



Diaspora engagement mapping CAMBODIA

Facts & figures

Terminology: the terms “Anekachun Khmer” or “Khmer Anekachun” are used to refer to the diaspora. However they are not commonly used.

Political rights



Dual citizenship¹



Right to vote in national elections for citizens residing abroad²



Voting from abroad³



Remittances



Remittances as a share of GDP: **8.76%**
Remittances inflow (USD million): **2,782**

Data disclaimer

As diaspora definitions vary widely, we have chosen to use comparable data on emigration as a proxy. This does not include all who consider themselves diaspora and is not necessarily aligned with national definitions of diaspora. Emigration data comes from [UNDESA](#) (2024) and remittances from the [World Bank](#) (2023).

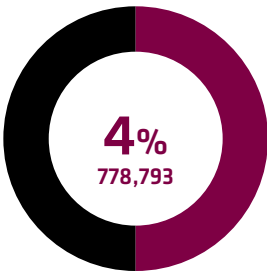
Emigration



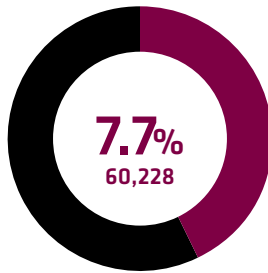
% of emigrants in total population



% of which in the EU



♂ 50%
♀ 50%



♂ 42.9%
♀ 57.1%

Top countries of destination



Thailand	375,635
United States of America	171,380
France	57,402
Australia	43,862
Republic of Korea	33,452

Cambodia does not have a diaspora engagement policy.

1 https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/acc_e/khm_e/WTACCKHM3A3_LEG_37.pdf

2 <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asia/more-than-1-million-cambodians-won-t-be-able-to-vote-in-2018-9397038>

3 Whilst voting from abroad is legally allowed, in practice it has not yet been implemented, as a lack of funding prevents registration of voters overseas, or opening registration offices. <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/6674/nec-pressed-on-election-reforms/> or <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/group-calls-oversees-voting>

Overview of the policy and legislative framework



- 2003** ● **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Thailand and Cambodia on Cooperation in the Employment of Workers**⁴ calls for the legal and organised deployment of Cambodian workers to Thailand, with a bilateral administrative process that provides for an employment procedure for both return or repatriation workers.
- 2007** ● **Prakas 012/2007**⁵ created a labour migration taskforce to manage policy implementation. Later, sub-decree 68/2009 (2009)⁶ formalised reduction of passport costs to US\$20 and expediting of passport issuance to within 20 days. Sub-Decree No. 190 (2011)⁷ acknowledged the impact of migration on development and strengthened the regulatory framework for managing labour migration.
- 2014** ∨
2018 ● **National Strategic Development Plan**:⁸ The plan incorporates migration-related challenges and measures such as improving institutional capacity and co-ordination for migration-related policy implementation that will help enhance the protection of rights, health and safety of Cambodian overseas workers. It also created the role of labour attaché in Cambodian embassies and developed a National Employment Policy.
- 2017** ∨
2025 ● **Technical and Vocational Education and Training**:⁹ The policy serves as a guide for the implementation and formulation of strategies for skills development and for better coordination among skills development stakeholders in Cambodia. This focus on skills shows the government's interest in improving the employability of Cambodian workers abroad.
- 2019** ∨
2023 ● **Policy on Labour Migration for Cambodia**:^{10,11} The updated policy builds on the foundation of the previous labour migration policies (2010-2014 and 2015-2018) and aims to enhance the effectiveness of labour migration in Cambodia. The policy focuses on three main pillars: (1) strengthening the labour migration governance framework; (2) protection and promotion of the rights of migrant workers; and (3) harnessing labour migration to maximise social and economic development.¹²
- 2023** ● Cambodia signed two agreements with Malaysia on the recruitment, employment and repatriation of Cambodian migrant workers in Malaysia. The two countries agreed to promote cooperation in various sectors, including trade, agriculture, tourism, energy, education and industry.¹³

» Trends

Emigration has been a growing phenomenon for Cambodia, seeing a 160% increase in the number of Cambodians abroad between 2000 and 2015. The recent progress in mainstreaming migration, through various government initiatives such as the implementation of the LMP and sub-decree 190, reflects the recognition of the social and economic contribution of migration. This has encouraged thousands of Cambodians to go abroad to work legally every month, aided by a 2013 guideline to simplify the procedures required to emigrate, reduce recruitment fees and improve monitoring of recruitment agencies¹⁴

