

# **Cambodia's Cash Transfer Program and the Laid-off Workers' Economic Priorities in the Post-COVID-19 Context: A Labor Market Assessment**

**Tapas R. Dash**

---

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic had a devastating effect on the global economy. The rapid spread of the virus led to the disruption of supply chains and freezing demand, limiting the flows of travel, trade, and investment (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2020). The lockdown measures implemented across nations to control the spread of the pandemic triggered supply and demand shocks and posed severe challenges for people with low incomes (Dash & Dash, 2021). Almost 1.6 billion informal economy workers, out of a worldwide total of two billion and a global workforce of 3.3 billion, suffered massive damage to their capacity to earn a living (International Labor Organization [ILO], 2020). To mitigate the socioeconomic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the livelihoods of the poor and vulnerable, countries diversified their measures, and social assistance played a crucial role in rescuing targeted people. The social assistance program is short-term in general, and due to the unpredictable nature of the crisis, the extension over time was uncertain. To meet the needs of the people during the crisis, several countries expanded their social assistance programs in general and cash transfers in particular. Globally, over 2020–2021, cash transfers reached 1.36 billion people, which means one out of six people in the world received at least one cash transfer payment (Gentilini, 2022). In addition to the unprecedented scale of cash transfers, many beneficiaries' profiles show that 203.7 million workers received unconditional cash transfers, including 184 million in the informal sector and 19.7 million in formal jobs (Gentilini *et al.*, 2022).

To control the economic impact of COVID-19, on June 24, 2020, the Royal Government launched a new temporary social assistance program: “the Cash Transfer Program (CTP) for Poor and Vulnerable Households during COVID-19” (CTP-COVID) with temporary cash assistance using the Government's Identification of Poor Households Program (IDPoor) to support 560,000 poor and vulnerable

affected households nationwide (Office of the Council of Ministers, 2020). On the official launch of the CTP, the Cambodian prime minister announced that “the Royal Government’s main goal in launching this program is to improve the livelihoods of the poor and vulnerable people affected by COVID-19, including unemployed or marginalized people who have fallen into poverty” (Office of the Council of Ministers, 2020). As provisioned in CTP, any IDPoor equity cardholder registered with an administrator at the commune level received an account from an e-payment provider. Households that received temporary cash assistance include a base cash transfer per household of US\$20 in rural areas plus an additional US\$4 per household member and US\$30 for urban households per month plus US\$7 per household member. Additional benefits for households include households living in extreme poverty, the elderly, children, persons with disabilities, and people living with HIV/AIDS (Pagnathun *et al.*, 2021). To minimize the economic shock for poor households, the Royal Government developed a US\$1 billion package, including a US\$300 million cash transfer program (Pagnathun *et al.*, 2021). According to the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (MoSVY), within three years, the Royal Government disbursed US\$ 1,056 million for its cash transfer program to support 704,535 poor and vulnerable households hit hard by the COVID-19 crisis (Ministry of Information, 2023). Although US\$ 25 million was initially estimated as the monthly spending for this program (Office of the Council of Ministers, 2020), finally, the Government dishes out an average of around US\$ 35 million a month for this need-based social assistance program (Mathew, 2023). As of January 2024, the cash transfer program has benefited around 710,000 households (more than 2.8 million people) in the country who hold IDPoor cards, with over US\$1.3 billion in cash transfers across 42 rounds of payments (ILO, 2024).

The large-scale CTP implemented by the Government of Cambodia to effectively distribute cash to poor and vulnerable households during and after the COVID-19 pandemic adhered to the three principles of equity-equality-efficiency (Chhoeung *et al.*, 2022). During its implementation stage, the Royal Government successfully overcame several challenges, including many people waiting in line to withdraw cash. The technical working group formed and worked under the guidance of the Economic and Finance Policy Committee, led the implementation process; coordinated among local governments, local councils, agencies, and the poor and needy; reviewed the IDPoor database; established the digital payment system; and trained local government staff.

