

## **CAMBODIAN INFORMATION FOR TRAVELLERS**

**Introduction:** Emerging from a recent traumatic history, Cambodia is still one of the twenty poorest countries in the world. The majority of children, families and communities in Cambodia's population of 14,8 million people, live in desperate poverty and struggle to meet even the most basic needs of food and clean water without assistance.

Cambodia's social indicators are amongst the worst in Asia, and children are particularly vulnerable.

- The mortality rate for children under five is amongst the highest in the region, with 97 and 141 deaths per 1000 births.
- Only 50% of Cambodian children have been immunized for diseases including polio, tuberculosis. Without immunization, children are at risk of serious disabilities and death.
- With the highest rate of HIV/AIDS in Asia, it is expected that the number of orphans and vulnerable children may escalate to 140,000 by 2007.
- Facing extreme poverty, many children are forced to move to the streets, participate in hazardous labor, and risk appalling sexual exploitation.
- Many parents struggle to earn an income, and are distressed that they still do not have enough resources to provide adequate nutrition, education and health care for their children.

Despite desperate poverty, the people of Cambodia are forging ahead to build an improved future for their families, their community and their country.

Thank you for your investment in our vision of life in all its fullness for all Cambodian people. Whether you are an individual donor, prayer partner, international supporter, donor government, multilateral agency or local partner; your valued support is enabling the powerful transformation of people's lives.

**History:** The Kingdom of Cambodia was part of the ancient kingdom of Funan. Being the oldest Indianised state in Southeast Asia, its religion was Hinduism. Today, Theravada Buddhism is the dominant religion. Cambodia lies at the heart of Indochina, bordered by Thailand to the west, Laos to the north and Vietnam to the east. Cambodia occupies a land area of 181,035 square kilometers. Cambodia's two dominant topographical features are the Mekong River and the Tonlé Sap (Great Lake). There are three main mountain ranges - the Cardamon Mountains in the southwest, the Dangkrek Mountains in the north and the Eastern Mountains in the northeast.

**People:** The population is currently estimated to be 14.8 million, of which 90-95 percent are ethnic Khmer, making Cambodia one of the most homogeneous people countries in Southeast Asia. The rest of the population comprises minority groups of, Chinese, Vietnamese, Chams (Khmer Islam) and indigenous hill tribes (Khmer Loeu). Infant mortality rates are the highest in the region at 97 and 141 death per 1000 live births. Due to poverty, poor sanitation and disease, it is estimated that nearly one child in five dies before the age of five. Women account for 54 percent of the population. Approximately 50 percent of the population is under the age of 19.

**Language:** The official language of Cambodia is Khmer. Some of the older generation speaks French but English is now more popular with the younger generation. Written Khmer is based on the ancient Brahmi script of Southern India.

**Arts and Culture:** Khmer architecture reached its zenith during the Angkorian era (the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> centuries). Angkor Wat Temples in Siem Reap. Many of the finest works of Khmer sculpture are on display at the National Museum in Phnom Penh. Other major attractions of the country are natural features, historical, archaeological and cultural features. The historical features such as the Royal Palace, Wat Phnom, Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, Killing Fields, traditional markets, traditional music dance, drama, architecture, traditional crafts and contemporary arts are the main interest for visitors.

**Religion:** The official religion of Cambodia is Theravada Buddhism (Hinayana), with approximately 90-95 percent of the population being Buddhist. The remaining five to ten percent is mainly Muslim and Christian. Buddhism was introduced into Cambodia between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries.

**Economy:** About 70 percent of the population work in agricultural labour. For a long time rubber was Cambodia's primary export. This has been taken over in recent years by timber exports and garments. Cambodia's economic statistics are low by international standards, and they look worse when you consider that Cambodia's principal sources of foreign exchange are unsustainable: foreign aid and timber sales. Foreign aid has far and away been Cambodia's chief money-source over recent years. It accounts for most of the signs of affluence that the visitor sees in Phnom Penh. Out in the countryside, however, Cambodia remains a very poor place where most people's livelihoods are agriculturally based and reliant on the vagaries of the annual monsoon. In recent years, Cambodia has seen an increase in the garment factories. There are currently about 600 garment factories in and around the city of Phnom Penh and Sihanoukville, the port city. About 200,000 young women are employed in the factories making clothes and shoes for an average wage of \$45-50 per month.

**Education:** The Pol Pot regime of 1970s put a stop to educational development. Many qualified teachers perished at this time, so that by 1979 Cambodia had only around 3,000 qualified secondary teachers left. Through the 1980s and 1990s, the situation has gradually improved. Adult literacy rates vary from 30 to 70 percent throughout the country.

**Time:** Cambodia has one time zone and is seven hours ahead of GMT.

**Climate:** The climate of Cambodia is governed by two seasons. Cambodia has a tropical climate and although there are two monsoons, the temperatures do not vary greatly.

