YOUTH CONSULTATION: YOUTH BOOT CAMP REPORT

September 2023
1. INTRODUCTION
   1.1. PURPOSE
   1.2. METHODOLOGY
   1.3. PARTICIPANTS

2. HUMAN CENTERED DESIGN PROCESS AND FINDINGS
   2.1. Warm Up ‘Gallery Walk’
   2.2. Group Discussion
      2.2.1. Discovery Stage
      2.2.2. Empathy Stage
      2.2.3. Ideate Stage
      2.2.4. Screening and Prototyping Stage
      2.2.5. Communicate Stage

3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS
1. INTRODUCTION

The Royal Government of Cambodia sees youth as an invaluable resource for national economic, social, cultural and environmental development. Youth is defined as men and women holding Cambodian nationality, single or married, aged between 15 and 30 years. The new Cambodia Pentagonal Strategy Phase I considers youth empowerment to be one of the main opportunities to enhance Cambodia’s long-term development objectives, which should in turn provide great employment opportunities to youth. This is especially true as 30.5% of the total population is aged between 15 to 30 years.

To ensure that the new Country Programme Document (CPD) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) aligns with all of the national strategic plans identifying youth as one of the core pillars for development, the UNDP initiated a youth boot camp consultation to gather insights from this particular demographic group. The boot camp brought together youth from various backgrounds across the country to discuss and share their stories, development problems, and challenges they have faced or are facing and observing in their communities, as well as their vision and development priorities for Cambodia in the future.

To gauge youth vision and perspectives, the discussion was framed around the sustainable development goals (SDGs) and the three shifts (or desired transformations) highlighted in the draft CPD 2024-2028. The three main shifts include: (1) accelerating inclusive growth, economic diversification, and human development, (2) advancing climate action and nature-based solutions for growth and human security, and (3) fostering an inclusive, peaceful, and resilient society.

1.1. PURPOSE

This youth boot camp aims to generate insights from different youth groups regarding their development priorities and possible solutions to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs. Youth perspectives will inform the formulation of the UNDP Cambodia Country Programme 2024-2028 and the corresponding future portfolios of interventions.

1.2. METHODOLOGY

The boot camp design employed a human-centered approach guiding participants to discover the root causes of the development challenges they faced or are facing and to ideate possible solutions. An experience-based learning methodology was applied to help participants reflect on their own experiences during their group work.

The six stages of the human-centered design (HCD) process were applied during the bootcamp, namely, discover, empathize, ideate, screen, prototype, and communicate. The ‘discover’ stage allowed participants to identify the root causes of the problem. Followed by the ‘empathize’ stage where participants were asked to use the empathy map to express how they relate to certain problems they identified in the first stage by filling out information on the six aspects listed on the empathy map: think and feel, see, hear, do, pain, and gain. After completing this stage, participants are able to understand the root causes of the problem and people’s needs and expectations.

The third stage is called ‘ideate’. This stage helped participants to brainstorm on as many solutions as possible after they identified and empathized with the problem in the earlier stage. Here, brainstorming was introduced to participants as a tool to assist them in formulating possible solutions. Following this is the ‘screening’ stage which helped participants prioritize appropriate solutions from a long list of brainstorming in the ideate stage. To help participants prioritize solutions, the boot camp facilitator advised participants to use a tool called the ‘shopping card’. The shopping card allowed participants to select their top three solutions from the ideate stage. Afterwards, participants began to work on the ‘prototype’ stage, where they were asked to visualize solutions on paper to unpack them and bring them closer to reality. These solutions were later presented in the last stage.

The facilitator also introduced rapid-prototyping and storyboarding to participants at the prototype stage so that participants could co-create options to illustrate their solutions. The final stage is ‘communicate’ in which each group is asked to present its prototyped solutions to all participants. The groups then received feedback, for revising their solutions if necessary.

The HCD process helped participants identify real problems people face in their daily lives and co-create possible solutions for developmental challenges in their communities.

