



**YOUTH FOR CHANGE
PROJECT
IN CAMBODIA**

**A GENDER EQUALITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION
PROMISING PRACTICE**

2023

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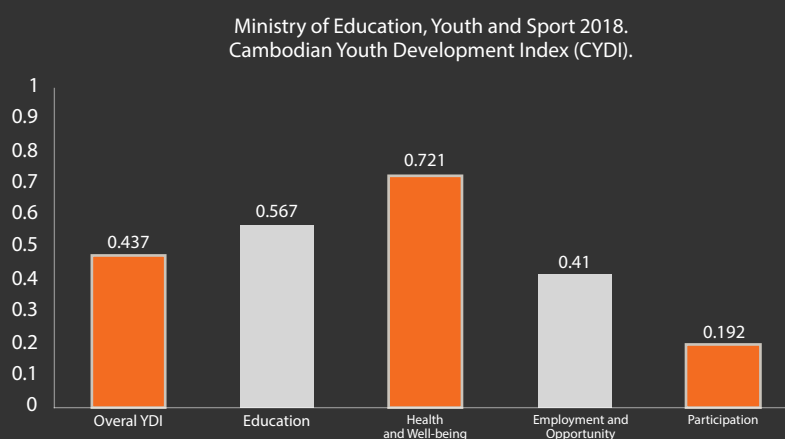
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THE CONTEXT

Young people under the age of 30 in Cambodia¹ make up almost 60% of the total population with the majority living in rural areas. While this represents a significant opportunity for economic growth, social change and innovation, young people in Cambodia face many challenges which prevent them from being equipped and empowered to create a positive future for themselves, their families, and communities. These include: lack of confidence, skills and experiences in using their **voice** to enact accountability and participate in decision-making; unrealized potential to lead change through **social action**; lack of preparation and readiness among youth for transitioning into active and sustainable **livelihoods**; and vulnerable youth's inability to keep themselves **safe and healthy**. The majority of Cambodia young people have little or no education, live in poverty, experience social exclusion and have low employment prospects.²

Data from the Cambodia Youth Development Index shows that the youth in Cambodia score low across all the 4 domains of well-being (health, education, employment and participation), and levels of participation have consistently scored starkly below the others in recent years, highlighting a disconnection and disengagement of youth from civic life.



World Vision International-Cambodia's (WVI-C) national baseline (2018) of youth life skills and participation found that while young people reported that they believed that they would succeed in achieving their goals (self-efficacy), they consistently reported that they did not actually know how to make that happen, not having the necessary skills, knowledge or experience. There were similar results in their attitude toward citizenship where young people reported that they felt civic engagement was important, however didn't know how to engage or didn't think it was specifically their responsibility. Additionally, baseline questions asking youth about their knowledge and experience of civic participation scored particularly low, showing young people were widely unaware of where and how to raise issues to duty bearers, and when they did so they saw limited result.

¹ Cambodia Population Census 2019, RGC.

² OECD Development Centre (2017), "Youth Well-being Policy Review of Cambodia"; EU-OECD Youth Inclusion Project, Paris.

³ Baseline utilized Development Assets Profile tool (Search Institute) and 5 others academically tested and fully contextualized scales.

WVI-C's baseline in 2018 also provided some insights into many of the risks and vulnerabilities male and female youth face in rural communities. There were higher rates of reported violent behaviors among both male and female youth than expected, seeming to stem from lack of role models in families and peer groups who address conflict peacefully, and from alcohol and drug use. Regular alcohol use was self-reported at 21%, however follow-up quantitative investigation showed the percentage was actually higher. There were findings which also showed young people, especially boys, experience a lack of care from their communities, neighbors and family, and young people's skills around social competencies were the lowest scoring of all life skills measured which showed many youths do not know how to or lack confidence to respond to negative peer pressure.

Data from WVI-Cambodia's recent Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) assessment completed in 2021 showed that women spend more time than men on household chores and nurturing. Women spend approximately 8 hours a day working to complete household chores and nurturing, while men only spend an average of 3 hours per day. This remains the case regardless of whether women have any other responsibilities for their family's livelihood. Overall, the young population, especially girls, experience a higher prevalence of violence, abuse, and exploitation than any other age group, especially in terms of physical and emotional violence, domestic and gender-based violence.⁴ People and children living with a disability continue to be discriminated against and lack the social support services needed for them to fully participate in the economic and social aspects of society. Ingrained social hierarchies and discrimination, based on age, gender, and ethnicity present prominent and persistent barriers for girls, boys, women, men, children, and people with a disability limiting their potential for full participation in society.⁵

Building on a long history of engaging youth as primary actors in programming, World Vision Cambodia's Adolescent and Youth Programming "Youth for Change and One Goal" uses an asset-focused positive youth development approach, bringing interventions directly to where young people are in the rural communities where we work, creating spaces and opportunities for them to learn, grow, develop and lead through dynamic and globally evidence-based curricula and methodologies which have been carefully contextualized using participatory methodologies. After initial smaller scale pilots in 2017, WVI-C launched this national adolescent and youth program in October 2018 directly responding to the needs of Cambodia's rural youths identified in 23 districts in 7 provinces (Taeko, Kampong Chhnang, Battambang, Beantey Meanchey, Siem Reap Preah Vihear and Kampong Thom) working with a total of 231 youth clubs.