December/January: Daytime temperatures range from the 20's in the coolest months

April/May: The hottest months of the year 32 – 40 degrees

May/October: Rainy season (Humid and wet)

**Electricity Supply:** The electric power supplying in Cambodia is 220 V

**Health:** Care in what you eat and drink is advisable. Tap water is not drinkable. Take care to increase your fluid intake during your stay. Mosquito repellent is handy for evening

outings. There is no malaria in Phnom Penh or surrounding provinces. Vaccinations recommended for Cambodia are: Cholera, tetanus and diphtheria; typhoid; Hepatitis A; and Tuberculosis (should be administered six weeks before arrival).

**Greeting and Gestures:** The traditional greeting is to press one's hands together in a prayer-like gesture and bow. The western practice of shaking hands has become more widespread, especially among men. Women use the traditional greeting. It is considered acceptable or perhaps excusable for foreigners to shake hands with Cambodians of both sexes. It is considered culturally unacceptable to embrace a female companion in public.

Greetings & Civilities in Khmer:

Hello *johm riab sua/sua s'dei*

Goodbye *lia suhn hao-y*

Yes *baat* (used by men) *jaa* (used by women)

No *te*

Please *sohm*

Thank you *au kohn*

**Tippling:** Tipping isn't obligatory but is widely practiced in hotels and restaurants in addition to the service charges shown on bills.

**Do's & Don'ts:** Some rules worth remembering while in Cambodia.

Getting angry and showing it by shouting or becoming abusive is both impolite and a poor reflection on yourself.

It is improper to pat children on the head.

Never point your finger or the soles of your feet towards a person or a figure of the Buddha.

If you would like someone to come over to you, motion with your whole hand held palm down.

When picking your teeth with a toothpick after a meal, it is considered polite to hold the toothpick in one hand and to cover your open mouth with the other.

Women may accept something from a monk, but she should be careful not to touch him (or child-monk).

Always remove your shoes before entering a Khmer home.

**Dress:** Cambodians are naturally modest in dress. They do not wear shorts or short skirts. Visitors would be wise to wear comfortable and loose clothing, and bring a hat.

**Food and Drinks:** In Phnom Penh you can sample the best of Khmer cuisine. You also have the choice of excellent Thai, Vietnamese, Chinese, French and Mediterranean cooking. Rice is the principal staple and the Battambang region is the country's rice bowl. Drinking tap water is not safe. Mineral water is available from hotels and roadside. All well-known soft drinks are available in Cambodia.

**Worship Services:** There are multiple options for attending worship services on the weekends. Please contact the Hospitality Services for a list of services.

**Visiting the Angkor Temples:** While you are visiting Cambodia, World Vision Cambodia (WVC) recommends you take the opportunity to schedule a visit to the temples of Angkor. These temples are the greatest tourist attraction in Cambodia. WVC has a list

of preferred accommodations for the town of Siem Reap which is only a few kilometers from the temples. If you are interesting in visiting the temples Angkor, please contact **Mr. Sophalla Cheng** and Hospitality Services for more information.

**Public Holidays:** WVC's calendar includes national and organizational holidays. National holiday dates may vary slightly according to the Buddhist calendar. The following is the WVC observed holiday listing for calendar year 2010:

1. International New Year	01 Jan 2010
2. Victory Over Genocide Regime	07 Jan 2010
3. International Woman Day	08 Mar 2010
4. Good Friday	2 Apr 2010
5. Khmer New Year	14- 16 Apr 2010
6. International Labour Day	01 May 2010
7. Royal Plowing Ceremony	3 May 2010
8. King Norodom Sihamoni's birthday	13-15 May 2010
9. Queen's Birthday	18 Jun 2010
10. Constitution Day	24 Sep 2010
11. Pchum Ben Day	7-9 October 2010
12. Coronation Day	29 Oct 2010
13. King's Sihanouk Birthday	1 Nov 2010
14. Independence Day	09 Nov 2008
15. Water Festival	20-22 Nov 2010
16. International Human Rights Day	10 Dec 2010
17. Christmas Day	25 Dec 2010

## SECURITY GUIDELINES

World Vision Cambodia (WVC) has developed the following security guidelines for its staff and visitors. World Vision staffs hosting your visit are acquainted with local customs and travel security procedures in Cambodia - they are your best guides. A few general precautions and guidelines will help you feel secure and enable you to enjoy your stay in Cambodia.

We recommend you stay only in hotels specified by World Vision. These hotels are reputable and have good communication systems - essential in an emergency situation.

Please be aware that tourist areas are magnets for criminals. It is to your advantage to avoid looking like a tourist. Do not carry lots of jewellery, bags, cameras, and other valuable equipment with you.

