted below, it can be implied that those who cannot address transportation issues are unlikely to continue their studies. Participant I had to ask his friends for a lift to university. Whereas participant J, who had to travel from his rural

home to university, emphasized the increase in his study expenditure, including study materials and travel costs, when enrolling at university compared to those at high school:

Even if I do not need to pay the school fee (scholarship), comparing between high school and university in relation to spending, it seems more spending to studying at university; in terms of study materials and fuel for motorbike, I spend more than I did at high school.

This finding implies that those who also live in rural areas, but cannot afford the travel costs from home to school, not to mention school fees and other related expenses, are unlikely to enrol at higher education institutions.

5.2.7 Poor Nutrition

Two participants who came from the same province were poor in terms of health and nutrition, in addition to their financial difficulties; unfortunately, their parents could not afford sufficient nutritious food for them. However, it is interesting that the male participant's health improved since he moved to the city, while the female's did not. She continued to suffer from ill health despite moving to Battambang province where she got a job like the male participant did.

5.2.8 Poverty of Opportunity

Geographical isolation was found to be the cause of the poverty of opportunity for rural students. Geography in this context refers to the differences in the availability of resources between urban and rural areas. Those who live in rural areas suffer from a lack of means to upgrade their socio-economic status. These means include a lack of schools and higher education institutions, a lack of teachers of English and a lack of quality education that they should have equally received compared to those living in urban areas. The stories of participants F, H, K and L best illustrated this finding and is reflected in the social injustice that these participants experienced:

In relation to studies, when I studied over there, I faced some problems such as the lack of schools. When I studied there, there were only primary schools because there were lots of mines which were not solved yet...Then I moved to study in Battambang. Transferring to Battambang at that time, there was no paper work for the transfer. So I studied here by starting from year one again, in 1999. Then I studied here from year one up until year twelve, but I did not face a problem of school shortage as such because there are abundant schools here (Participant F).

Because I am from rural areas...I have learnt very little English because at rural areas there were not English teachers...yes there were, but until I started high school that there were English teachers...secondary school...so my livelihood was also poor, I didn't attend extra tutorials

until I started high school...at first, I studied free of charge...the teacher invited me to study...after studying longer, I paid 3,000 riels¹⁹ per month, only 3,000. So I had studied for several years...studied at night at teacher's home...at rural areas for one to two hours per night...upon the completion, I got some basic English...(Participant H).

At that time, my house was far...I came to stay with my aunty since 2001 when I was little boy...in 2008 I went back home...so at that time I rode a bike to school...but not long after that I dropped out of school (Participant K).

The nearest school had only up to grade four...I had to further to grade five...it was far... to the commune so I had to do a long-distance trip so it was hard. At that time the road was cut off and sticky during rainy season...during dry season it was not that bad.....I studied from grade five, six then further to grade seven to nine. So I had been far away from home for five years...after lower secondary school exams (diploma exams), I further my study at a district...because at first at commune, and then at district...it was remarkable...struggling...staying at pagoda...with a number of friends...so if at that time there was only me, I might not have managed to struggle this much (Participant L).

In brief, those who had grown up in rural areas experienced injustice in terms of educational quality, a shortage of schools and international language education. For example, those who were able to move to town enjoyed access to quality education, while those who had to study in their rural hometown experienced a shortage of quality education and international language learning opportunities.

Interestingly, while most of the participants experienced financial poverty and a lack of opportunity, one participant was poor in terms of political liberty and the rights to freedom of expression. His interest in politics and political discussion was not acceptable in or welcomed by the society surrounding him, including his parents:

There are many problems, but the important issue is the fact that I love politics... but the society, the place where I live; they do not like what I love. Like when I studied at high school, I organized an event which was not relevant to politics, but people get confused, there were many things involved with that issue. It seemed like they really restricted my freedom... so in relation to political issues, even at home, my parents also banned me...so I feel very depressed (Participant J).

This finding reflects a violation of the rights to freedom of expression as stated in article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (The UN, n.d.) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (UN Documents, 1948). This article means that no one should ban people from thinking and talking as they wish

¹⁹ 3,000 riels equal US\$0.75 (Ostermiller, 2014).

since they have the right to do so (The UN, 2013). In this context, participant J has the right to like and talk about politics; and he should not have been banned by his parents or discriminated against by society. Based on how he was treated, it is clear that his right of freedom of expression has been violated.