1.3. PARTICIPANTS

40 young people between the ages of 18 and 30 were invited to attend the boot camp, but only 39 were available to participate. To ensure inclusivity, youth from various locations and backgrounds across the country were selected. These included indigenous youth, ethnic minorities, university students, high school students, LGBTQI+ youth, youth with disabilities, youth working in the informal sector (MSMEs), youth attending incubation programs, youth volunteers in commune councils, and youth working in non-profit organizations. The below tables detail the cross-section of participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous Youth</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Minorities</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Students</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Students</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBTQI+ Youth</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth with Disabilities</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth in Informal Sector</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incubation Program Graduates</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Volunteers</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Working in Non-Profit</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Among the 39 participants, 22 (56%) participants were self-identified as women, and 14 (36%) as men, and three (7.69%) as LGBTQI+. There were six (15%) people from indigenous community, four (10.25%) ethnic minority, four (10.25%) university students, four (10.25%) high school students, three (7.69%) from the LGBTQI+ community, four (10.25%) youth with disabilities, four (10.25%) youth working in the informal sector (MSMEs), four (10.25%) youth attending incubation programs, one (2.56%) youth volunteer within a commune council, and five (12.82%) youth working in a non-profit organizations.

### Gender Composition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBTQI+</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Breakdown of Participant Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Groups</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous people</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic minorities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University students</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school students</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBTQI+ youth</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth with disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth working in the informal sector (MSMEs)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth attending incubator programs</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth volunteers in commune councils</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth working in non-profit organizations</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>39</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. **HUMAN CENTERED DESIGN PROCESS AND FINDINGS**

2.1. **WARM-UP ‘GALLERY WALK’**

At the beginning of the event, the facilitator introduced a ‘gallery walk’ to warm participants up and prepare them for the HCD process. Then, participants were divided into five groups and the bootcamp facilitators who presented the following topics were assigned to each group: the draft UNDP country programme shifts 1 to 3, the SDGs, and the UNDP youth online survey results. Each facilitator presented his or her material at their assigned station as the groups of participants moved from one station to another.

This exercise provided participants with background knowledge and information on the prioritized areas in the upcoming UNDP five-year country programme, the sustainable development goals (SDGs), and to the results of the online youth perception survey launched by UNDP during the month of July 2023 on development challenges, and the progress on the SDGs in Cambodia. This introduced key topics and set the foundation for discussions during the boot camp.

2.2. **GROUP DISCUSSION**

2.2.1. **DISCOVERY STAGE**

At the discovery stage, participants were asked to do a guided life-journey exercise using a piece of paper to illustrate the development challenges or experience they faced or observed in their communities in the past five years. In this exercise, participants were asked to dig deep into the root cause of the problem. After reflecting on their own journey, each participant was asked to share his or her life journey with the group. Each group was then asked to identify the top five developmental issues in their communities. The issues raised included poor quality of education, poverty, limited skillsets, unemployment, child marriage, migration, lack of digital and financial literacy, abuse of authority against indigenous people’s rights, absence of safe drinking water, poor waste management and healthcare, child malnutrition, low agricultural yields, discrimination, gender inequality, lack of access to information, limited space for political expression, domestic violence, lack of tourism, social security, participation and partnerships in society and climate change. Below is an overview of the themes and challenges discussed by participants:
Education Quality

Quality of education was one of the main issues that groups identified in their communities. Participants identified many reasons behind poor education quality in Cambodia, including limited number of schools, low qualification of teachers, poverty, low skillsets, and shortcomings in educational technology and languages skills.

Limited number of schools and poor school infrastructure are still of concern for people in some rural areas. For example, in Battambang, Ratanakiri and Siem Reap, children have to travel a long distance to school due to the absence of schools in their communities which usually resulted in children dropping out of school. The schools suffer from poor infrastructure, lack of playgrounds, libraries, computer rooms and laboratories, etc.

The lack of punctuality of teachers in rural schools was another concern as some of them do not come to school regularly. Youth also mentioned that classrooms are poorly managed as class size tend to be very large, and consequently students are not able to learn properly. This is reflected in the lack of foundational knowledge. For example, many students cannot write or spell correctly Khmer words after graduating from grade 12. Students also feel that they do not have the right orientation or mentorship to help them pursue their dreams after graduation. Some students end up working in farms or banana plantations after graduating from high school because they do not have enough information or support on what major to study in university. In addition, no computer or language classes are provided in rural areas. Schools lack digital facilities for students to learn and practice digital skills effectively.

