

The issue of gender in cambodia



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Gender problem is considered as a global issue which exists not only in developing country but also in developed country. As a developing country in South-East Asia, Cambodia is known as a hierarchically ordered society. In all areas of development and administration, women always take the partnership with men. Unfortunately, they still cannot access to all equal rights, shares of benefits, opportunities, and values. Although Cambodia has reached the age of globalization, women still have been regarded as the lower group because of gender inequality. Cambodian women's choices have been in one particular limit as the result of cultural and traditional norms which is seen in many aspects of Cambodian society such as family, education, workplace and politics.

Traditionally, Cambodian families value the men more than women as a Cambodian said that “ the men are a piece of gold when it is dropped in mud, is still a piece of gold while the women are a piece of cloth, once it is stained, stained forever.” Normally, women are responsible for doing household chores and lacking of decision-making as well as giving birth while the men go outside for work to earn money and they are controversial and powerful in the family. Thus, when facing any problems, men always use their power to deal with such situation that sometime, they great physical abuse or any kinds of violence to rule over the women.

Moreover, there are many reasons regarding to the wide gap between men and women of accessing of education. Firstly, Cambodian people believe that men are more important than women because men can go out to work while women have to stay at home to do the housework. Furthermore, parents do not allow their daughters to go to school because of some factors regarding

security and reputation. As another Cambodian said that “ a family which has a daughter is not different from a family that has a toilet in front of the house. As a result, women in the past were not allowed to study because she could be stubborn, and write a love letter to men. Furthermore, after all daughters get married, they have to stay at home and to be fed by her husband. Therefore, she does not need to study. In addition, if a poor family can afford only one child to study, the family will choose son to study instead of daughter. According to an interview to a poor family which moved to Phnom Penh city from Prey Veng province ten years ago that has one son and two daughters that is conducted by our group shown that both of the two daughters are not allowed to go to school because they have to work in the garment factories in order to support their brother’s education. Finally, their brother now has become an upper-secondary school teacher at Santhormok High School in Phnom Penh city while they both are illiteracy.

According to ADB, DFID/UK, UNDP, UNIFEM, and WB (2004, p. 46) states that men’s wages is 33 percent higher than women’s wages depend on an individual’s age and education. Moreover, Ministry of Planning (1999) says that the largest wage differences between males and females exist among young worker aged 15 to 29 with no schooling (75 percent), while the smallest differences exist among workers aged 30 to 39 years with lower secondary schooling (As cited in ADB et al., 2004, p. 46), so it shows that there is substantial wage discrimination against women, and young women in particular labor markets. In addition, Cambodia Development Resource Institute (2003) says that “ the average daily wage for men in fishing is about 5, 000 riels (\$1. 25), while women earn only 83 percent of that

amount; in fish processing men earn about 4,150 riels (\$1.13) per day and women earn 63 percent of that wage” (As cited in ADB et al., 2004, p. 46). Furthermore, The participatory poverty assessment (ADB, 2001) in Cambodia found that women’s wage is less than men’s wage where there is limited waged employment locally even they are doing the same work. For example, men can earn up to 5,000 riels (US\$1.25) per day working as casual laborers while women will receive only up to 2,500 riels for the same work. In the poverty assessment shows that this differences wage is because of three reasons. First, there are some jobs that women cannot do well as men. Second, women take more time off during the day. The last reason is that it didn’t matter anyway because it all went back in to the household finances (As cited in ADB et al., 2004, p. 46).

In addition, the rate of women’s voice in politics is still low in Cambodia. Even though all men and women are equal in voting, there are still less women who represent in the parliament than men. For instance, there were only 5 percent of women candidates in 1993, and there were only five among of them won the election and joined the national assembly (ADB et al., 2004, p. 125). Furthermore, this rate has been increasing very slowly. For example, there were 11.5 percent in 1998 and 12.2 percent in 2003 of women who are elected (ADB et al., 2004, p. 125). In addition, the numbers of women participation in each political party are also lower than men. In 2003, only 8 out of 73 seats in Cambodian People Party, 4 out of 26 seats in Funcinpec Party, and 3 out of 24 seats in Sam Rainsy Party were women candidates (ADB et al., 2004, p. 126). In short, these data represents that women are given less value than men in Cambodia politics.

However, some people state that the gender inequality in Cambodia is shaped by biology. Women are physically born weaker than men so mostly they are responsible for mothering work such as deliver and to look after the babies, and stay at home to do housework while men go out for work and become breadwinner, so men have power to control the family. This point has some merit on the surface. However, pregnant is only a temporary time for women to produce the baby, and this time they can do some house work. Then, after they deliver the baby, they can go out for work as the men do such as a teacher, a doctor, an architecture, etc.

In conclusion, according to the four aspects such as family, education, workplace, and politics that have mentioned above, we can analyze that culture is an essential factor that causes the gender inequality between men and women. Women have to do housework and to give birth, so they do not have chance to be educated which becomes the obstacle for them to find a well paid job. Moreover, because of the education of women still in limit, their participant in politic is also in a small number. Actually, it is really hard for women to change their culture without any supporting from men. As a result, in order to motivate people to understand more about gender inequality effectively, both government and non-government organizations need to be strongly facilitated in making policy to encouraging women knowing their right of sharing and making decision. Moreover, he has to develop the laws for violence against women, and provide more motivate girl to be educated, women to join literacy program that can help them to build up their social values, so that it will develop the country because we have enough human resources. Men and women are the two elements which are

inseparable from one another. They both are like the left and right hands of a country. Without one of them, a country's development will be stuck.

Moreover, women also should accept the opportunity that provided by the men.

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