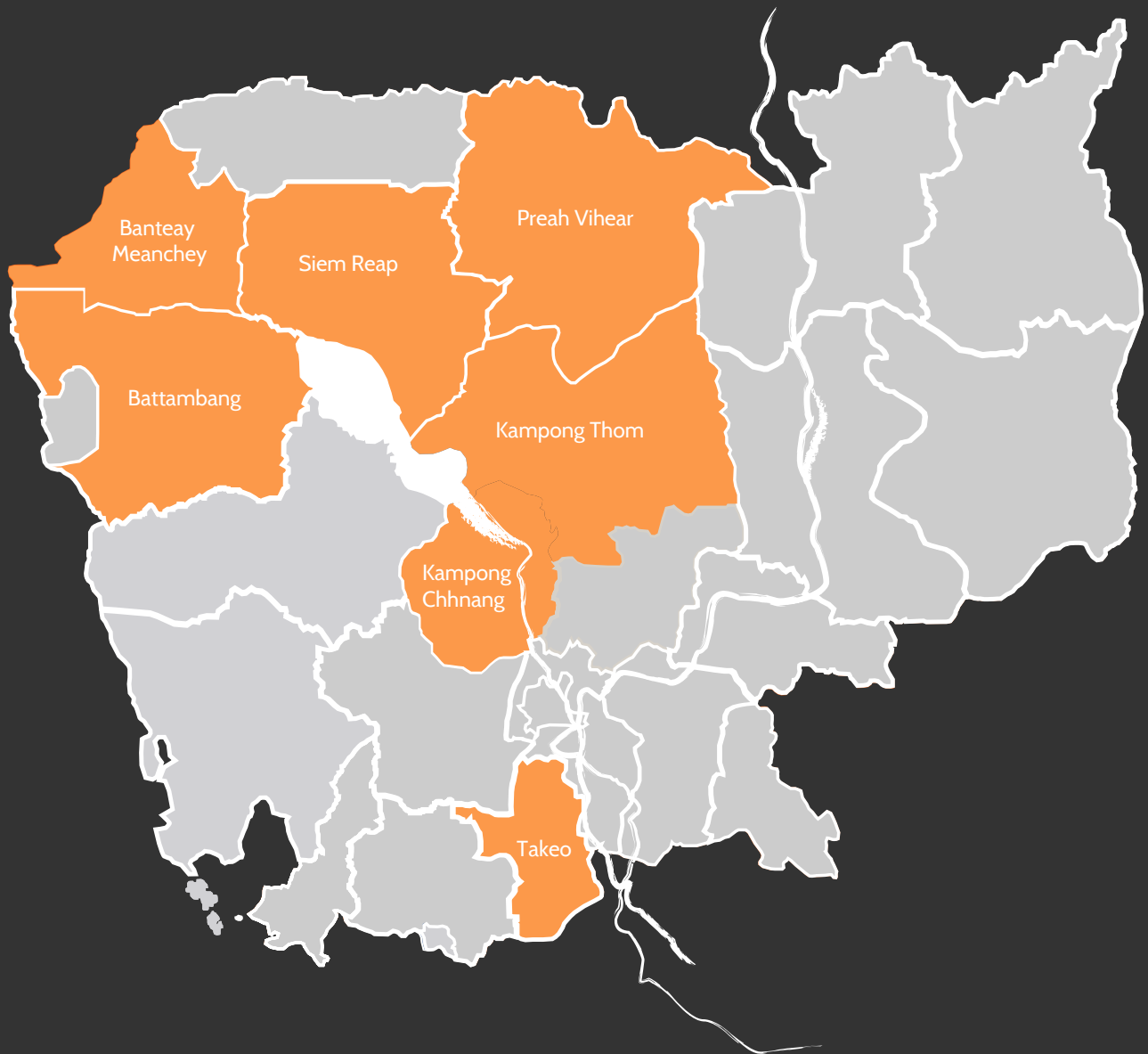
⁴ VSO Cambodia 2019 Youth Analysis – Social exclusion, gender and political economy.

⁵ UNICEF Cambodia 2014: Situation Analysis for Disability-Inclusive Governance and Community Development in Cambodia.