While the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the Cambodian economy unprecedentedly, triggering the first economic contraction in 25 years, which contracted the economy by 3.1 percent in 2020 (World Bank, 2021), Cambodians faced several economic and financial challenges, and the poor and vulnerable were the worst sufferers. The global pandemic reversed the poverty reduction progress; the

poverty rate, which dropped from 33.8 percent to 17.8 percent over the ten years from 2009 to 2019/2020, surged by 2.8 percentage points since 2020, indicating a fall of around 460,000 people below poverty income thresholds (World Bank, 2022). Although the Royal Government's success in COVID-19 containment was exemplary, much of its population remains vulnerable to shocks and risks of falling below the poverty line. Also, many young Cambodians face poverty and social exclusion due to poor employment prospects because of little or no access to education or skills training and low-quality education. According to the Youth Multi-dimensional Deprivation Indicator (Y-MDI), one young Cambodian out of five is deprived in two or more well-being dimensions at the same time, including health, employment, education, and civic participation, while 40 percent fare poorly in at least one of these dimensions (OECD, 2017a). To ensure job seekers adapt to workplaces and become employable, effective and purposeful interventions require a systematic assessment of the market needs. Although the pandemic has had a detrimental effect on Cambodia's economy by shrinking the tourism, manufacturing exports, real estate, and construction sectors, it has accelerated the shifts towards digitalizing economic activities with the potential to create productive work opportunities in the near future.

Given the limited studies, it is crucial to understand that the initiative has been a lifeline for targeted families, preventing them from falling into food insecurity, debt, or the sale of family assets while ensuring healthcare and children's education. This chapter, therefore, holds immense significance as it aims to contribute significantly to the integrated response of poor urban settings in Phnom Penh in the context of economic recovery and strengthening the Government's social protection measures. The laid-off workers, who lost their jobs during the pandemic and are currently unemployed or employed with a low level of income and workers in the informal sector not having sustainable sources of income, are the worst affected; to enhance the economic conditions of their families, it is essential to understand their priorities in the post-pandemic context. The research provides profound insights into improving the economic situation of families of laid-off and low-skilled workers by exploring opportunities for wage and self-employment. Thus, the study aims to identify the most viable economic sectors for potential employment and demand-driven occupations and skillsets required in the post-pandemic context for productive employment, underlining the urgency and necessity of this research. From policy perspectives, these insights will support purposeful interventions by the Government and private and non-government organizations (NGOs). The study will facilitate policy decisions for the economic welfare of the target group, potentially enhancing the livelihoods of Cambodia's most vulnerable populations.

As the introductory section of the chapter offers a broad perspective on the research topic, setting the stage for the subsequent sections, we present the pertinent literature, providing a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter in the following section. The methodology adopted in the study is presented in the third section, followed by empirical results and discussions. Finally, the concluding section serves as a culmination of the entire study, summarizing the key findings that have emerged from the research, including a deeper understanding of the implications and significance of the findings. This section also includes the directions for future research.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 COVID-19 and Social Protection in Cambodia**

Recognizing the significant role of social protection toward economic growth with equity and inclusiveness, in July 2017, the Royal Government endorsed the National Social Protection Policy Framework 2016–2025 (SPPF), which aimed to harmonize, integrate, and strengthen the existing social protection schemes to increase the effectiveness, transparency, and consistency of the entire social protection system (Royal Government of Cambodia [RGC], 2017). The social protection framework focuses on two main pillars, social assistance, and social security, and intends to ensure income security and reduce Cambodians' economic and financial vulnerability. Social assistance programs are publicly supported and targeted to the most vulnerable through conditional or non-conditional in-kind or cash transfers (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [FAO], 2019).