Poverty

Poverty is one of the main developmental issues observed by participants in their communities, and it plays a part in restricting children from going to school. Children would end up helping their parents with farming. In Ratanakiri, most parents work in banana plantations, and they often bring their children to work with them. This results in many children dropping out of school.

Skills Mismatches

Many young people do not know what major to pursue after graduating from high school, nor do they know what they want to do in the future. This usually leads to difficulties in finding work, and many take jobs they have no passion for.

Unemployment

Many young people are unemployed because they do not have the right knowledge, skills and working experience. Many job openings require years of experience, which restricts youth from applying, especially fresh graduates. As such, many choose to work in cafes and other service jobs instead. Another issue is a lack of short courses, vocational training, and volunteering opportunities which can help young people build experience and prepare them for future employment.

Forced marriage

Many young women are forced to marry and support their family at a young age due to poverty, cultural norms, and gender expectations. Early marriage restricts their chances to go to school, explore and see the world, and advocate for their rights in Cambodia. They lack education and skills to find a decent job, often leading them to seek employment abroad as low-skilled workers. Some migrate to Thailand and Vietnam.

Migration

Some farmers in rural areas migrate to neighboring countries to earn better incomes. The prices of fertilizers and pesticides are getting higher and higher, but crops yields drop every year, so farmers cannot afford a comfortable lifestyle, nor can they hope to improve their standard of living. Some farmers even fell into debt, and in order to pay it off, economic migration is the only way to survive.

Digital Literacy

Participants observed two main problems around digital literacy in the country: insufficient access to technology, and a lack of digital skills.

Even though technology plays a very important part in our modern life, a lot of people in Cambodia still have no access to digital literacy education and are unable to take advantage of it, especially in provincial and rural areas. Schools in rural areas have very limited access to digital platforms for learning.

There are pros and cons to using digital platforms. Participants observed that there is a cybercrime problem in the digital space with hackers using digital platforms to earn money targeting young girls. Some content creators produce harmful content and misinformation, promoting immorality in society. A lot of young people in the country are unable to distinguish harmful and misleading content from genuine content.

Financial Literacy

Financial literacy is a challenge for many people in rural areas. Siem Reap, Ratanakiri and Mondulkiri were discussed as an example. People there tend to make poor financial decisions, taking bank loans to purchase goods. A culture of materialism and consumerism often motivates people to borrow money from the bank. According to participants, debt is a problem in society. Some people cannot pay back loans due to high interest rates and low income, so they have no choice but to sell their properties, pushing them into poverty.

Indigenous People’s Rights

Participants raised the issue of some big companies and powerful individuals who abuse their authority by engaging in deforestation and land-grabs at the expense of indigenous communities.

The indigenous community in Steung Treng has been subject to violations of their rights and abuse of their natural resources. For example, they are not informed before an operation of forest clearance by the company engaging...
in this clearance, and often feel powerless to do anything about it. These large companies identify activists in the community and sue them. The company claims that the indigenous people were relocated and are farming on their land, and endeavour to drive the indigenous people out of the land. The only way to do so is by suing them.

Deforestation creates a lot of problems for indigenous communities because most of them depend on the forest for food and income. Without the forest, local people lose their income, and their water becomes polluted, which affects their health. Indigenous people have on many occasions been identified as active actors in deforestation, but, some deforestation crimes are committed by newcomers who relocated on indigenous land.

Aside from the issue of deforestation, land titling is another big concern. In Mondulkiri, land titling has raised many problems, with big companies taking indigenous people’s land as part of a land concession. These corporations employ various tactics to scare and threaten indigenous people.

Safe Drinking Water

The indigenous community in Steung Treng was taken as an example as it has no access to safe drinking water, with the river being the only source of water. Local people there tend to feel helpless because they have not received any support so far.

Poor Waste Management and Health Care

People in the local community lack the skills to handle waste properly. Poor waste management tends to cause health issues including lung and stomach diseases. People also lack knowledge and up-to-date information on how to take care of their health. At the same time, the quality of public health services is very poor. For instance, public health staff cannot often cater to patients’ needs at health centers, and medication is insufficient.