⁶ WVI-C's programming approach in line with USAID's YouthPower. <https://www.youthpower.org/positive-youth-development>

Project Implementation Area

Youth for Change project has been implemented in 23 districts across 7 provinces in Cambodia.



OBJECTIVES OF YOUTH FOR CHANGE PROJECT

The major goal of the project is to ensure that “Adolescent and youth are participating as agents of positive change.” There are three main expected outcomes from the project:



Adolescents/youth have improved life skills and assets for positive self-concept and future orientation.



Adolescents/youth have the capacity to lead social change.



Positive, caring, and nurturing relationships are developed between adolescents and adults including parents, peers, facilitators, and community members.

The project aims at supporting a new generation of young Cambodian and strengthen their capacity and agency to approach life and its challenges with a creative, innovative mind-set critical thinking, and flexibility to their environment. The project work at scale with male and female youth change makers and leaders in order to directly contribute to a movement of networked youth which transform their lives and their communities, engage and support the most vulnerable youth to be part of that change, and work with youth as partners for child well-being.

The project strengthened the capacity of male and female adolescent and youth and created an enabling environment for youth's engagement, empowerment, leadership, and development. It increased youth's capacities, life skills and confidence to participate in decision-making processes, develop and implement community service-learning projects, contribute to community developments and strengthen youth networks to influence policies changes at the national levels.

The project engaged the most vulnerable adolescents and youth (12-18 years) through sports and youth clubs. These activities were designed to build teamwork, promote positive peer relationships among male and female adolescents, and provided essential life skills necessary for resilience, and ability to make healthy life choices. The project also prepared adolescents and youth to contribute positively to their own lives and the lives of those around them today and in the future.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The Youth for Change (Y4C) project conducted an evaluation in 2021. The evaluation used a mixed methods approach where quantitative and qualitative (Focus Group Discussions, Key Informant Interviews) data were collected. Primary quantitative data was collected through surveys in 22 Area Programmes, a simple random sample of 25-30 adolescents and youth who participated in the project for at least one and a half year was selected from each Area Programme, making a total sample size of 605 adolescent (338 girls). The data measured main key indicators for adolescent and youth participation and compared those to the baseline in 2018. The survey was conducted through phone interviews due to COVID-19 pandemic related restrictions. Qualitative data was collected through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KII). Area Programmes purposively selected for FGDs to represent a wider community at the programme level. FGDs participants included male and female Youth for Change club members, Parents of Youth for Change club members, and Youth for Change club leaders. KII participants included village leaders, Commune leaders, and Youth for Change club leaders.

The following table presents the number of Youth for Change FGDs and KIIs

Respondents	Females	Males	Number of FGDs/KIIs
Youth for Change club members	17	15	2
Youth for Change club leaders	13	5	2
Parents of Youth for Change club members	12	5	2
Commune leaders	1	1	2
Village leaders	2	2	4

The quantitative data analysis was done by the World Vision International-Cambodia Monitoring and Evaluation team using SPSS software. The qualitative data was analyzed manually based on the pre-determined themes according to the FGDs and KII objectives of the programme evaluation.

Additional qualitative data was collected in 2022 through in-depth interviews during the documentation of GESI promising practices success stories. These interviews were conducted with 7 youth leaders (3 males and 4 females), 1 commune leader, 1 commune police, and 6 project and programme staff.

The study findings supplemented annual monitoring data and showed that 8636 adolescents (3255 boys and 5381 girls) participated in the program and their lives have been transformed.

THE STRUCTURE OF YOUTH FOR CHANGE

The project is built around 5 core components:



Dynamic life skills through experiential learning:

The project is built on the methodology of experiential education, a learn-by-doing approach, which enables the transformation of character, attitudes, and values, as well as growth in knowledge and life skills. Facilitators purposely engage with learners in direct experience and focused reflection in order to promote learning, develop skills, clarify values, and develop learners' capacity to contribute to their communities.



Capacity building of local partners:

To improve the sustainability of the project, building the capacity of local partners is crucial and is embedded into the design.



Community service-learning projects:

The project promotes the development of confident, self-aware and resilient young people who contribute positively to their communities via adolescent/youth-led community service-learning projects. The service-learning component reinforces the life skills learning process. Adolescents and youth are given the opportunity to direct the content and focus of the service-learning opportunities through a series of community mapping exercises and contextual needs assessments.



Strengthen a positive relationship with adults and peers:

The project is designed to enhance the connection of young people and their families as well as other adults in the community. Both adults and young people explore how community issues can be approached from different perspectives in a mutually reinforcing manner, so that young people's voices are recognized and valued by the community.