As a social assistance program, the CTP, which came into force during COVID-19 and continued for several months after the end of the pandemic, was based on the successful implementation of a cash transfer program for poor pregnant women and children under two years of age from families with IDPoor Equity Card implemented since 2016. The IDPoor Program, established in 2006, aimed to identify target groups for various poverty reduction interventions. IDPoor cardholders are supported through several means of government assistance to support livelihoods and promote social equity. As a standard tool, Government and Non-Government organizations must use IDPoor to target social services to poor and at-risk households (Ministry of Planning [MOP], 2024). Based on the Royal Government's IDPoor Program poverty thresholds, the identification of Poor Households Program classifies household income level using a proxy means test that assigns a "poverty score" to the household based on a range of information, including demographic data, number of children in the household, and debt. Accordingly, it classifies households as Non-poor, Poor (IDPoor 2), and Very Poor (IDPoor 1) (OECD, 2017b). Apart from IDPoor equity card-holding households, to bring other households under the umbrella of the cash

transfer program, it was felt necessary to identify and register households experiencing changes that made them newly eligible for IDPoor. As such, the already “on-demand” IDPoor (OD-IDPoor) process, which the Ministry of Planning initiated in 2017, required a nationwide implementation. This was completed in all of Cambodia’s 1,646 communes in May 2020, which included 191,000 newly poor households that became beneficiaries of the CTP (Pagnathun *et al.*, 2021).

To mitigate the devastating socioeconomic fallout and protect the poor and vulnerable against the adverse effects of the global pandemic, in addition to a base cash transfer per household in rural and urban areas, additional benefits were provisioned based on location, poverty status, household demographic characteristics, and level of vulnerability (Table 3.1). This was meant to ensure the principle of equity and equality of the CTP (RGC, 2020).

**Table 3.1:** Amounts of Payments under the CTP (COVID-19)

<i>Benefits (per month)</i>	<i>Areas</i>					
	<i>Urban Households in Phnom Penh (US\$)</i>		<i>Urban Households Outside Phnom Penh (US\$)</i>		<i>Rural Households (US\$)</i>	
	<i>IDPoor 1</i>	<i>IDPoor 2</i>	<i>IDPoor 1</i>	<i>IDPoor 2</i>	<i>IDPoor 1</i>	<i>IDPoor 2</i>
Family with IDPoor	30	30	30	30	20	20
Each family member	13	9	10	7	6	4
<i>Additional top-ups for vulnerable members</i>						
Children, 0–5 years old (per child)	10	7	10	7	6	4
Disability person (per person)	10	7	10	7	6	4
Aged person above 60 years old (per person)	10	7	10	7	6	4
Family member with HIV (per person)	10	7	10	7	6	4

*Note:* Exchange rate: US\$1 = KHR 4,000

*Source:* *Prakas* released by the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (MoSVY) on June 15, 2020.

The first study on the socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 cash transfer program on households in Cambodia conducted by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in Cambodia and the General Secretariat for the National Social Protection Council (GS-NSPC) was based on three rounds of interviews undertaken between December 2020 and June 2021. The study reveals a reduction of the unemployment rate by 0.57 percent in 2020 and 0.62 percent in 2021, including a reduction of the poverty rate by 2.7 and 3.4 percent in 2020 and 2021, respectively. Based on the Food Insecurity Experience Score (FIES) results, the cash transfer program protects poor and vulnerable households from further food insecurity, ensuring they have enough rice and other food. Further, the recipients of the CTP had more cash to spend on their necessities, and a comparison between the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of the program shows that the non-beneficiary households borrowed more from informal money lenders than the beneficiary households (UNDP & GS-NSPC, 2022).

