

CAMBODIA



Cambodia has a troubled modern history—devastated by wars, plagued by extreme weather events, and caught in a seemingly endless cycle of economic development and democratic backsliding.


Country Context

Hun Sen ascended to the premiership in 1985. As Prime Minister, Hun Sen played a key role in the brokering of peace talks that brought an end to the Cambodian-Vietnamese War and has since used his role in the war's end to justify the political decisions that have kept him in power for the past 34 years. Though Cambodia has made significant economic gains under Hun Sen's leadership, that growth has come at the cost of government transparency, natural resources, human rights, and democratic freedoms.

How is the U.S. Involved?


The U.S. has provided support in areas such as trade and investment, democracy and governance, poverty reduction, and public health. However, bilateral relations have strained in recent years as China has taken on a more influential role in the country with financial investments free of the prerequisite conditions imposed by pro-democracy Western assistance.


Key Figures

 **118**
senior opposition party members banned from political activity in 2018

 **Ranked #161 of 180**
on the 2018 Corruption Perceptions Index

 **Over 25%**
of the population lives in poverty

 **70%**
of the population lives in rural areas and is dependent on subsistence agriculture

 **32%**
of children under five are stunted

On-the-Ground Perspective

- Threats by the Cambodian government to reject U.S. government assistance and the adoption of arbitrary and repressive laws on the activities of NGOs have made the operating environment especially difficult for those working in the democracy and human rights space.
- In 2018, the government dissolved independent newspapers, radio, and television channels and ramped up the policing of social media posts criticizing the government.

Responses and Actions

- USAID assisted in the expansion of the Health Equity Fund, a health insurance framework for the poor, to all health facilities in Cambodia. In 2018, USAID transferred management of the Health Equity Fund to the Government of Cambodia, giving Cambodia control over its future development.
- In 2017, UNICEF provided financial and technical support to the Ministry of Health, which increased the proportion of targeted health facilities within northeastern Cambodia equipped to provide services for severe acute malnutrition. By the end of 2017, these facilities treated 2,595 children.

References available at [interaction.org/2020globalsituationreport](https://www.interaction.org/2020globalsituationreport).