Adolescent/youth-directed content:

Most importantly, adolescents are given the opportunity to choose the content direction and service-learning project based on their own interests and contextual need. They are led through a reflection process, which helps determine the focus and direction of the life skills. Adolescents and youth are also encouraged to participate in the planning, monitoring of activities and feedback mechanisms.

The Youth for Change curriculum is structured around 4 main learning themes:



Active Citizenship – adolescent and youth develop skills that will enable them to become responsible, trustworthy citizens of integrity, who are able to contribute to the common good.



Employability – adolescent and youth develop the social, organizational, and life skills that will increase their likelihood of success in a competitive marketplace.



Leadership - adolescent and youth engage in facilitating and/or coordinating activities in World Vision's programmes or those of other organizations and to develop specific skills that will enable them to pursue the long-term welfare of their communities.



Social Accountability - adolescent and youth become active citizens, enabling them to identify and fulfil their roles, rights and responsibilities within their communities and country.



EVIDENCE OF IMPACT



WorldVision prioritizes Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Approach that promotes equal and inclusive access, decision-making, participation, systems and well-being of the most vulnerable; transforms systems, social norms, and relations to enable the most vulnerable to participate in and benefit equally from development interventions, builds individual and collective agency, resilience, and action and promotes the empowerment and well-being of vulnerable children, their families and communities. The goal is to achieve sustained, transformational change at individual, household, community, and societal levels so that all persons can enjoy fullness of life.⁷

Overall evidence suggests that project related activities, including life skills trainings, sport for development activities, participation in youth clubs, and community service-learning projects, contributed to enhanced empowerment and well-being of male and female adolescents and youth, and promoted gender equality and social inclusion.⁸ Throughout the project, male and female youth themselves were the central stakeholder of the project, and were the ones on the receiving end of and participating in the programs and leading programs as volunteer youth leaders. The project trained both male and female youth leaders to take the leadership role in their clubs and to lead their clubs in implementing service-learning projects fostering the positive relationship with local community leaders through resource mobilization and advocate for youth engagement and participation in local government decision-making process.

Parents were engaged in the project implementation as supporters of the work, helping to shape the local contextual adaptation of the program and promoting the programs to the youth and encouraging them to attend. Parents also supported the implementation of the programs, through participating in a youth-led community service project. At the same time youth participants whose lives were transformed by the project became champions and positive influencers within their families and community.⁹

At the local level, the project worked with local duty bears, commune councils, village leaders, faith leaders, school teachers and other stakeholders to engage them as the partner for resource mobilization and fundraising to support the implementation of community service-learning projects that were developed and implement by the youth clubs. To improve youth engagement and civic participation, the project included a training and awareness on child rights during youth club and employed advocacy approach to support male, female, and vulnerable adolescents and youth groups develop and implement youth-led advocacy projects to advocate for accountability of the local government and local duties bearers accountable of the issues that affect the lives of young people.

At the national level, the project team worked with various World Vision partners such as United Nation Population Fund, United Nation Volunteer, Volunteer Service Oversea to advocate and influence the National Council for Youth Development, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports to ensure better implementation of National Policy on Cambodian Youth Development.

⁷ World Vision GESI Approach and Theory of Change.

⁸ WVI-C-2021. Child Protection and Participation Technical Programme Evaluation.

⁹ WVI-C-2021. Child Protection and Participation Technical Programme Evaluation.

ACCESS

Youth for Change improved young girls' and boys' access to life skills through various life skills training and sport activities. The project trained and engaged about 8636 adolescents [3255 male and 5381 female from 2018 to 2020.¹⁰ Many of these adolescents and youth demonstrated positive behaviors and attitude changes. For example, in 2019 there was a positive increase in percentage of girls and boys (44%) who engage in community development through various platforms and having their voice heard, and whose voices was considered in community decision-making compared to 19% of baseline in 2018. Moreover, gender equality and social inclusion sessions and messages were integrated in the Youth for Change curriculum where participants learned about the importance of gender equality and inclusiveness in their youth clubs.



“Youth for Change is supporting youth to develop life skills through experiential learning methodology and youth-led projects, participating in a new learning approach that promote positive relationship among youth and other stakeholders in the communities. Life skills is the 21st century skills and these skills are necessary for youth to grab the present and future opportunities. Therefore, relevant stakeholders acknowledged the potential of youth and supports them to fully participate in the development of the communities and society”; - Deputy General Director, General Department of Youth, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport.

The project used sport for development where football training and activities were used as a platform to target and engage most vulnerable and difficult to reach adolescent boys and girls. This improved their access to life skills and informal education, building their positive relationship skills and confidence to socially engage in the community. The project enabled young people to have equal opportunities and meaningful networking despite growing up in the impoverished environment.