The World Bank (2021) study also revealed that the transfer amounts were adequate to sustain a minimal living standard for most recipient households. While the average CTP-COVID benefit for IDPoor 1 was equivalent to 21 percent of the proposed national poverty line (44 percent of the proposed food poverty line), it was 17 percent of the proposed national poverty line (35 percent of the proposed food poverty line) for IDPoor 2 households. The Royal Government provided additional measures to support the private sector in mitigating the impacts of COVID-19 on businesses and workers in Cambodia. The suspended workers in the garment, textile, and footwear (GTF) sector received government subsidies of US\$ 40 per month and an additional US\$ 30 per month, which employers contributed. Also, the hotel, guest house, restaurant, and tourism workers received US\$ 40 per month, and in addition, enterprises provided financial contributions to their employees voluntarily or subject to their financial capacity (O'Connell, 2021).

## **2.2 COVID-19 and Social Protection in Other Asian Countries**

Experiences from other developing Asian countries also showed a positive contribution of the cash transfer program to the livelihoods of the poor and vulnerable affected by the pandemic. India's COVID-19 social assistance package, namely, *Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana* (PM-GKY), announced in March 2020, provided cash direct benefit transfers (DBT) and in-kind supports (IKS) through existing schemes for immediate relief to the vulnerable population. The country's social protection package of US\$ 24 billion at the federal level was almost half of the combined package of all middle-income countries. In addition, State governments announced additional measures. Of the US\$ 24 billion package, about US\$ 10 billion was for cash transfer, and the remaining was for in-kind support, primarily food grains (Thapliyal & Goli,

n.d.). Under the cash transfer package, INR 500 (US\$ 7) was transferred to the bank accounts of 200 million women every month, while 87 million farmers received an advance payment of INR 2,000 (US\$ 28) under a preexisting income support program called *Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi* (PM-KISAN). Besides, 30 million poor senior citizens, widows, and persons with disabilities received ex-gratia of INR 1,000 (US\$ 14) under a preexisting pension program called the National Social Assistance Program (NSAP), while 80 million poor women got advance payment of about INR 784 (US\$ 11) to buy LPG for household cooking for the next three months. Varshney *et al.* (2021) examined the impact of the PM-GKY assistance package on the procurement of agricultural inputs. The result reveals that the transfer package significantly alleviated credit constraints and increased agricultural investments. The farmers who received benefits from the PM-GKY scheme spent substantially more on procuring seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides. At the micro level, in a longitudinal study in one of the states in India, Bihar, from December 2019 to September 2020, Makkar *et al.* (2022) examined food insecurity before and after the lockdown and the cash transfer in moderating negative effects of food insecurity. The swift economic response to the pandemic crises using targeted income transfers successfully mitigated the potentially profound impacts of food insecurity. Households that received cash transfers had lower odds of being food insecure once the lockdown was lifted.

In response to the economic distress and livelihood crisis of the poor due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the fifth most populous country in the world – Pakistan, launched the *Ehsaas Emergency Cash* (EEC) program to deliver one-time emergency cash assistance to the most vulnerable. The EEC program covered 16.9 million families at risk of extreme poverty (Nishtar, 2021). Based on the EEC provision, each low-income household received a one-time payment of PKR12,000 (US\$75) to buy food items for four months (Markhof, 2020). A telephonic survey conducted during the program implementation showed that 97 percent of beneficiaries used the total cash amount during the lockdown, and 93 percent of the cash transfer was spent on sustenance alone (Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Division 2020, as cited in Nishtar, 2021). The survey reveals the necessity of cash transfers to meet the basic needs of the targeted families in the country. Similarly, to protect the most vulnerable people who need assistance during the pandemic, Indonesia built a fiscal stimulus package through expanded social assistance and increased benefit levels. The package includes the regular conditional cash transfer (*Program Keluarga Harapan* [PKH] – Family Hope Program) expanded to the bottom 25 percent of the population distributed monthly; social cash assistance, targeting families in the 30<sup>th</sup> to 40<sup>th</sup> percentile of the population living outside Jakarta and metropolitan areas, who received IDR600,000 (US\$43) per month not covered under PKH or Program *Sembako*; food assistance program *Sembako*, expanded to the bottom 30 percent of the population who received benefits increased from food worth IDR150,000 to

IDR200,000 (from around US\$10 to US\$12) per month. The others include food assistance to affected families in Jakarta and the metropolitan areas equal to IDR600,000 (US\$43) paid monthly, unconditional cash transfers from the Village Fund (BLT Dana Desa) IDR300,000 (US\$21) per month, although initially it was IDR600,000 (US\$43) per month, and electricity subsidies to the poorest 40 percent of the population (Aulia & Maliki, 2021).