Mental health problems are emerging in some communities, and these are related to social pressure, depression and discrimination. For example, an LGBTQI+ person may experience depression when described as a contagious disease in the community by their family and peers.

Child Nutrition

The lack of awareness on child nutrition is another key problem. Many parents lack knowledge of the type of food that is important and healthy for their children. This is because they lack access to health information. Most parents are busy with their daily business or farming, and they rarely participate in any community meetings to learn about nutrition and children’s health.

Low Agricultural Products

Figure 1: The illustration of the problem a farmer faces in the community

The participants identified several key issues that lead to poor agricultural output: first, many farmers lack proper irrigation systems, meaning they are unable to water their crops. Second, many farmers also lack agricultural skills. Third, climate change is leading to lower crop yields. Many people in rural areas depend on agriculture. As a result, these issues are a significant cause for concern.

Some farmers invest in machinery to support their agriculture activities by taking a loan from the bank, yet they are often still unable to earn enough income from their agricultural products. As a result, they tend to fall into debt. In addition, the lack of infrastructure to transport products to the market is another issue. Farmers have to cross the river which is very time-consuming and reduces the time they have available to sell their products. Costs of agricultural inputs is high, but the final product prices are low, and sometimes farmers cannot find a market to sell their products. Typically, they sell their products to middlemen because they lack the marketing skills, and the price offered by the middleman is usually much lower than the market price. This deepens inequalities in society.

Discrimination

Discrimination exists in all communities in Cambodia. LGBTQI+ people always experience discrimination from their communities, and are faced with a lack of acceptance, with community members telling their children not to engage with them as they may have contagious diseases. Some members of this community feel pressured when they go to school as they are not allowed to wear what they want, or to express themselves freely. This often leads them to drop out of school.

Discrimination against persons with disabilities is still prevalent. People consider persons with disabilities as strangers or people to be feared. This discrimination presents a barrier to education and career opportunities for people with
disabilities. There are not enough braille schools for visually impaired people, so they tend to enroll in school quite late in their life, for example at the age of 13 years. Also, the average length of their education is very short – often just one or two years. Teachers specialized in this area are limited too. Distances to these schools are often long, and some schools are closed due to budget shortages.

**Gender Inequality**

Parents tend to motivate their sons to go to school and encourage their daughters to help at home. Many young women miss out on opportunities to find decent jobs to support themselves because of their lack of skills. Although boys are encouraged to go to school, they tend to drop out at a very young age, usually due to a lack of motivation sometimes as a result of the influence of their peers and local communities.

Girls also experience harassment when traveling within and outside their hometowns, often being subjected to suggestive comments from men which make them feel uncomfortable and afraid. This experience tends to discourage them from going out and doing what they want. The lack of education and social norms are usually the cause of this issue.

### Lack of Access to Information

People living in rural areas have limited access to information about social accountability and public services. Local authorities have not done enough to raise awareness and encourage citizens to participate in local decision-making.

### Infrastructure

Roads in many rural communities are often in bad condition, with local authorities promising to repair them but not following through. Such poor road conditions present logistical difficulties for students and pregnant women and render travel dangerous, particularly night travel. There have been no interventions from local authorities on this matter.

### Limited Political Space

In Cambodia, before elections, political parties on the campaign trail visit students and local people to solicit their votes, yet after elections, these constituents often find their voices silenced, and do not feel empowered to express their thoughts. This represents a stark contrast with government officials who are free to discuss political issues at any time and place, and represents an inequality that leaves the youth disaffected.

### Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is also a concern. Youth participants from an island in Steung Treng observed that almost 80% of the population – especially women and children – are victims of domestic violence, and that this phenomenon is considered by the local population to be a normal state of affairs. Poor education and limited knowledge on how to stop domestic violence keep it prevalent.