More importantly, this participant experienced sad treatment from the local authority just because he tried to organize a simple event, one that was not related to political actions. This treatment reflects a violation of the right to peaceful assembly, which is specified in article 21 of ICCPR (The UN, n.d.). This article means people have the right to organize a meeting peacefully.

To summarise, youth in this study were mostly poor in terms of financial resources and opportunities, while two experienced malnutrition.

5.2.9 Youth Poverty, Determination and Opportunities

Opportunities adding to determination played important roles in positively changing the participants' lives. Opportunities described by these participants included scholarship and job opportunities.

As discussed in Chapter Two, Kerbo (2011) acknowledged a number of Cambodian characteristics that are important for social mobility. Those who live in rural areas are unlikely to move out of poverty unless opportunities are made available to them. This study reflects Kerbo's (2011) findings, highlighting how means such as scholarship programmes, study loans, dorms for rural students, and the health care system assisted rural students.

After high school, my life has not changed at all. My life has changed because of that school, funded by foreign aid. I am a poor student who cannot afford the enrolment at the university. However, they required us to pass an entry exam. This really changed my fate and other poor but capable Cambodians. Now I've got a job and has been pursuing for a bachelor degree (Participant H).

Even if I do not need to pay the school fee (scholarship), comparing between high school and university in relation to spending, it seems more spending to studying at university; in terms of study materials and fuel for motorbike, I spend more than at high school (Participant J).

On the other hand, opportunities also played a crucial role in changing their lives. For example, participant H was really determined to pursue higher education although having a very poor livelihood. He would have had a different life if scholarship and job opportunities provided by an NGO did not exist while he was working as a waiter at a

restaurant. In other words, the NGO was an opportunity provided to these people for the enhancement of their capabilities and skills and the development of their talents as mentioned in the youth development model.

Similarly, participant E would not have had a chance to work for an NGO and further her education at university if the opportunity of a volunteering job at her rural hometown had not come up.

As can be seen from the quotes, the opportunities these participants received included scholarships from NGOs and the government, and job opportunities in the NGO sector.

When opportunities are not available, determination and hard-working may not be enough to move out of poverty. For example, participant B was a hard-working person. He was a volunteer for three organizations while studying at university and did not give up searching for jobs. Nevertheless, due to the unavailability of paid jobs, he struggled with poverty:

The solution to my livelihood is to get a job, but now I have not managed to get one yet and get only volunteer jobs. I am working as a volunteer at three organizations now. I cannot earn money yet. I am continuously searching for jobs.

On the other hand, when the opportunities are available, determination and working hard paid off. The story of struggle of participant H best illustrates this point:

When I finished high school, I took an entry exam at a school of technology Don Bosco...it is a vocational training school...but I passed on waiting list...I was on waiting list for a major of electric and electronic skills...but due to the hundreds of candidate...they selected only four or five more...so I did not pass...I decided to come to Phnom Penh...in Phnom Penh, one of my aunt was a cleaner at one restaurant called Baitong...she asked the boss to employ me...at that time my physical body looked funny...my weight was only 47kg...thin and dark....after working for a year, I bought a bicycle which cost 40,000 riels²⁰ and rode it around Phnom Penh... when I knew almost every part of Phnom Penh, I started seeking for a place to study.

In sum, without opportunities, the participants' determination and commitment alone would not have brought them this far.

²⁰ 40,000 riels equals US\$10.04 (Ostermiller, 2014)

5.2.10 Youth Poverty and Education

While challenged with hard lives, the participants perceived education as a major means for them to get out of poverty and it was the main encouraging factor that had brought them this far. However, it is clear from their stories that there were other factors, such as self-determination; their peers' influence; self-motivation; encouragement from parents; success stories of older peers; and, interestingly, verbal violence and pushing from parents, that enabled them to successfully pass secondary school and sooner or later to enrol at higher education institutions.