The Royal Thai Government introduced new interventions and existing programs to expand social protection coverage during the crisis. The “*No One Left Behind*” program, a temporary wage subsidy scheme targeted at informal workers, farmers, fishers, and herders with a three-month wage subsidy of THB 5000 per month, paid from May 2020, reached almost 50 percent of the labor force in the country (Andrade & Borges, 2023). In addition, the State Welfare Card (SWC) program, a cash transfer program targeted at the poor and vulnerable, the Old Age Allowance, the Persons with Disabilities (PwD) Allowance, and the Child Support Grant were expanded. Further, a new cash transfer program targeted at poor and vulnerable, self-employed workers and farmers, the “*We Win*” program was introduced in January 2021 with monthly THB 7000 benefits delivered for two months and later extended for another month which covered 33.2 million people in the country (World Bank Group, 2021). All SWC recipients received monthly THB 1,000 in April – June 2020, THB 500 per month in October – December 2020, January – March 2021, and an additional THB 200 per month per person for six months from July to December 2021 (World Bank Group, 2021). Also, the ‘*We Love Each Other*’ program, announced on February 15, 2021, provided new transfers for formal sector workers. A rapid phone survey conducted among households in April – June 2021 revealed that the recipients of the “*No One Left Behind*” program benefitted, reaching 80 percent of the households (Belghith & Arayavechkit, 2021).

### **2.3 Potential Sectors for Employment**

Cambodia’s decades of stable economic growth and efficient macroeconomic management played an important role in creating jobs in promising sectors. Cambodia Job Outlook 2018 projected the most robust job growth in textile, apparel, and footwear; hotels and restaurants; trade; construction; finance; transportation and communications; and real estate and business (National Employment Agency [NEA], 2018). Further, the Job Outlook shows the expected opportunity to work in computer, Information Technology, and multimedia. However, the global pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on the Cambodian labor market, resulting from the closure of business units, including several other restrictive measures directed to control the spread of the virus. According to the ADB (2020), the sectors most affected by projected employment losses were construction, manufacturing, hotels and restaurants, transport, storage, and communications.

### **Retail Sector**

A sharp rise in Cambodians' disposable income, including the presence of a large expatriate workforce and a strong tourism industry, contributed to the growth of modern retail outlets, including shopping malls, mini-marts, convenience stores, and supermarkets in Phnom Penh city. Cambodia's retail sector has undergone a significant transformation within the past few years. Cambodians slowly and steadily shift from traditional to modern markets due to better hygiene, quality, and variety (Food Export Association of the Midwest USA and Food Export USA-Northeast, 2022).

According to the UK-based Institute of Grocery Distribution, the grocery market industry in Cambodia was predicted to reach US\$9.3 billion by 2023 (Food Export Association of the Midwest USA and Food Export USA-Northeast, 2022). By 2026, the retail sales in the packaged food market in Cambodia are expected to reach nearly US\$1.1 billion, a growth rate of 21.6 percent from 2022 (Food Export Association of the Midwest USA and Food Export USA-Northeast, 2022).

### **Information, Communication, and Technology (ICT) Sector**

Cambodia's ICT sector is seen as having exponential growth, including demand for the Internet, mobile phones, and other forms of technologies continue to rise. Based on the World Bank, International Telecommunication Union (ITU), and Global System for Mobile Communications (GSMA) statistics, by 2020, mobile connections in Cambodia reached 21.18 million, and mobile penetration was more than 126 percent. The Internet users were 8.86 million, and the penetration reached 52.6 percent by January 2021, which increased by 1.1 million (+14 percent) within one year. In addition to traditional voice and data services, additional digital services, including online office, remote video conference, remote education, and e-commerce, are more heavily dependent on the digital infra requirements of universal broadband and speedup broadband network (Khmer Times, September 21, 2021).