### Tourism

Many businesses depend on tourism. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, Cambodia lost many tourists, leading to the closure of a large number of businesses. It also led to an increase in migration. Siem Reap in particular was hard hit, with many people in the city losing their income. The lack of diversification in Siem Reap was also one of the factors contributing to lower visitor numbers, as well as limited support from the government and relevant ministries to promote tourist sites in Siem Reap; rather, policies that deterred tourists were maintained, for example the restriction of photography at temple sites. Cambodia is seen by some tourists as a transit stop on the way to Vietnam and Thailand. Local vendors and service workers such as tuktuk drivers try to rip-off tourists during their stay in Siem Reap, and the lack of tourism education by relevant stakeholders such as transport and tourism operators is an issue.

### Social Security

Social security is a problem for the youth of Cambodia. Gang activity is a hot topic in one of the communities of Prey Veng, where many young people join gangs and contribute to social disorder. These people tend to be imprisoned at a high rate. Their actions inevitably lead to them being discriminated against, and as a result, they usually lose education and job opportunities.

Abuse of labor was another issue highlighted. Some employers mistreat their employees and do not apply labor laws at work, instead forcing employees to work overtime and increasing their workloads. Another problem is the prevalence of forced labor. There are many reported incidences of employers offering Cambodians restaurant work, only to trick them into becoming sex workers, and punishing and threatening them if they do not follow their orders.

Religious conflict is also a problem in communities home to Buddhists, Christians, and Muslims. Such conflicts are a hindrance to peace-building efforts in these communities. Places of worship are sometimes built next to, or in close proximity to places of worship of other religions, and this creates friction.

### Participation and Partnership in Society

Young peoples’ voices are not heard by the elderly in their communities. Some of the elderly population hold the belief that volunteering work is useless and will not get young people anywhere. They do not value the youth’s social initiatives and volunteer work. This discourages youth from participating in public events or learning about SDGs.

The understanding of SDGs is limited. Many people have no access or opportunities to participate in contributing to the development of the country. There is no clear mechanism to mainstream SDGs at a grassroots level and to monitor them and their progress properly.

A lack of good governance can be considered one of the core issues in Cambodia at the moment. There is a general lack of transparency, as well as a lack of private-public partnerships to mobilize resources to develop the country.
Climate Change

Climate change was raised as one of the biggest issues. Current weather patterns are unstable and have a negative impact on agriculture. In Phnom Kravanh, many farmers have lost their income due to climate change affecting their crops.

2.2.2. EMPATHY STAGE

Participants were asked to explore the problems or challenges they face in their community in the empathy stage. During this session, they outlined their feelings, hopes, and needs. Below are the empathy boards that each group filled relating to the problems surfaced:
Mental health problems
- Stressed
- Scared of doing it again
- Limited access to information
- Technology is complex
- Technology is too broad a subject to learn

Use technology in business, education and entertainment
- Access to employment
- Easy of communication
- Platform to express a voice on social problems

Hard to access employment
- Hard to access information
- Difficult to learn about technology
- Cybercrime

Get involved in social work using technology
- Using technology for economic development
- Sharing educational information
- Earning extra income via digital tools
- Pay more attention when using technology

General public has limited digital knowledge
- Lack of digital skills
- Cheating
- Hackers
- Fake news
- Not safe to manage own data on digital platforms
- Lack of resources on how to use technology

Worried about family’s livelihood
- Low income, high expenditures
- Loss of human resources
- Loss of property and descent into poverty
- Natural disasters affecting agricultural yields leading to loss of income, inability to repay loans

Financial literacy knowledge and skills
- Living a happy and fulfilled life
- Reducing debts taken without a clear purpose
- Accessible short courses

Domestic violence
- Debt
- Migration
- High levels of school drop-outs
- Need for daily necessities
- Taking out more and more bank loans

Borrowing money without a clear purpose
- Spending money wrongly
- Debt increasing
- Creating a short course on financial literacy
- Attending financial literacy training
2.2.3. IDEATE STAGE

The ideate stage allows participants to pause, reflect, and generate solutions to the problems identified above. Participants are invited to do an exercise where they visualize an ideal of Cambodia they want to see in the next five years. Following this, they generate potential actions towards the achievement of these scenarios. Below are the solutions that each group proposed to address the problems they identified:

Group 1’s ideal was to live in a society where public services are nurtured, where information about education is widely accessible, and where educational facilities are adequately equipped. They wanted to see transparency in assessments and a move away from a dependence on national exams. They suggested an evaluation system be implemented to assess students’ creativity and innovation capacities. Furthermore, they highlighted their desire for active community participation in education. They also believed that parents should be motivated to encourage their children to take a positive attitude towards schooling and education. Finally, they want to see a safe, equal, and just society with no discrimination towards anyone, especially women, children, and indigenous people.