My solution is that since I see my family work in the farm day by day, very exhausted...so I have just thought gradually. Then I chose education to move out of those difficulties so I have to study hard to get high salary (Participant F)

First, enrolling at the university is good for my future. If I do not further my study, I would stay at home, we do not have large rice farm and my family is poor...if I don't further my education, I will be like this forever...no bright future like others (Participant D)

She asked me to drop out of school because she could not afford it, but I told her no. Although no money, I still study because I want to study (participant O).

Humans when we go together...we push each other and become an encouraging factor mutually...so we just kept on doing it all together...yes (Participant L)

After high school completion, I could not further my study for a year due to hard economy...tuition fee did not matter, but if we spent on daily livelihood, transportation cost, fuel costs...they cost much more...so I did not study at the university for a year...in 2002, I enrolled at the university for a year, but due to my dad's sickness, I differed my study until 2009 when I came to work here in Battambang where I re-enrolled (Participant E).

The good thing was that I was happy being with my mum and dad. First, I lived over there, I was able to study; I had enough time to study because my mum and dad sent me to school...and I had enough time to study....I was happy with studying...and...(Participant F).

Mostly my study was accomplished...my struggles are typically...asking other experienced seniors...ask them how they studied, how they did it, how their pathway was...and so on...mostly senior students...when I visited other villages and senior students, I mostly asked them some advice (Participant L).

...but before enrolling at school, my dad taught me all of the alphabets...but before I knew all the alphabets, I was hit so hard (laughs) (Participant B).

I did not expect that I would have had today...reflectively; at rural areas in addition to...a majority such as my family and the rest of villagers mostly do not understand about education. So not many people push us...So my life path is completely dependent on my own path...That is I just did it...no one showed or guided me; for example to do this or do that in order to succeed...this means even my family who are farmers, every study was based on an open space where there was no exact direction yet...So my life...I did not yet...just walked all the way through that life path...in addition I did not even know what I did study for (Participant L).

They had quarrel every day. (Crying), but, I still studied... (crying)... for my bright future. Because dad consumed alcohol, so when they made quarrel everyday like that I did not have encouragement to study. I thought I should have dropped school (participant O).

I got up at 6:30am...I did not have a school bag like others...I used a plastic bag and banana trunk to wrap my chalk board...and every time I went to school, I really wanted to study (Participant B).

As noted, the educational success of two of the participants was attributed to being pushed hard by, and verbal violence from, their parents:

If mum and dad did not push me hard to attend schools since grade 1, I would not have had today (Participant J).

The sad thing was I worried about high school exams...when took exams at grade 9, I was scared...if I failed, mum would stop me from studying...so I just keep studying hard...and took exams...when I passed, I was very happy...grade 12 came, I started being worried again...so I tried hard...scared of failing...because if I failed, she would have stopped me from studying (Participant B).

The barriers to education, such as poverty and the long distances between schools and home, highlighted by Pou (2012a) are undeniable. However, such barriers did not prevent some of the participants in this study from accessing schools that were far from their homes; participants L and I, for instance. Despite the very long distance, difficult roads, and poverty, they managed to finish secondary and high school. This achievement is due to their strong determination for education.

One difficulty was that my house is far from school so it was difficult to travel to school...that's it...whenever it is rainy season, it's hard to travel (Participant A).

The nearest school had only up to grade four...I had to further to grade five...it was far... to the commune so I had to do a long-distance trip so it was hard. At that time the road was cut off and sticky during rainy season...during dry season it was not that bad.....I studied from grade five, six then further to grade seven to nine. So I had been far away from home for five years...after lower secondary school exams (diploma exams), I further my study at a district...because at first at commune,

and then at district...it was remarkable...struggling...staying at pagoda...with a number of friends...so if at that time there was only me, I might not have managed to struggle this much (Participant L).

My high school friends, they have money, they had already gone to study in Phnom Penh (Participant H).

Although participant K dropped out of school due to the long distance between his home and school, he managed to return to school two years later when he moved to stay with his aunty in town:

At that time, my house was far...I came to stay with my aunty since 2001 when I was little boy...in 2008 I went back home...so at that time I rode a bike to school...but not long after that I dropped out of school (Participant K, personal communication, June 2, 2012).