The project trained young people on leadership skills, this strengthened their capacity and confidence to lead various activities and projects. The result from project evaluation in 2021 highlighted that 59% of female and male participants reported demonstrating increased leadership capacity compared to 29% at baseline in 2018. Focus group discussions with club members revealed that, adolescents and youth, including females, were given opportunities to lead or organize some of community project activities, such as organizing workshops, trainings, or performances to raise awareness on different community issues. These opportunities enhanced club members, especially females' ability to take leadership roles in various activities and community affairs.

The project increased access to information and supported female and male adolescent and youth who are at risks of exploitation and abuse to have access to support services and mechanism. The result from programme evaluation in 2021 showed that 93% of most vulnerable adolescent and youth participating in program reported knowing the presence of support services and mechanisms to respond to abuse, exploitation, violence or other forms of harm. Results from the FGDs with project participants showed that adolescents and youth have become more aware of child protection support services through the life skills training sessions. The training included guidance to support adolescents to identify close and trusted people who they could seek support in cases of violence or abuse. Adolescents also participated in awareness activities and training sessions focused on child rights, types of violence, how to identify or recognize child abuse and how to seek support.

DECISION-MAKING

Adolescents and youth had an active role in the planning, monitoring of activities and feedback mechanisms. They were also given the opportunity to choose the learning and service-learning project based on their own interests and contextual needs, and were engaged in local government decision-making process through local platforms or youth-led advocacy projects.

Additionally, the project strengthened young people's ability to make decisions at individual and community level. At individual level, adolescent and youth participants learnt through life skills sessions to understand who they are and their identity, and were oriented on how to plan and make decisions for their future. At the community level, the project recruited and trained young male and female youth leaders to lead and facilitate Youth for Change clubs, and girls were empowered to take leadership roles in these clubs. More than 68% of youth leaders were females who led on the implementation of Youth for Change clubs and facilitated club activities including planning, implementation, and reflection. These youth leaders were also responsible for facilitating the regular weekly life skills training sessions. They also supported club members to make decision on which issues/project to work on or respond to.

At the community level, the project implemented Community Service-Learning Projects (CSLP). The CSLPs are youth-led activities where young boys and girls identified local and national issues and developed and lead projects and campaigns addressing those issues. The project used a social accountability approach to advocate the local duty bearers to include the concerns and issues raised by the young people in the commune investment plan. Following the evaluation of Youth for Change project in 2021, 41.7% of participants reported that their views or ideas are sought and incorporated into local government decision-making compared to 7.9% at baseline in 2018.¹¹



PARTICIPATION

The Youth for Change model is built on the methodology of experiential education, a learn-by-doing approach, which enables the transformation of character, attitudes and values, as well as growth in knowledge and life skills of male and female adolescents and youth. Adolescents and Youth improved their knowledge, developed skills, and capacity to contribute and participate in their communities.

Adolescents and youth were engaged in facilitating and coordinating their club activities, and were also engaged in various community affairs. Progress reports indicated that from 2018 to 2019, the project mobilized and built capacity of 455 youth leaders, local coaches and volunteer role models self-organize, lead and facilitate series of weekly life skills curriculum training, football skills training and lead the development and implementation of community service-learning projects with 68% of them are female leaders, coaches and volunteers¹² The project also engaged young people in different community platforms to raise the awareness on the important of young people engagement in different community process. This includes in the participation in community investment and planning process, community meetings, annual community review and planning, and social accountability process such ISAF (Implementation Social Accountability Framework) and other community engagement activities.¹³ Based on the result from WVI-C Child Protection and Participation Technical Program Evaluation in 2021, ¹⁴More than 93.7% of Youth for Change participants were able to identify a platform to raise issues to duty bears compared to 34.7% at baseline 2018. In Youth for Change survey, adolescent and youth participants were asked to give examples of the platforms that they have used to raise the issues to duty bearers. They identified places such as commune hall, village leader's house, police post, school, churches, youth clubs, district hall, WORLD VISION offices, as places where they raised the issues to duty bearers. They mentioned a variety of issues that were raised by their clubs such as child protection issues, community violence, domestic violence, drug and alcohol, child malnutrition, environmental pollution, poor infrastructure, and lack of clean water, among others.



“There was a meeting in the Pagoda with village leader, commune leader, and monks to discuss children’s rights and violence against children and during that time I raised my concern around children’s rights for development and protection”, - a female Youth for Change club members from Boribor 2 AP.



¹² WWIC 2019. Adolescent and Youth Participation Programme Factsheet.

¹³ WWIC 2021. Child Protection and Participation Technical Programme Evaluation.

¹⁴ WWIC 2021. Child Protection and Participation Technical Programme Evaluation.