Group 2’s dream was to see all citizens have access to schools, hospitals, and clean cities with green spaces, and all live in happiness with a high quality of life, with equal education opportunities. At home, they wanted to see the elimination of domestic violence and the use of non-violent methods to deal with conflict. From an ecological standpoint, they wanted to see more people using non-plastic water bottles, as well as efforts to preserve green spaces and plant more trees, and a reduction in pollution of all kinds.

Group 3 talked about access and opportunities provided by the government for youth and civil society to build their skills through technology in education. They wanted to see a government that builds enough public schools nationwide and...
promotes policies to increase training opportunities at a national and sub-national level. They also believe that taking advantage of AI is key to the improvement of education services. They want to see a civil society capable of utilizing digital tools and technologies, one that promotes free access to digital workshops or trainings for youth, allowing them opportunities to participate in discussions on issues they are facing. They also want youth who have technological and digital skills to take part in the development of educational content and to engage in digital literacy advocacy. Furthermore, they want technology reach to extend to the general public, and for people to take advantage of technology to improve their businesses and to receive news and information. They believe that when people are equipped with digital knowledge and skills, they are less likely to fall victim to cyber-crime and any other pitfalls of technology.

Figure 3: Group three's dream of Cambodia in the next 5 years

Group 3’s dream was to see high-quality education, with children enjoying learning in school. This entails having the appropriate facilities including computers, libraries, first-aid rooms, laboratories, cafeterias, playgrounds, etc. They imagine children playing in playgrounds surrounded by nature, and teachers coming to school regularly.

2.2.4. SCREENING AND PROTOTYPE STAGE

After going through the human-centered design process from the empathy stage to the screening stage, each group identified one solution to each of the key problems they agreed on in the ‘discover’ stage. The five key problems are:

1. Quality education – general education

   a. Promoting a child-friendly school environment with playgrounds and green spaces for children to enjoy.
   b. Equipping schools with teaching materials and facilities, for example fully equipped chemistry labs.
   c. Employing a counselor or consultant to help students decide on their next steps in higher education.
   d. Mobilizing young people to undertake volunteering work in rural areas providing STEM education and language classes to children.
   e. Empowering and incentivizing contract teachers.
   f. Organizing charity events to mobilize resources to build schools and improve their facilities and to incentivize teachers in rural areas.
Some resources were identified to achieve these proposed solutions. These resources are:

### Indigenous peoples’ rights & education

Three key actions were proposed to promote indigenous peoples’ rights as follows:

- **a.** Empowering indigenous women, children and people with disabilities by organizing learning and sharing events for these groups. Indigenous youth to commit to being a role model in their communities.

- **b.** Strengthening their own skills and capabilities. Pledging to take advantage of learning opportunities by setting SMART goals so that they can contribute to their communities.

- **c.** Eliminating domestic violence in these communities. Providing education about domestic violence and human rights in order to reduce incidences of domestic violence.

Some resources were identified to achieve these proposed solutions. These resources are:

### Skillsets and capabilities

Key actions proposed to achieve progress in this area are as follows:

- **a.** Organizing face-to-face trainings in schools, places of worship and health centers on volunteerism and the importance of maintaining a clean city and environment with minimizing plastic waste.

- **b.** Organizing events to replant trees.

- **c.** Running experience-sharing sessions for youth in rural areas.

Some resources to achieve these proposed solutions were identified. These are:
Digital Literacy

The solutions proposed to tackle digital literacy are:

a. Strengthening individual digital literacy. Individuals can undertake self-learning and research by reading e-books, and attending seminars to learn from experts.

b. Creating content to share knowledge with others. The sharing can be done face-to-face and online using secure digital tools. The content has to focus on education in the form of edutainment.

c. Self-care. This is important for anyone exposed to online social media, as it can lead to feelings of inadequacy and social pressure when comparing oneself to others, and exposes people to abusive content and conversations. Self-care tips for young people include positive thinking, spending time in nature, undertaking regular exercise, seeking counseling or expert advice, and reconnecting with peers.