Despite experiencing poverty, it is not a surprise that all of my participants mentioned education as a good investment for the improvement of their living standards. It is interesting that those whose parents lacked ability to invest in their education still managed to enrol at university. According to the interviews, civil society, including religious institutions, such as Buddhist temples and Korean Christian Churches, private schools, and NGOs play a vital role in provincial students' lives.

The findings highlight the ways in which education is an instrument for the promotion of social mobility, economic growth, and social justice as discussed by Smith (2012). In other words, it reduces social inequality and increases health and wellbeing in society and peoples' power through increased knowledge.

5.2.11 Youth Poverty, Aspirations, Hope and Optimism

It is obvious from the life stories of the participants that they have really put much effort into improving their economic status. This finding indicates that most of them have an internal locus of control rather than an external locus of control (Dalton et al., 2010).

As previously outlined, an internal locus of control refers to the belief that outcomes are the results of a person's actions, whereas an external locus of control refers to the view that outcomes are essentially controlled by fate or by others. According to Dalton et al. (2010), it is evident that the poor typically hold a higher external locus of control than their higher status comparison group. This statement infers that the poor do not put personal effort into changing their status because they believe that their poverty is fated and that is why they are poorer than other groups.

However, the poor in this study mainly hold an internal locus of control, as they put much effort into moving out of poverty. Additionally, they showed their strong aspirations despite their poverty. This is in strong contrast to the saying that “the lack of hope and aspirations are a typical characteristic in the personality of the poor population” (Dalton et al., 2010, p. 5).

...because I thought only studying at universities enabled me to get a job...because nowadays, after high school completion, we knew nothing...our general knowledge is also low...English competency is also poor...and I thought deeply and I started studying...I started working...I started saving...and my mum and dad told me prior to my departure that work and earn and kept for myself for my study, don't need to send it to them...they would not take it...they said I had to manage to feed myself...they did have money to support me except some rice (Participant H).

Yes, that involves aspiration and ambition of human as well...because I think if I study that field (nursing)...I only get this much...but if I turn my mind to university, this will enable me to further to Master or likely to Doctorate degree...reach my goal...it's much easier...If I study this field (nursing), this means it's too narrow for my life pathways...yes...on the other hand, I have set what I have determined to be...it is I don't want to work for others...what I have determined...I need to create a job, my own career...yes...and in terms of studying nursing, it means if we continue to study this field It is inevitable to work for others forever. So there is only one way to avoid it...that's it (laughs) (Participant L).

To gain more knowledge...if not further my education at university, I cannot find a job. If I discontinue at grade 12, I do not have ability to work (Participant J).

5.2.12 Poverty Reduction and Government Policies

As previously discussed, although the Cambodian government has sound policies for poverty reduction, the policies focus on low-skilled manufacturing work, such as garment factories in the city, large agribusiness firms and tourism sector only. This focus will produce a small number of middle class and make the rich richer, while the rest are untouched, Kerbo (2011) predicted. The negative results of the current poverty reduction strategy were witnessed by some participants. For example, participant B viewed the growing number of jobs at garment factories as not beneficial to graduates and citizens:

...job markets in Cambodia is not broad yet...there are not many factories...mostly there are abundant garment factories. This makes graduates or citizens unemployed...can't enter such job market.

Similarly, the focus on large agribusiness companies makes the poor become poorer due to the loss of their land to the owners of those large firms. As seen by participant B, while the rich buy large pieces land,

the poor move to the forest:I see what is bad is one problem of the disrespect of laws of some leaders. It is...in sum, the more money they got, the poorer we become (Participant J)

In the current social situation, the rich evicts the poor. The rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer. The rich buy land while the poor live in the forest...it always exists...oppressing...in addition current land issues are cruel...oppressing people, especially land concessions affects too much on citizens' lands...during these few months, there have been many demonstrations organized many times in our Battambang province...they have organized many times (Participant B).

5.2.13 Social Justice

Based on the findings of this research, rural students experience social justice through access to a growing number of private and state universities at provincial levels. However, using the definition of social justice by the Australia Association of Social Work (AASW) (as cited in Solas, 2008), the participants experienced more social injustice than justice in terms of the situations where their basic needs are not satisfied; resources to meet those needs are not equally distributed; and their rights are not recognized or protected by the government.