4 http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p_lang=en&p_isn=93356&p_country=THA&p_count=441&p_classification=176p_classcount=59

5 <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/9789264273634-6-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/9789264273634-6-en>

6 https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_145704.pdf

7 <http://www.mekongmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/05/PDF49.2KB.pdf>

8 <https://cambodia.unfpa.org/en/publications/national-strategic-development-plan-2014-2018#:~:text=The%20National%20Strategic%20Development%20Plan,to%20a%20socioeconomic%20development%20process.>

9 http://apmigration.ilo.org/resources/implementation-of-recommendations-from-the-3rd-to-10th-asean-forum-on-migrant-labour-afml/at_download/file1

10 <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/1.-Labour-Migration-Policy-2019-2023.pdf>

11 Policy on Labour Migration for Cambodia (2019-2023) is currently under review for extension until 2028.

12 <https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-05/Cambodia-labour-migration-governance-framework-en-2024.pdf>

13 <https://apnews.com/article/cambodia-migrant-workers-malaysia-agreements-anwar-0086b5b6527808e2c98d93252924295b>

14 <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/61435/thousands-of-cambodians-going-to-work-abroad-every-month/>

In terms of diaspora engagement, the National Strategic Development Plan shows a gradual increase in government efforts to protect the rights, health and safety of Cambodians overseas through the labour attachés in Cambodian embassies. Key sectors of diaspora engagement include tourism and cultural preservation, humanitarian aid and skills transfer through medical expertise or education.

Citizen rights: Prime Minister Hun Sen announced in May 2022 to members of the diaspora that the government will permit them to register for, and obtain, Khmer national identification cards to ease their ability to do business in Cambodia, enabling them to buy real estate or even to form a political party.

Obstacles



- **Lack of resources:** The Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MOLVT) has capacity limitations, which include lack of staff and resources, weak co-ordination between relevant ministries and across countries, and ineffective mechanisms for monitoring and supervising recruitment agencies and mechanisms to settle grievances.¹⁵ Local authorities require guidance on the new Sub-Decree and Prakas and their role in monitoring recruitment practices. The MOLVT should issue a notification to the authorities to present the law and its implications in simple and practical terms. Regular provincial- and district-level meetings should be held to bring together various departments and partners to enhance the provision of services in the community and the capacities of officials and village leaders.¹⁶
- **Media landscape:** Cambodian media is mostly controlled by the state and government power over digital spaces is set to increase with the country's planned National Internet Gateway. The fact that the diaspora is a relatively small part of Cambodian society that does not necessarily fit into a national-focused news agenda and it includes groups that have fled for fear of persecution means that the limited media space could have an effect on the ability for trust building between the government and its diaspora.
- **Political division and transnational repression:** There is political division in the diaspora, linked to its history, making government-led diaspora engagement initiatives challenging for certain groups. Moreover, the persistent political repression against Cambodian activists in exile challenges diaspora's participation in advocating for freedom of expression and democracy in Cambodia.

15 <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/9789264273634-6-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/9789264273634-6-en#back-n-ch02-2>

16 http://ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_228484.pdf: 17



SPOTLIGHT: effective practices

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[Migrant workers resource centres 2013](#)

TRAINING
+ RIGHTS

Migrant workers resource centres (MRCs) have been established in Cambodia to provide information, counselling and legal assistance to visitors and to conduct outreach to schools, training institutions, and communities. Such activities aim to reach potential migrant workers, their family members, and community leaders. Preliminary discussions have been held with the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MOLVT) and International Labour Organisation about establishing an MRC in Phnom Penh to assist migrants prior to departure, and to respond to queries from local labour departments and MRCs around the country on legal issues, procedures, and complaints.

[The Interrelations between Public Policies, Migration and Development \(IPPM\) project 2013 - 2017](#)

REMITTANCES

The IPPMD project focused on understanding the link between migration, remittances and sectors such as agriculture and education. It aimed to identify policy gaps in Cambodia in harnessing their potential for national development and to provide policy recommendations. The research team worked with the Ministry of Interior, which provided information on country goals, data and policies. The post-project report argued that while the whole migration process (emigration, remittances, return migration) could contribute to Cambodia's development, it was not being fully optimised and suggested a range of recommendations, such as the implementation of a national financial education programme to boost the financial literacy of Cambodians so that more remittances could be channelled towards productive investments.