Lack of Financial Literacy

Agri-tourism is an avenue proposed by group 4 as a solution to the problem of financial illiteracy in their communities. They use the example of a market called ‘Kramoun’ where everyone in the community is invited to sell their local crops. This market helps local people generate more income to pay back their debts and also helps them diversify their sources of income. It can allow them to earn enough to support their lifestyle so that they don’t fall into a debt trap. This market can also be key to reducing the pace of migration.

Key steps required to establish such a market are:

a. Researching existing products in the area

b. Calling for meetings within communities and villages to propose and discuss the idea of establishment of the market.

c. Requesting locations within the community to set markets up.

d. Communicating with local people to identify the range of available products they can bring for sale in the market.

e. Discussing and deciding market opening days.

f. Using loudspeakers and social media to announce and promote the market, its location and opening hours, and the products on sale.

g. Assigning an individual to manage the market and monitor sales and income.

Some resources to achieve the proposed solutions were identified. These are:
2.2.5. COMMUNICATE STAGE

During the communicate stage, each group was asked to present their prototypes to their peers for feedback so that they can iterate their solutions.

Figure 8: Each group presented their solutions

3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1. CONCLUSION

This section describes the linkages between the challenges youth face in the community with the priorities and themes identified for the upcoming UNDP Country Programme Document (CPD). By completing all stages of the HCD process, participants were able to identify key problems within their communities and appropriate solutions. Interestingly, many development priorities raised by young participants have also been covered in the draft CPD 2024-2028.

The CPD shift one: accelerating inclusive growth, economic diversification, and human development consists of three building blocks: (1) human development and inclusion, (2) trade and economic diversification, and (3) financing for development. These three building blocks are comprised of various themes and sub-themes that the UNDP plans to implement. During boot camp discussions, participants also expressed the key development priorities already listed under this first shift. This serves to validate UNDP’s selection of themes and sub-themes, as they are exactly the issues that people face in practice. These development priorities relate to financial services, nutrition, the health system, WASH (including safe drinking water), poverty reduction and inequality, the future of work, education and skills, and debt. There is great concern about abuses in the workplace, with participants observing employers mistreating their employees. The participants also highlighted poor infrastructure and migration.

The CPD shift two: advancing climate action and nature-based solutions for growth and human security consists of three building blocks: (1) improving natural resource management (2) accelerating the adoption of a circular economy, and (3) advancing climate action for a low-carbon resilient society (including energy transition). During the discussion, participants raised many development issues that fell under this second shift, such as natural resource management and climate change. For example, they raised concerns on deforestation and its destructive effect on the ecosystem, water pollution and the health and livelihoods of local people. They also described how climate change adversely affected local people’s agricultural outputs which fosters migration. Participants discussed how the government and private sector should consider creating environmentally-friendly experiences for tourists using low-emission and affordable transportation and non-plastic food and packaging to protect the environment. Indigenous communities have been living in their communities for generations, so their livelihoods depend heavily on the natural resources in their areas. For them to benefit from natural resources and in order to prevent external companies from taking advantage of these, strong law enforcement and protection is required.

The CPD shift three: fostering an inclusive, peaceful and resilient society consists of three main building blocks: (1) strong institutions (effective, accountable, and transparent) as duty bearers, (2) agency and spaces for people’s participation, and (3) people-centered digital governance. Several key development priorities discussed at the boot camp fall under shift three. First, land reform and management for indigenous communities was one of
the key issues raised by youth as requiring government intervention, as many indigenous communities are suffering from the violation of their land and rights. Second, addressing gender-based violence is very important to youth, who have observed first-hand many cases of violence and harassment in their communities, especially against women and children. Third, strengthening the rule of law and access to justice is essential for citizens, especially vulnerable groups such as women, children, people with disabilities, and indigenous people. Fourth, access to information and sub-national decentralization and de-concentration (SDG localization, planning, and budgeting) were raised as key development priorities. For instance, rural people need to access information related to public health services, or local communities budget planning and decision-making processes.

