

## 40. Leaving no one behind in Cambodia: The IDPoor poverty identification mechanism

*By the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany*

### Successful poverty reduction programmes need to effectively identify the most vulnerable

Approximately one in five Cambodians lives in poverty, with up to 50% defined as multi-dimensionally poor or vulnerable. While market liberalisation in the late 1990s led to rapid economic expansion, not all Cambodians benefited. Numerous social protection programmes for the poor were set up, including free health care and school scholarships. However, each programme and implementing organisation had its own criteria and process to identify beneficiaries. This was inefficient, confusing, and often did not reach the most vulnerable. Increasing labour migration, whether abroad or between urban and rural work, added complexity to attempts to identify and provide access to benefits for poor households. A tailor-made and locally relevant package is required to ensure that these households, and their most vulnerable members, are not left behind in the development agenda.

### A mechanism to identify and target those most in need

The German and Australian governments, through Germany's Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ), have supported the Cambodian Ministry of Planning to create and implement an overarching poverty identification mechanism. The resulting programme, called Identification of Poor Households or IDPoor,<sup>1</sup> initially targeted rural areas - where 80% of Cambodians live - and uses a hybrid model to combine the objectivity of a proxy means test with a participatory community-based selection process.

Government agencies and organisations that provide programmes for the poor now use IDPoor to target their beneficiaries, as required by a 2011 government decree. In this way, IDPoor is making a significant contribution in ensuring that those most in need are identified for poverty reduction interventions.

The IDPoor database contains close to 8 million household records including over 500 000 currently active IDPoor households (representing over 2 million people, close to 15% of the population). Each of Cambodia's provinces is re-assessed every three years in an effort to prevent the "data deprivation" that the World Bank has identified as a hindrance to many poverty reduction efforts. The programme achieved full rural coverage for the first time in 2013. Full national coverage is expected in 2019, thanks to an adapted IDPoor process for urban settings launched in 2017.

## A participatory selection process, capacity development and a focus on sustainability

IDPoor was designed collaboratively by the Cambodian government and key stakeholders, who focused on three important aspects: the participatory nature of the selection process, capacity development, and sustainability.

Over 30 000 people play a role in implementing IDPoor, from provincial administrators down to Village Representative Group (VRG) volunteers who conduct household interviews. About 1.6 million villagers annually take part in selecting their VRG. Between 2012 and 2014, villages elected 31% female VRG members, which not only helps to build women's status in rural areas, but also brings their insights to identifying poor households that may otherwise be overlooked - such as female-headed households. This participatory design means IDPoor is effective in identifying the poor and is widely trusted.

IDPoor also focuses on capacity development, with successful investments in human resource development as well as institution building and legislative recognition. Finally, the German, Australian and Cambodian partners agreed from the start that IDPoor's financing would progressively shift from donors to the Cambodian government. By 2015, Cambodia was fully financing rural IDPoor implementation, and urban implementation will follow in 2019.

IDPoor has, furthermore, evolved in response to critical challenges. Defining and assessing poverty is a complex issue, but it needed to be boiled down to a simplified questionnaire administered to villagers. That is why stakeholder involvement, as well as recurring training, are key factors to the programme's success. The questionnaire also had to be adapted to different identifiers of poverty between rural and urban settings. In order to increase data use, and thus IDPoor's impact, much effort has been put into making the data accessible online.

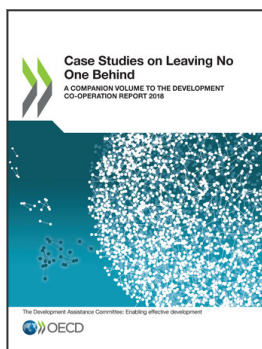
While the three-year cycle is impressive for a poverty survey in this setting, households that miss the IDPoor round in their village still had to wait until the next cycle to be evaluated for eligibility. Given migration and the rapid cycle of some households in and out of poverty, IDPoor needed a way to allow households to apply between rounds. Therefore, an "On-Demand" IDPoor mechanism was piloted during 2018. This included a mobile interface to directly input household data for quicker turnaround.

## What next?

The vision of Cambodia's 2017 National Social Protection Policy Framework is for IDPoor to develop into a single registry that contains data on poor households, information about all available social protection programmes, and records of which households are beneficiaries of each. This will help ensure no one is left behind, as it will further harmonise the identification of the poor and provide information on benefit programmes. The changes needed to make this a reality are under way, including a better identification code that will work across systems nationwide. As part of the database upgrades begun in 2017, an Application Programme Interface (API) layer is being added to allow interoperability and data exchange with data users' systems so that, ultimately, more programmes can efficiently offer services and benefits to those who need them most.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> For more information : <http://www.idpoor.gov.kh/>; <https://health.bmz.de/ghpc/case-studies/leave-no-one-behind/>; <https://youtu.be/k3VrKkTOB2Y>



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