According to the life stories of the participants, the government has mostly fulfilled its duties to ensuring social justice for rural students in terms of education, including higher education, by bringing private and public universities closer to rural students via provincial levels. This reality has allowed rural students to fulfil their basic needs in terms of education. Additionally, it has helped to facilitate access to higher education for rural residents, such as participants E, F, H, I, J, K, L, O, P, Q and R, who managed to stay in town, either through paying rent or staying at relative's house or at Buddhist temples.

Nevertheless, the government failed to ensure social justice for young people when choosing English as a Lingua Franca for various forms of communication for the whole country. Since English language proficiency is in high demand in the job market, the lack of English language proficiency in rural students reflects the unfairness that rural students face. Young people who reside in rural areas do not have equal opportunities to absorb quality English language knowledge as those in the urban areas do. This difference is due to the lack of quality language teachers in rural areas. As a result, these rural students have less lucrative job opportunities than the urban students have.

For example, participant H possessed technical skills, but not language skills and that lowered his opportunities in the job market:

At the present, as far as I see, even here they also require English language. Everything is in English. This affects students who are poor at English. No matter what, as long as the society use English as an official language, it poses problem to me because my English is poor. In relation to my skill capacity to take the test, I am never worried (Participant H).

Additionally, social justice exists as long as individual rights are respected and protected. However, as discussed in section 5.3.1, the government did not fulfil its obligation to ensure the respect and protection of the participants' rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

5.2.14 Gender Justice

The stories of the participants clearly depicted social injustice in terms of gender. Although more rural students can access higher education in the province, the majority of them are male. Males have more options than females in terms of accommodation. For example, males can stay at the Buddhist temples while women absolutely cannot. This difference reflects inequality in access to higher education, which is only available in town.

5.2.15 The Role of NGOs at Grassroots Levels

Although NGOs' influence decreased at macro levels (Chinnery, 2009), they still have strong influence on a large number of Cambodian's lives, especially the participants' lives. PNC Cambodia, for example, played a vitally important role in completely changing rural poor students' lives, such as participants Q and H. Their lives would not have been this good if PNC Cambodia did not offer scholarship and job opportunities to poor students on their completion of the course.

5.2.16 The Role of Female Relatives

One of the findings of this study reflects what Kerbo (2011) found in terms of the strong family tie system. In Cambodia, relatives, especially female relatives, play a very important role in helping their relatives during difficult times. The lives of participants F, K, and O best illustrated this finding:

After my mum's death, my dad felt discouraged to continue his crop farm work and me too. When my grandma saw the situation where I stopped going to school, she brought me here to continue my study (Participant F).

When I was a child...was at rural areas...still have both mum and dad, the livelihood was normal, medium...but in 2004 when my dad passed

away, there is only mum...until now I live with my aunty here (Participant K).

At that time, my house was far...I came to stay with my aunty since 2001 when I was little boy...in 2008 I went back home...so at that time I rode a bike to school...but not long after that I dropped out of school ...so in 2010 I came back to stay with my aunt ...I just started my school again in 2010 (Participant K).

CHAPTER SIX- CONCLUSION

The life stories of the rural university students in this study were interesting. They had been through many challenges, such as poverty, including poverty of means to education, poverty of personal rights, such as the rights to free education, freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, poverty of opportunity and poverty of nutrition, discouragement, and a long distance between school and home.

The students in the study experienced poverty of means to education such as financial support, study materials, and an access to accommodation. The study also found the gender difference in accessing to free accommodation in the province to attend university. For example, rural female students have less means than men in terms of free accommodation while pursuing their study in the province since men could have an access to free accommodation at Buddhist temple while girls did not.

Another challenge the students faced was poverty of personal rights. These include the rights to free education, freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. In terms of poverty of the rights to free education, the students in the study received low score as a result of being unable to pay the extra money required by her primary school teacher. Poverty of freedom of expression and peaceful assembly was also experienced by the student in the research. His expression about politics was banned and not welcomed by his teacher, classmates and parents. In addition, his plan to celebrate official International Women's Day with his schoolmates was also banned and he was discriminated as a result of such plan.