Some other points fall under – agency and spaces for people’s participation. This consists of empowering people and creating spaces for participation, providing access to information, ensuring inclusion of young women and men (socio-economically and politically), and diversity and trust-building between groups. For example, participants pointed out that people in their communities do not have access to health or public event information. They are not able to participate in their community’s decision-making processes or public events where they can gain knowledge and engage with other people in the community. A few other important points were raised relating to digital literacy skills and the digital transformation of government and public services. Participants thought it was important to improve digital skills in society, especially for young people, who should have access to digital education in schools.

Besides, participants also brought up a few other developmental areas to be addressed within their communities, including forced marriage, tourism, poor agricultural product output, lack of skills, and social security. Finally, the issue of security was raised – regarding youth joining gangs and engaging in anti-social behavior, while destroying any future opportunity for education or employment.

3.2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The boot camp validated the priorities included in the draft UNDP CPD. The HCD process showed that participants place particular emphasis on the following issues, which are outside the remit of the UNDP mandate:

1. Reliable and affordable student loans. Partnerships between public and private banks should be strengthened for providing student loans for youth who need financial support to pursue higher education. Loans should preclude the need for collateral as these students have often low-income and need the additional funds to pursue their education. Such an initiative of more readily access to funds will help cultivate more human resources for the country and meet the market demand for skilled labor as Cambodia seeks to transition into an upper-middle-income country by 2030. Otherwise, young people are likely to drop out of school and migrate for work.

2. Digital literacy in education. Cambodia is embracing the ‘industry 4.0’ era, and its citizens must be equipped with digital knowledge and skills in order to remain competitive with other countries. To produce a technologically-savvy labor force, digital literacy should be integrated into the education system from primary to higher education. This holistic approach will help students gain skills and build a strong pathway for their upward social mobility and their ability to compete with other youth in the region and across the globe. Providing digital skills education externally or through private tutorship is not as effective as integrating it into the school system, as doing so takes time out of young people’s days that they could be using to build social connections with their peers and communities. It is therefore recommended that such education be integrated into the school curriculum. An important note, the educator and school administrator play a very important role in digital literacy, so providing them training on delivering this skill would be beneficial; but at the same time, care must be taken not to make them feel the burden of extra work.

3. Investment in infrastructure for skillset development for young people. More investment in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) schools throughout the country is needed to ensure that students are equipped with specialist technical skills. Investment can be made in school facilities, such as laboratories, equipment and machinery, and teachers’ compensation. To ensure TVET schools produce capable human resources, teaching technical skills alone is not enough. Soft skills such as critical thinking, teamwork, communication, and leadership should be integrated into the curriculum and students should be encouraged to engage in practical experiences through internships or volunteer work. A strong funding and monitoring mechanism is suggested to ensure the transparency of funding and quality of skills development.

4. Mental health should be paid attention to. Non-clinical mental health treatments such as community-building, connecting with nature, and collective care, have proven to be effective ways to help people facing these challenges. Collective care refers to working on a stigmatized problem with a group of people from diverse backgrounds. It is
worth noting that these people might be dealing with feelings of shame and guilt, and that they are in different places when it comes to participating and sharing. Hence, it is important to create a safe space with protection and safeguarding in place. Funding should be allocated to youth groups and local organizations to organize such mental health treatments to foster mental strength and wellbeing in the community. With regards to clinical treatment, the government and development partners need to work together to make mental health services affordable and accessible to everyone.

3.3. YOUTH FEEDBACK ON THE BOOT CAMP

At the end of the boot camp, all participants were invited to give feedback on the whole event as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I want to see more of:</th>
<th>I want to see less of:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>● Youth bootcamp and interactive facilitation like this allow young people to openly discuss, share with each other and feel heard.</td>
<td>● Plastic use at the event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● A two- to three-day bootcamp for discussing deep problems and solutions.</td>
<td>● Short-duration event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Share this opportunity with other young people because it is a great opportunity for us to express our voices.</td>
<td>● Short notice about the bootcamp information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Food and location like this</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Organize this bootcamp in various provinces and hold it more frequently.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>