[Cambodge, d'hier à aujourd'hui - Season of Cambodia 2018](#)

CULTURE

This festival, organised by Cambodian-led NGO Cambodian Living Arts, offers a series of artistic events around Paris, to discover the revival of Cambodia's cultural scene almost 40 years after the fall of the Pol Pot regime in 1979. It also seeks to engage the Cambodian diaspora to build ties between the generation that fled the Khmer Rouge, and their children who do not know of that period.

[The Employment Permit System \(EPS\) 2006](#)

TRAINING
+ LABOUR

The Employment Permit System (EPS) is a partnership with South Korea to create demand for local labour. In 2014, this scheme had 745 trainees and 307 employees from Mongolia, Cambodia and Vietnam. The scheme also offers workers customised training for employment at a local Korean firm so that they can resettle back home securely after their overseas posting.

[Integration of safe migration module into national vocational training curriculum 2023](#)

MIGRANTS
RIGHTS

In order to raise awareness on safe migration among TVET students, who are often prospective migrants seeking employment abroad, the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MoLVT), with support from IOM, officially integrated a module on safe migration into the national TVET curriculum. A training of trainers (ToT) was conducted across 37 TVET institutes to ensure the effective and efficient delivery of the module.



My Journey Mobile App 2021

Through civil society partnerships, the mobile app was developed to provide access to essential, reliable and practical information on labour safety and rights, in the hopes of making Cambodian women's migration journeys safer. The app is user friendly and universally accessible, and delivers information through videos, animations, audio and dialogues. The development of the app draws upon the narratives and perspectives of Cambodian women migrant workers themselves, increasing its relevance.

DIGITAL +
MIGRANTS RIGHTS

Vocational and Technical Training Programme for Youth from Poor and Vulnerable Families 2024

The programme aims to enhance skills in 10 priority sectors for youth from poor and vulnerable families, as well as those vulnerable to unemployment and poverty, including returned migrant workers. As they are set as a second priority for the programme, returned migrant workers are eligible to attend the training for free but will not receive a monthly stipend. This programme is a part of Cambodia's Strategic Plan for Employment Development, Social Security and Vocational Training 2024-2028.

RETURN AND
REINTEGRATION: EDUCATION
AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Annex: List of Actors

Diaspora related institutions

- **At regional level**

International Labour Organisation (ILO) 1969

Cambodia has been a member of ILO since 1969. Since the early 1990s, the ILO has been an active partner in Cambodia's economic, social and democratic recovery, playing an important role in helping to restore livelihoods, generate sustainable employment, rebuild infrastructure and set-up and strengthen democratic institutions. Cambodia has ratified all eight of ILO's core conventions. The **TRIANGLE in ASEAN programme** is a part of the ILO's global efforts to promote fair migration. Through delivery of technical assistance and support to governments, social partners, civil society and regional bodies, TRIANGLE in ASEAN aims to create a set of policies, tools and services that enhance the contribution of labour migration to stable and inclusive growth and development. It involves ASEAN six countries, including Cambodia, and is funded by Australia and Canada.

- **National institutions**

- At ministerial level

Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MoLVT) 1993

This is the primary body managing labour migration. It has five sub-departments: labour inspections, labour disputes, employment and manpower, child labour and occupational health. The MoLVT handles the complaint process for migrant workers, maintains the standard for inspections on private recruitment agencies and enforces the promulgation of minimum standards of job placement services abroad.

Ministry of Interior 1996

The MOI is responsible for providing passports, preventing illegal recruitment, and cross-border human trafficking.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MFAIC)

The MFAIC is in charge of distributing all relevant documents and regulations, facilitating legal labour migration, and managing and resolving disputes between workers and their employers in receiving countries via Cambodian embassies. For instance, during the Covid-19 period, officials at the MFAIC coordinated with the Malaysian government to facilitate the return of Cambodians who were stranded in Malaysia via a special charter flight.¹⁷

Explore the institutionalisation of diaspora engagement worldwide via the **typology of 430+ institutions**



¹⁷ <https://www.mfaic.gov.kh/site/detail/41663>

- At sub-ministerial level

The Department of Employment and Manpower 2005¹⁸

The Department of Employment and Manpower is the secretariat of the General Department of Labour and is tasked with the protection and management of Khmer workers in Cambodia and overseas. Its tasks involve selecting and licensing employment agencies; monitoring and evaluating recruitment agencies; resolving disputes between migrant workers and domestic employment agencies, and between migrant workers and their employers; supporting employment agencies in sending workers abroad, such as through Sub-Decree No. 190; and preventing illegal recruitment. The department has nine offices in charge of public relations; management of alien workers; monitoring and inspection of alien workers; monitoring of Khmer workers; employment and workforce statistics; job placement in Cambodia; job placement office for Malaysia and Arabic countries; job placement office for Thailand; job placement office for Japan, Singapore and all other countries. It also has five bureaus, responsible for labour inspections, labour disputes, employment and manpower, child labour and occupational health.