The rapid assessment of emerging needs for workers and skills in times of COVID-19 crisis (NEA, 2020) indicated that 38.9 percent of total establishments interviewed reported having introduced new ICT practices in the workplace in the last three years. There was an increase in the use of ICT in the ICT sector, and the survey showed that over three-quarters of the establishments within the sector made new use of ICT available in the workplace. Concerning future business opportunities, the ICT sector suggested the highest rate of business opportunities, with 32.7 percent of establishments interviewed in the sector. The top six occupations by sector that have experienced an increase in the use of or requirement for ICT skills were accommodation, construction, food and beverages, garment, footwear, apparel, ICT, logistics, warehousing, transportation, rubber, and plastics.

### **Manufacturing Sector**

One of the most remarkable developments from the economic reforms of the Royal Government was the growth of the country's manufacturing sector. Cambodia's manufacturing sector accounted for 31.3 percent of the country's economy in 2016, and the growth rate for value added in the industry was the highest (9.7 percent) in 2017 in Southeast Asia (ADB, 2018). At the end of 2018, there were 1,528 factories in Cambodia, with 922, nearly two-thirds of which were operated by weaving, bag, garment, and footwear manufacturers. The total income from the production of domestic and export products by these industries was about US\$ 13.17 billion in 2018, an increase of 23 percent compared to 2017 (Ministry of Information, 2019). By 2020, the number of garments, footwear and travel goods factories reached 1,218, engaging more than 808,223 workers/employees and indirectly benefitting about 2.5 to 3 million people (RGC, 2022). Thus, the garment sector continues to be one of the critical engines of growth, providing jobs and livelihood to millions in the country.

### **Construction Sector**

Construction is one of the four pillars supporting the Cambodian economy and generating employment opportunities in addition to the garment industry, tourism, and agriculture. Cambodia's construction sector attracted a total investment of US\$ 9.35 billion in 2019, up 79 percent from US\$ 5.22 billion in 2018. As per the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning, and Construction, against 2,867 projects in 2018, the ministry granted licenses to 4,446 construction projects in 2019, leading to an increase of 55 percent in projects. As per the ministry report 2019, around 1,081 construction and home design companies operated in the country and generated approximately 150,000 jobs (Xinhua, December 25, 2019). Further, Cambodia's investment in the construction sector also registered a remarkable rise in the first half of 2020 as against 2019. Despite the global crisis due to COVID-19, Cambodia's construction investment value in the first half of 2020 has reached US\$ 3.8 billion, indicating a 12 percent increase compared to the same period in 2019 (Cambodia Constructors Association, 2020).

### **Tourism and Hospitality Sector**

Over the last decade (except for COVID-19), there has been a continuous increase in the number of tourists visiting Cambodia. In 2019, the total number of international tourists visited was 6,610,592, whereas it was 6,201,077 in 2018. This resulted in a 6.6 percent growth of international tourists in 2019 compared to the previous year (Ministry of Tourism [MOT], 2020). In 2019, the contribution of travel and tourism to employment for Cambodia was 3,046.8 thousand persons, as against 2,911.6 thousand persons in 2018, which increased by 4.6 percent. Considering the

last two decades, the contribution of travel and tourism to employment in Cambodia increased from 905 thousand persons in 2001 to 3,046.8 thousand persons in 2020. Further, the contribution of travel and tourism as a percentage of Cambodia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2019 was 32.5 percent compared to 31.6 percent in 2018 and 15.1 percent in 2021 (Knomea, n.d.). However, due to COVID-19, the sector has drastically fallen with international travel restrictions and the closure of many international flights worldwide.