SYSTEMS

The Youth for Change project challenged negative gender stereotypes and discriminating social norms that excluded girls. For example, there is a belief that sport is an activity for boys only and girls should not be allowed to be part of those activities. The project developed positive messaging using various communication strategies to create awareness, educate and persuade adolescents and community members on gender equality and social inclusion.¹⁵ Below are example of messaging that were developed to address the gender stereotype.¹⁶

Pain Hook (underlying beliefs)	Counter-messaging (messages to address beliefs)
"Sports is just for fun, not for learning"	Sports is fun learning If you think sports does not encourage learning, that's "old thinking"
"Girls are not strong enough"	Girls are strong enough to play sports Sports can be enjoyed by everyone
"Soccer does not make girls beautiful"	Soccer makes them fit and strong. Strong is the "new beautiful" Healthy and strong is more important than beauty
"Sports is unsafe / dangerous for girls"	Sports team is a safe space with well-trained coaches Sports injuries are very little in programme



"Before young males did not like to learn or play football with girls, but now they have shifted their perspective towards girls by enjoying playing and learning with the participating girls. This is also showing the wider community that both girls and boys should be given an equal opportunity to play football and learn," - Technical Project Coordinator.¹⁷

The project also established support systems for girls that included parents, community adults, teachers, local leaders, and peers to help address negative social norms, and dispel the common myths about girls' participation in sport and other social affairs. The project integrated gender messaging in the outreach sessions and home visits to target, engage and mobilize the support from parents in encouraging and allowing their female children to participate in the projects. At the community level, the project recruited and trained local community female coaches and adult role model as supporting adults for female participants. At the district level, the project implemented community awareness meetings, community dialogues, and district tournaments that engaged local key influencers such as teachers, school principals, village and faith leaders, commune leaders, and district governors to be part of and support the project. Nationally, the project worked with football training NGO "Salt Academy" who are the expert partner in football training and developing girl football teams, football club "Phnom Penh Crown" and private company "Smart Axiata" to organize football training and national tournaments. All these activities created an awareness on the importance of female participation in sports.



"So far, what the commune police have done was the awareness raising activities with [World Vision] project in collaboration with the commune council, Commune Committee for Women and Children (CCWC), village members and youth groups. It was done, firstly, based on their [World Vision] project approach, and secondly, we mainstreamed the activities directed by policy on Village and Commune Safety implementing by commune police," said a Local Commune Police.

Youth for Change strengthened community engagement in youth activities and enhanced the connection of young people and their families as well as other adults in the community. Both adults and young people explored how community issues can be approached from different perspectives in a mutually reinforcing manner, so that young people's voices are recognized and valued by the community. Young people are key drivers of Cambodia's development and economic future. However, their meaningful engagement in policy making and decisions that impact them has been limited. Children and youth are often not empowered to express their voice and interests at both local and national levels and commonly have limited access to information about decision-making processes. This is especially the case for children who are most vulnerable – such as children with a disability, girls, indigenous children, children living in remote areas, and other vulnerable children.¹⁸ The Youth for Change project bridged some of these gaps by employing a youth-led advocacy approach to promote friendly dialogues between young people and local duty bearer and provided the platform for young people to raise community issues to their local government and advocate for social change. The project supported some of Youth for Change clubs to develop and implement youth-led advocacy projects and engage with local leaders in a constructive dialogue. Young people were able to raise their concerns on the issues that were identified in their projects to local leaders and requested for the response. From 2018 to 2020, more than 281¹⁹ youth-led advocacy projects were developed and implemented by Youth for Change clubs to advocate with local duty bearers on the issues such as child protection, security, lack of material for learning, road reconstruction, COVID-19 awareness information, environmental issues, and supports most vulnerable families. development and participation in local and national decision-making.



“There was a meeting in the Pagoda with village leader, commune leader, and monks to discuss children's rights and violence against children and during that time I raised my concern around children's rights for development and protection”, a female Youth for Change club member from Barbour 2 Area Programme.

The project promoted positive peers and adult relationship with male, female and vulnerable young people. This created a positive caring and nurturing relationship and an enabling environment for young people to growth and thrive. The engagement of local community adults as the mentors to partner with Youth for Change clubs helped to increase the collaboration between them as they supported young people to implement their club activities. More than 27,525 local adults were engaged to support and participate in youth-led projects or campaigns developed and implemented by Youth for Change clubs.



“From the first (2002) and second (2007) commune election, the commune had not much focus on youth engagement and participation in community development and it was neglected on youth engagement work. But late on, the commune was guided from the government and with supports from civil society organizations, we have been focused on the participation of youth in social and community development with other adults. In our commune, a lot of changes has happened and now youth are active participating in most of the commune development activities”, a Commune Chief from Rolear Phear District.

