

CAMBODIA COUNTRY PROFILE

Capital: Phnom Penh



Quick Facts

Population: 13,881,427

GDP (Purchasing Power Parity): \$30.65 billion

GDP per capita (Purchasing Power Parity): \$2,200

GDP composition by sector:

Agriculture: 35%

Industry: 30%

Services: 35%

Size of labor force: 7 million

Labor force: by occupation:

Agriculture: 75%

Industry: NA

Services: NA

Unemployment Rate: 2.5%

Population below poverty line (\$2/day): 40%

Life expectancy at birth: 59.29 years

HIV/AIDS – adult prevalence rate: 2.6%

Adult Literacy Rate (age 15 and over):

Male: 84.7%

Female: 64.1%

For more information: <http://cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/cb.html>

Political History

Cambodia has a long and complex history. This paragraph barely scratches the historical surface of Cambodia. I encourage anyone who is traveling to Cambodia to do some outside research using the sources provided after this paragraph.

Cambodia was considered a French Protectorate from 1863 to 1953, with a brief Japanese occupation during World War II (1941-1945). In 1969, United States president Richard Nixon began a B52 bombing campaign called Operation Menu. This mission to attack Viet-cong enclaves in Cambodia was held secret until 1970, when the United States briefly invaded Cambodia. During Operation Menu and the following invasion, anywhere between 30,000 and 500,000 Cambodians lost their lives.

The 1970s and 1980s brought events and leaders that further deteriorated the political, economic and social wellbeing of Cambodians. From 1975-1979, the communist Khmer Rouge regime formed and became the leaders of Cambodia. Led by Pol Pot, the Khmer Rouge regime carried out a genocide on the people of Cambodia. Official estimates speak to the atrocities of this genocide. At least 750,000 people died through execution, starvation, or in work camps. An estimated 1.5 to 3 million more died from indirect policies of the Khmer Rouge. In 1978, Vietnam invaded and occupied Cambodia, pushing the Khmer Rouge into the countryside. 13 more years of civil war followed. To this day, the genocide is fresh in peoples' minds. An atrocity of such magnitude is not easily forgotten. Cambodia is currently under the leadership of King Norodom Sihamoni and Prime Minister Hun Sen.

For more information: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cambodia>, <http://www.yale.edu/cgp>

The Economy

After nearly 30 years of violence, the Cambodian government moved forward on economic reform in 1999. In a move to strengthen the textile industry, the Cambodian government signed a deal with the United States that gave Cambodia a guaranteed US textile import quota. There were also incentives for a better package if the government was able to improve the working conditions to meet international standards. The measures that were taken have made apparel made in Cambodia more attractive on the global market due to a relatively pleasant working environment for most Cambodians in the industry. Through this and a booming tourism industry, Cambodia's economy has grown at between 5% and 6% over the past 7 years. Still, nearly 75% of the country is employed in subsistence level agriculture. The primary agricultural products in Cambodia include rice, rubber, corn, vegetables, cashews, and tapioca. The primary industries are tourism, garments, rice milling, fishing, wood and wood products, rubber, cement, gem mining, and textiles. In Cambodia, the bottom 10% of society receives just 2.9% of the income, while the top 10% receives 33.8% of the total income.

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Cultural Notes

- Remember that the genocide is still in the minds of many Cambodians. It is vital to understand the genocide in order to understand present day Cambodia.
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Advocacy Issues

- See "Briefing paper on social justice advocacy issues in Laos and Cambodia" prepared by Peter Vander Meulen for Partners Worldwide trips to Cambodia.
- http://www.advocacynet.org/resource_view/resource_22.html, for a list of organizations working on advocacy issues in Cambodia.
- <http://mcc.org/cambodia/partners.html>, the Mennonite Central Committees list of programs going on in Cambodia.