Inter-Ministerial Working Group for the Implementation of the MoU with Thailand 2005¹⁹

This government body was formed to oversee the implementation of the employment MoU with Thailand. Its main tasks are verifying the nationality of irregular Cambodian migrant workers and issuing them with a certificate of identity.

Inter-Ministerial Taskforce for Migration (IMTM) 2007²⁰

The IMTM was created by Prakas 012/07 in January 2007 to develop and implement policy and action plans on labour migration. It coordinates migration issues and provides recommendations to the government.

Manpower Training and Overseas Sending Board (MTOSB) 2006²¹

MTOSB is a public employment agency, which was added to the structure by sub-decree 70 in 2006. It is tasked with recruiting, training, and sending workers to South Korea. It is a special unit within the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training, which facilitates government-to-government labour migration agreements.

- At local level

Association of Cambodian Recruitment Agencies (ACRA) 2008

Based in the private sector, the association aims to enhance and effectively promote the employment of Cambodian workers and to contribute to economic and social development. It also informs its members about labourer-receiving sources (name, condition, contact details) and promotes the orderly and safe migration of Cambodian migrant workers. It also communicates with national institutions related to recruiting, sending and managing workers going to work abroad for effective social economy and communities with external institutions to find new markets for its members.

18 <https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/MONOGRAPH/92808/108288/F-1312769134/KHM92808%20Eng.pdf>

19 <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/9789264273634-6-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/9789264273634-6-en>

20 Ibid

21 <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Manpower-Training-and-Overseas-Sending-Board-MTOSB/388811931209705>

Diaspora organisations in Europe

Association Culturelle Cambodienne de l'Ain (ACCA)

France 1980

- ☑ **Development activities**
- ☑ **Integration activities**

Set up to promote and share Cambodian culture and traditions within the French community, ACCA also serves as a meeting centre to raise funds for their traditional dance groups, develop better knowledge of Cambodian culture, go on outings to shows and religious events, and provide humanitarian aid when necessary.

Association des Médecins Cambodgiens France 1977

- ☑ **Development activities**

The association was created by Cambodian refugees and Cambodian doctors in France who saw the need to provide both material and psychological help to their fellow compatriots. It promotes mutual assistance and brings as much help and comfort as possible to the needy. Since its establishment, the association has grown in membership and it has diversified in its field of intervention in both France and Cambodia, where large-scale humanitarian actions have been undertaken.

Association Khmers De Toulouse France

- ☑ **Development activities**

This group aims to bring together and build friendship between the Khmer communities of Toulouse. It organises shows to raise funds for orphaned children in Cambodia and also celebrates Cambodian festivals, cultural and sports activities.

Association Solidarité Cambodge France 1999

- ☑ **Development activities**

The association was created by Cambodian refugee families in France to promote relations of solidarity between Bretagne and Cambodia by developing mutual aid and cooperation actions and by promoting exchanges between family groups through sports, cultural and socio-educational activities.

Cambodian Cultural Association France

- ☑ **Integration activities**

Lead by Cambodians, the association aims to promote solidarity and friendly relations between Cambodians and French people, as well as to conserve Cambodian cultural heritage. The association presently has 20 members and is based in Bron.

Read more about diaspora organisations in "[Starting guide: What is a diaspora organisation](#)"



Cambodian Society in the United Kingdom (CASUNIK)

☑ Integration activities

CASUNIK was founded by students, immigrants and diplomatic staff to help, guide and assist any Cambodian living or visiting in the UK, as well as any person related to Cambodia or Cambodians. They aim to maintain, promote and introduce the Khmer tradition and culture, as well as to encourage cultural exchanges between Great Britain and Cambodia.

Khmer Rouge Victims' Collective France 2005

☑ Development activities

NGOs, student groups, research institutes, and victims' associations in France created the Khmer Rouge Victims' Collective in June 2005 to facilitate the participation of Khmer Rouge victims in legal proceedings. Today, the Collective is the organisation in which the Cambodian diaspora is most actively involved. Its members include associations, such as Asie-Aide à la Jeunesse, Asie Extrême, Centre for Applied Research on International and European Criminal Justice (CARI ECJ), Connecté, Les Enfants du Sourire Khmer and Justice for Cambodia.

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