At the national level, the national project team worked in partnership with United Nations Population Fund Cambodia, United Nations Volunteer and other civil society organizations to advocate and influence Cambodian National Youth Council and General Department of Youth, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport for resourcing and implementation of National Policy on Cambodian Youth Development. As the result of this joint advocacy work, Cambodian National Youth Council had taken action to review and developed the National Action Plan on Youth Development which was finally approved by the Minister of Education, Youth and Sport in 2022. The action plan is a guided roadmap for both the national and local government to implement their activities that promote youth development and participation in local and national decision-making.

¹⁸ OECD Development Centre (2017), “Youth Well-being Policy Review of Cambodia”, EU-OECD Youth Inclusion Project, Paris.

¹⁹ WVIC Adolescent and Youth Participation Annual Programme Monitoring Data 2018, 2019 and 2020.

WELL-BEING

The Youth for Change project helped to improve the sense of worth, capability, and confidence of both female and male adolescents and youth. Many of them reported a feeling of confidence and of being responsible, and accountable. Young people gained essential life skills necessary for resilience and making healthy life choices. They felt empowered to actively engage in social development activities and to be active agents of change. Through the project evaluation, young people highlighted that they have become more confident than before through their experience of participating in the life skills sessions and implementing the club activities. Young people also expressed that they have learnt and knowing themselves better and becoming a responsible person, listen to their parents' advices and also helping doing some of the family' works and be supportive to their neighbors. Through the project, young people were exposed to different communities, so they learnt the real situation and challenges that people in community are facing in their lives. This has motivated young people to be part of social change in their community.



"In the past, I was afraid to talk with school director, village leader, commune leader, and community and now I am confident to talk with them because I do CSLP project I need to talk with them about project and request. In all the projects, I always discuss with them to get their idea. I requested village leader to fix the road." – Female adolescent from Boribor 2 Area Programme.

There was a notable reduction in Adolescents engagement in risks taking behaviors such as physical fights, drug use, alcohol consumption, and unhealthy sexual engagements. The result from project evaluation in 2021 showed a significant reduction in the percentage of Adolescents and youth participants who were engaged in risk-taking behaviors from 78.1% at baseline 2018 to 44.6% in 2021.²⁰ Participants also reported that they learned how to manage their emotion and anger, and to solve conflicts peacefully through life skills trainings, sports activities and other project activities. When facing with conflict, adolescents were able to be more patient, seek a solution, and ask other people for help to resolve it.

The use of youth clubs and gender training helped male and female adolescents understand harmful gender roles and social norms and to advocate for equality and inclusion. Young people learned to appreciate differences and how to be respectful of others.



"I have changed from a person who doesn't appreciate the different opinions to become more respectful, caring for one another, and be mature in all relationships," said a Youth for Change participant.

The child rights awareness sessions created an awareness on gender-based violence, how to identify or recognize child abuse and where to seek support. This increased the sense of safety and well-being of adolescents and youth. Additionally, Youth for Change participants reported in an evaluation in 2021²¹ that they have improved their social connections and relationships with their friends, peers, parents, community members, and community leaders through their engagement in youth clubs. The project implemented 410 community service-learning projects in partnership with 16,928 community adults and stakeholders to address a range of identified community issues (such as Violence Against Children, drug, school drop-out, community clean up, dengue fever, and road traffic accidents) which benefited to 16,229 children.²²



"In my community, there are several issues impacting children and youth such as substance abuse of drug, alcohol use, violence against children, and in some families, children are forced to drop out of school to help their parents/caregivers to work at the factory or construction worker. What motivates me and my youth team to work on this issue is because we don't want to see children and youth in my community fall into the trick and bearing uncertain future. Moreover, they might not be able to become potential resource for their community and society development. To transform this issue, we initiate many small community projects to raise awareness about this issue." a female youth leader from Samrong 2 Area Programme.



LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Youth for Change project has been very successful in improving the well-being of male vulnerable young males and female especially when integrated with other sectors such as local level advocacy and community engagement sector.



LIFE SKILL TRAININGS

Life skill training is an effective learning tools which has helped young people develop their confidence and skills to lead their own life and to effectively communicate and engage in the community positively, especially when using experiential learning approach. However, in order to assess the changes of life skills training programme, the project ensured young people are regularly engaged in the programme for at least one year. The project has to also ensure an on-going engagement of young people in various activities to prevent a high number of adolescents and youth dropping out from the project.



COMMUNITY SERVICE-LEARNING PROJECT (CSLP)

The community service-learning projects have a positively contributed in making positive impact in the lives of Youth for Change participants and offering space and opportunities for young people to positively participate and contribute in improving their community situation. The CSLP used a social accountability approach to advocate for friendly dialogues between young people and local leaders to hold them accountable in delivering their expected responsibilities.