The participants in the present study also experienced poverty of opportunity, particularly the shortage of job opportunities. The participants perceived unemployment as the biggest challenge for them after their graduation, due to certain constraints, such as the need for having connections in order to get specific jobs and the disproportion between the number of job vacancies and the number of graduates. To address these challenges, the Cambodian government should create more job opportunities and enforce pro-human rights and social justice labour laws

The students also experienced poverty of nutrition at childhood which resulted in present unhealthy health; discouragement and a long distance between school and home.

More interestingly, higher education was found to be the main solution chosen by these students to address the challenges they have faced in lives. In addition, self-determination, aspirations for a better life as well as positive role model were found to be key motivating factors that led these students to commit to pursuing it. It was found that participants who possessed strong self-determination to access education and aspirations for moving out of poverty showed their potential to achieve their desires. Additionally, along with a good number of external supports, such as financial support from relatives, NGOs and government scholarship programmes, free accommodation at Buddhist temples, and the growing number of private universities in provincial areas, these students have managed to achieve their educational aspirations.

In conclusion, internal factors such as self-determination, commitment and aspirations determine the futures of some young rural students in this study, while external supports play an important role as a means to help them reach their aspirations for the future. Additionally, the stories of these students can be used as role models to provide hope to other young, rural poor students in chasing their future aspirations.

The findings of the thesis are messages to inform relevant policy makers about challenges rural students faced and means that helped them cope with the challenges. This will help them develop educational policies which are more pro-rural student as well as promote inspiring environment for them to fulfil their future aspiration. In addition, through these findings, parents and teachers can be aware of youth's feeling of disappointment and depression as a result of their misunderstanding and restriction of human rights to their children and students.

Further research should focus in more detail on the roles of self-determination and levels of aspiration in shaping the future of young university students, including those from rich backgrounds.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Questionnaire

Question 1: Descriptive

- Where did you grow up and what was life like when you were a child? Prompts (what were the good things, the fun things to do? The not so good things that happened to you or your family? - drug use; deforestation, domestic violence; unemployment, traffic accidents, land appropriation, corruption)
- What were the stages of life that brought you to university and what's life like now? Prompts (schooling, work, costs, family support and sacrifice. What's university like – good and not so good as above)

Question 2: Evaluative questions

- How does the life you lead and the opportunities you have compare with other people in society? Prompts (your friends, neighbours, people you grew up with, people in poor areas? Issues of hard work, privilege and luck)
- Can you describe what are the important issues affecting you, your wider family and your community?
- Prompts (How important are these issues - positive and negative affects?)
- How do you think the social conditions in Cambodia have changed in recent years? Prompts (what's got better, worse? What change has affected you the most – positive and negative)
- How much does this meant to you? What responsibilities you might think you have about this issue?

Question 3: Solution questions


- What are the solutions for the things that are not working well?
- Prompts (check major issues that have emerged)
- Can you tell me about your plans for the future?
- Prompt: contribution to/, responsibility for positive change, obstacles, hopes, and fears

Question 4: Demographic

- Age
- Gender
- How long have you been in the university?
- course of study
- Occupations
- Location

Thank you so much for your participation.

Appendix B: Ethics Approval



Samnieng Sek
2/89 Carrington Road
Mt Albert
Auckland 1025

19.4.12

Dear Samnieng,

Your file number for this application: **2012-1016**
Title: **Perceptions of young Cambodians about their future while coping with their contemporary lives.**

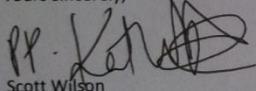
Your application for ethics approval has been reviewed by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee (UREC) and has been approved for the following period:

Start date: 10.4.12
Finish date: 10.4.13

Please note that:

- 1. The above dates must be referred to on the information AND consent forms given to all participants.**
- 2. You must inform UREC, in advance, of any ethically-relevant deviation in the project. This may require additional approval.**

You may now commence your research according to the protocols approved by UREC. We wish you every success with your project.

Yours sincerely,

Scott Wilson
Deputy Chair, UREC

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