Always travel in pairs. This is especially true once it is dark outside. You should not walk alone at night.

Be aware of pickpockets in crowded areas. Many pickpockets work in pairs, and one may attempt to distract you as the other steals from you. Pickpockets often work in pairs using distraction as their basic ploy.

Avoid large street crowds or gatherings.

If you carry a handbag, keep it close to your body with one hand always on the bag.

Do not carry valuables or too much cash in your purse or handbag. You may leave your passport and valuables with the hotel management or with our hospitality service staff. Please contact **Mr. Sophalla Cheng** if you would like to leave items with the hospitality staff.

It is best to carry a small amount of money and wear a cheap watch. Then if robbers approach you, you may hand these items over to them. We advise that when carrying money you should divide it between two or three pockets or bags. Pickpockets and robbers then have less of a chance of successfully getting all your money.

If you hear gunshots fired, do not go to investigate the sound. You should stay calm and keep a low profile.

A local practice is to shoot into the air when a fire has broken out or during heavy rain. These shootings work as a warning for people to stay away and alert the fire brigade. During heavy rains shooting in the air is thought to help stop the rain. When guns are being fired, stay indoors and away from any area where the guns are being fired.

Do not photograph Cambodian soldiers or police.

WVC is not responsible for any theft of personal belongings, personal injuries or kidnappings.

WVC has adapted the above guidelines from World Vision Corporate Security document "A Shield About Me" Safety Awareness for World Vision Staff.

## **HELP US PROTECT CHILDREN**

### ***Behaviour Protocol Guidelines From the World Vision International Child Protection Policy***

World Vision Cambodia is determined to stop the abuse and sexual exploitation of children.

We implore your help and diligence in accomplishing this task.

Focused on the safety of all children, in 2000 World Vision developed an international Child Protection Policy to reduce the risk to children from any form of abuse or neglect, including sexual abuse.

Behaviour Protocols are World Vision Cambodia's rules of appropriate conduct linked to the Child Protection Policy which protect children from abuse, while also ensuring staff and visitors are not at risk of false accusations of inappropriate behaviour.

As World Vision Cambodia has implemented programmes which are at the forefront of efforts to counter sex tourism and abuse of children, your commitment to the Behaviour Protocols helps us to continue protecting children.

Our work in prevention includes strong links with the police and government.

We are pleased to report that the government of Cambodia has imposed severe penalties for acts relating to child sexual abuse. Punishments range from mandatory sentences of 10-15 years in Cambodian prisons. International governments have recently backed these initiatives with new legislation to imprison offenders in their home countries for up to 30 years.

**WORLD VISION CAMBODIA**

**Behaviour Protocol Guidelines**  
**From the World Vision International**  
**Child Protection Policy**

Child protection is paramount to World Vision Cambodia (WVC). Therefore, all visitors are expected to assist us in protecting children by abiding by these Behaviour Protocols at all times:

- a) I will not travel to WVC projects unless I am accompanied by an authorized WVC staff member.
- b) I will always be appropriate and culturally sensitive in all interactions with children.
- c) When unsure of the boundaries of appropriate or inappropriate behaviour, I will seek guidance, without hesitation, from accompanying WVC staff.
- d) I will be entirely professional in my relationship with children, while at the same time demonstrating compassion and care in both actions and speech.
- e) I will not engage in physical conduct with children such as culturally inappropriate or unwanted touching, hugging, kissing, or blocking of normal movement.
- f) I will not stay alone with any children or minors, whether in the child's house or elsewhere.
- g) I will not revisit a project or a child without an authorised WVC staff member present.
- h) I will not share personal contact details (home, work or hotel address) with any child or their family.
- i) I will only provide gifts that are approved by WVC staff. I will not provide cash gifts directly to children or their families. However, I do understand that cash gifts can be channelled through the WVC office.
- j) I will not photograph, video or collect stories of children without the prior authority of WVC staff and approval from the children involved. (WVC has a standard approval form.)
- k) I will only photograph children when they are appropriately dressed and I will respect their dignity and right to privacy at all times.
- l) I will be concerned about the perception and actual nature of my interaction and relationships with all children in Cambodia.
- m) I will not use verbal or visual conduct such as derogatory comments, pornography, sexual advances, unwanted invitations, or use of power and authority to persuade a child.
- n) I will not disclose the name(s) of children, address or location of shelter to which I have access to any other party without the permission of WVC.

I have read and understood and I agree to adhere to the Behaviour Protocols of World Vision Cambodia.

The welfare of a child is of prime importance to WVC/VFC. Inappropriate behaviour toward children, including failure to follow World Vision/Vision Fund Behaviour Protocols, WVC/VFC has the right to stop the visit and take other necessary action as appropriate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Visitor (PRINT)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Visitor (SIGN)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date