To achieve effective results, the project strengthened the capacity and leadership capabilities of Youth Club Leaders, so that they are able to ensure inclusive participation of their club members and improve democratic function of youth clubs, allow more opportunity, and motivate their club members to take the lead on the club activities and community service-learning projects. This was done through inclusive participation as part of youth leader training and on-going capacity building, coaching, and support for youth leaders. To ensure inclusive and friendly platforms for young people to meaningfully engage local authorities, there is a need to have a strong support and to engage in trust and relationship building from project staff to facilitate those relationships with local authorities.



SPORT FOR DEVELOPMENT

Sport is an effective and relevant tool for engaging young people to play and work together as a team. It also creates positive changes in inter-gendered relationships, values and attitudes.²³ Engaging females in sport challenged community gender stereotype where football was often perceived by to be the sport for boys and men. Sport safety and caregiver engagement is critical for engagement of adolescent girls into the programme. Strengthening the caregivers/parents' engagement will improve the awareness and understanding of female adolescents' caregivers/parents on the benefit of the programme for girls and this will build trust and relationship between programme and community.



COMMUNITY AND ADULTS ENGAGEMENT

The midterm review of Youth Technical Programme in 2019²⁴ indicated that there were issues of distrust and discrimination among young people in the community, limited number of adults modelling positive relationship, and lack of caregiver supportive and protected relationship. In this context some young people felt discriminated, lack of positive, caring, supportive, and trustful relationship with adults. The project strengthened intergenerational relationships by being intentional in building positive and mutual relationships with community leaders, caregivers, and facilitators through:

- Strengthening the engagement of parents/caregivers by increasing outreach, home visits and awareness activities to and with parents, and ensuring that programme provide more space to parents to actively contribute and participate in the youth club activities. This helped them to understand and value the programme and contribute to the project implementation.
- Worked with project staff, community leaders, and parents to develop adult champion groups that promoted positive, caring, and supportive adult role models to youth clubs.
- Ensured the integration of adolescent programming with other core project models, especially positive parenting; the intervention that focusing on address attitudes, behaviors and practices with regards to the care and nurture of children as well as social and cultural behaviors that create an environment for positive parenting practice in adolescent families.



REPLICABILITY

Youth for Change was initially adapted and contextualized from a youth-focused economic development model called Skills and Knowledge for Youth Economic Empowerment (SKYE) project model which was developed by New Horizon in Partnership with World Vision International. The SKYE model aimed at improving critical thinking, leadership and work-readiness skills to the youth. The model was implemented through SKYE club where youth members would meet and work together to identify key challenges within their community and market opportunities. They also planned and implemented community service-learning and social entrepreneurship-learning projects to address those challenges.

In Cambodia, the project model was piloted and implemented in several province across the country before it fully rolled out in 2018 in 23 districts and 7 provinces in 2018-2020. The Youth for Change project was then shared with Department of Youth Centre, Ministry of Education Youth and Sport, and have been adapted to implement national youth engagement and participation project which is implemented in 25 provinces in Cambodia. Therefore, the model can replicate in both community-based clubs and school-based clubs. The Youth for Change program provides flexibility for implementation based on context and needs, and learning tools can be complemented by additional training, workshops, and vetted curricula to address specific interests and needs of male, female and other vulnerable adolescents in the communities.

²⁴ WWIC Youth Technical Programme Mid-term Review 2019.



SUSTAINABILITY

The Youth for Change had engaged adults as partners in youth-led community projects, and recruited positive adult role models to support the delivery of life skill sessions. The project had also promoted positive and equitable gender relationships through encouraging and supporting male, female and vulnerable adolescents and youth to learn together, share leadership responsibilities, and co-create projects and initiatives.

Youth for Change identified and developed local volunteer leaders and role models to support in the on-going running of the program. These local leaders are trained and supported over the life cycle of the program, building their knowledge and skill in delivering as well as their confidence. This experience and skills remained in the community even after the project ended, and activities and learnings have continued. The ownership is also evident through the youth-led projects. These projects cover themes and activities identified and planned by the youth, through which their capacities and confidence to continue leading social change and being agents of change in their communities and society.

Youth for Change project included scope and opportunity to work with local partners including government institutions in direct implementation and through strategic partnership. The project had partnered with churches, local NGOs, and Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport to further scaling up the project to more target adolescents and youth and have influenced national youth engagement participation policy and action plans.



FAITH-BASED APPROACH

In Cambodia, religious spaces such as pagoda and church play an important role in the daily life of the people in the community and in the upbringing of children and young people. The Youth for Change engaged churches and faith leaders as partners in the Youth for Change project implementation. Faith leaders were provided with capacity building and training on how to implement youth clubs' activities and to support youth club in developing and implementing community service-learning projects.







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