

REACHING
THE GRANDMOTHER
TO IMPROVE CHILD WELL-BEING IN CAMBODIA



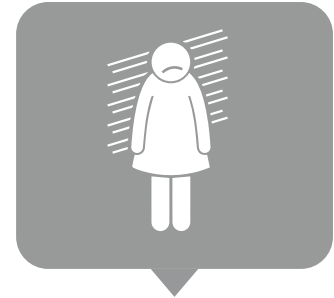
Majority of **(80%) women** in Cambodia are **economically active**, one of the highest rates in the world with more than **600,000 jobs** in the garment industry held by women!



Among the international migrants (majority migrate to Thailand) three-fourths (72%) of households where at least one parent has migrated, the grandmothers (99%) are the primary caregivers.ⁱⁱ Over half of the internal migrants (64%) to Phnom Penh (city) are women agedⁱⁱⁱ 20-34 years, who are in the prime child-bearing and caring ages, leading to a desperate situation for a generation of young children being left in the care of grandmothers.



Migration can have negative impacts on children staying behind. They are more likely than other children to drop out of school, with 15.6% of them doing so. The effect is especially pronounced for girls, as nearly half of household heads view girls as more suited for household chores than education. Stay-behind children also have a 27% larger probability of participating in economic activities compared to children in non-migrant households, with their work hours increasing^{iv} by an average of 7.4 hours a week.



The prevalence of depression (43%) and anxiety (50%) among the elderly caregivers in the migrant households is significantly high. Caregivers in migrant households also had lower levels of resilience and perceived their social support from family members to be weaker than those in non-migrant households. The elderly caregivers showed the symptoms of distress stemming from their past traumatic experience during the civil war period, as elderly caregivers had a higher level of distress than younger caregivers.ⁱⁱ



Cambodia's "Super Grannies"

Hundreds of Cambodian grandmothers are part of the phenomenon, "Skipped generation", where the grandparents provide care to their grandchildren while parents migrate for employment, often at minimum wage. This phenomenon of "Skipped generation" is also accompanied by issues such as poor breastfeeding and complementary feeding practices due to barriers of cost, time, and mothers' quickly returning to work.

Back home, grandmothers are under enormous strain to cope with the emotional and financial burden of raising children. The pressures of the role add compounded stress on aging grandmothers who struggle to manage health conditions brought on by age. It makes caregiving even harder, and the attention to health and nutritional priorities for the grandchildren unintentionally neglected. In addition these grandmothers also experience stress and depression due to child caring responsibilities.

Empowered with appropriate knowledge on maternal, newborn, and child caregiving, and with encouragement, super grannies can become agents of change in their families and wider communities.



\$132,000 to improve the nutrition of **2,200** children over a period 3 years



\$132,000 could reach **700** grandmothers in **35** villages



minimum **3 grandchildren** under the care of onegrandmother



In Cambodia **10%** of children are acutely undernourished and **22 %** (one-fifth) children are chronically underweight.





Hope and Encouragement from Meas Ny, a grandparent from Cambodia

A popular Cambodian saying goes “grandparents love their children one tao (a unit of measurement in form of the basket used to measure rice) but they love their grandchildren one thaing (one thaing equals two taos)”. For Meas Ny, 67, this statement best matches her current situation.

In Cambodia, it is common to see the grandchildren left behind to stay with grandparents when their parents leave to work far away from home. Ny said that her love for her grandchildren is unconditional since she never expects to get anything back from them when they grow up. She said that her life’s mission is to take good care of them and hope to see them having a good future.

Ny is the first person to wake up in the morning, she gets up at 4 am every morning to prepare breakfast for her children and grandchildren, making sure they have something to eat before going to work and school. While they are having dinner, she sweeps and cleans the house and front yard because she said it is a bit messy as the house is like a playground for them.

Ny has seven children. Some of them and their spouses work in garment factories and in construction sites. Ny said they have to leave for work early in the morning and return in the evening. She said they earn just for their living and do not contribute much to care for their children.



Busy Grannies of Cambodia

Dy, a 52 year old has 2 children who work in garment factories and she takes care of four grandchildren, of three months, 18 months, nine years, and ten years of age. Sitting on a plastic chair, with her three-month old grandchild sleeping beside her in a hammock, "I get up at 5 am and cook for my grandchildren and children. I take care of them. My next chores are preparing firewood and growing rice. I also wash the clothes for the whole family."

Kim, a grandmother aged 50, takes care of three grandchildren, 5, 4, and 2 years old she has been their nanny since each child was six months old. Each day she gets up at five to cook for the family, feeds the grandchildren, cleans the house, washes the dishes, then the clothes, she then takes care of the garden. Vegetable gardens of morning glory, pumpkins, and spinach are behind Kim's home and small plants surround the home. Her yard is free from trash. Kim's only free time is on Sunday this is Kim's daily routine. Kim said, "I feel stressed at times, while taking care of the grandchildren", "If I did not take care of the grandchildren, my children would not be able to work and make a living."



Grandmother Inclusive Approach

World Vision organizes monthly meetings to promote understanding on health, nutrition, WASH, benefits of positive engagement with children and importance of self care. The programme also encourages other household members to share responsibilities of the grandmothers to lighten her role through intergenerational meetings. The programme is not replacing the role of parents but it is adapted to the phenomenon of skipped generation so that the child's nutrition and health needs are met and caregivers are equipped with the knowledge and confidence to care better.

Since grandmothers play such an important role especially feeding the young infant, they need to be equipped with knowledge, skills, positive behaviours and practices related to health and well-being of young children.

Links to additional information, publication, photos and videos,

<https://www.wvi.org/stories/cambodia/meet-super-grannies-cambodia>

<https://www.wvi.org/publications/report/cambodia/learning-report-grandmother-inclusive-approach-improved-child>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JpcvcPe3rVg>

<https://www.enonline.net/fex/67/cambodiagarmentsandiyf>

References:

- ⁱ International Labor Organization (2018). Living conditions of garment and footwear sector workers in Cambodia. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_663043.pdf
- ⁱⁱ International Organization for Migration (2019). Migration impacts on Cambodia children and families left behind. International Organization for Migration. <https://www.louvaincooperation.org/sites/default/files/2020-08/Migration%20impacts%20on%20cambodian%20children-MHICCAF%20REPORT.pdf>
- ⁱⁱⁱ Overview of Internal Migration in Cambodia, available at <https://bangkok.unesco.org/sites/default/files/assets/article/Social%20and%20Human%20Sciences/publications/Policy-brief-internal-migration-cambodia.pdf>
- ^{iv} CDRI (2014). The Impacts of Adult Migration on Children's Well-Being - The Case of Cambodia. [online] Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Available at: https://www.cdri.org.kh/publication-page-old/pub/otherpapers/Migration%20and%20child%20well-being_CDRI.pdf
- ^v Schneiders, M (2021). Grandparent caregiving in Cambodian skip-generation households: Roles and impact on child nutrition. *Maternal and Child Nutrition*. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/mcn.13169>



World Vision is an international partnership of Christians whose mission is to follow our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in working with the poor and oppressed to promote human transformation, seek justice and bear witness to the good news of the Kingdom of God.

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