### ***Finance/Banking/Insurance Sector***

The steady growth of the Cambodian banking sector over the past two decades has been backed by a liberal investment regime and market trade policies. Although Cambodia's insurance sector is nascent, the rising acceptance of insurance policies by Cambodians as protection for the future is leading to an overwhelming influx of insurance firms into the country, creating numerous job opportunities for young people. Currently, the total assets of banking and financial institutions have increased by 17.4 percent, credit has increased by 19.6 percent, and deposits have increased by 12.3 percent. Further, the banking and finance sector continues to promote financial inclusion, with the number of deposit clients reaching 8.2 million accounts – an increase of 20 percent and credit clients rose by 3.2 million accounts, up 13 percent (Khmer Times, July 9, 2020). Thus, more employment opportunities are likely to be created due to the fast growth of the country's finance/ banking sector.

While studies in other countries have explored the potential for offering decent and stable employment in the post-COVID-19 recovery phase, including the specific skill set the target group requires, such studies in Cambodia are scarce. The few studies conducted in Cambodia are case-based and require a more comprehensive approach. Therefore, this study significantly contributes to the existing literature by examining the most viable economic sectors for potential employment, including demand-driven occupations and employees' required skills, and investigating the existing skills. Moreover, it delves into the potential barriers for the target group to acquire the skills needed for secure employment and the enabling factors that motivate the target group to acquire the essential skills for decent and stable jobs in the post-COVID-19 context, providing practical insights into employment strategies in Cambodia.

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Study Area**

The study is a collaborative effort, purposively selecting two of the Phnom Penh's urban area (Khans) for primary data collection. The selected communities are fallen under two Khans namely Khan Pou Senchey, and Khan Mean Chey.

### 3.2 Study Participants

The primary respondents of the research are the laid-off workers who lost their jobs during the COVID-19 global pandemic. As a qualitative study, from four target locations, we selected 120 households (30 households from each target location) and conducted in-depth interviews based on purposive sampling. As a non-random sampling, we used purposive sampling to select laid-off workers to meet our research objectives. Purposive sampling works well with limited samples and when the study selects particularly informative participants (Saunders *et al.*, 2009).

In addition, we conducted one focus group discussion (FGD) in each target area, comprising six participants. As such, four FGDs were performed in total with the participation of 24 laid-off workers to understand the economic challenges and perspectives of target groups in terms of the most viable economic sectors for potential wage and self-employment, including market-driven skills in the post-pandemic context.

Also, to comprehensively understand the current and future labor market, the study conducted key informant interviews (KIIs) with 12 private enterprise employers covering real estate and construction, food and beverage, tourism and hospitality, wholesale and retail trade, and automotive industries. The findings from these interviews, the survey data, and the FGDs provide a detailed understanding of the factors motivating skill acquisition in the labor market.

### 3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

The study used a pre-tested structured questionnaire during the survey to collect primary data from the target respondents. Also, we sought qualitative information from the respondents through open-ended questions in the FGDs to mark their understanding of the complex situation of the post-pandemic and thoughts on paths to overcome the crisis. In addition to the survey and FGDs, we gathered the required secondary data from different publications of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), United Nations Development Program, World Bank, Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF), Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training (MLVT), and others. This comprehensive approach to data collection ensures that we have a complete and accurate understanding of the economic situation of laid-off workers during and after COVID-19.

Data gathered from the respondents and their opinions are analyzed through a comprehensive blend of quantitative and qualitative methods, ensuring a well-rounded understanding of the study's objectives. Open-ended responses were coded to arrive at clusters, and percentage responses were tabulated. The study used descriptive statistics, and data were analyzed primarily through frequency tables and cross-tabulations to filter the required information. The study also used a thematic approach to examine the responses gathered from target participants, adding a layer

of depth to the analysis. Data analysis was taken separately for target categories and sub-populations (sex) before it was undertaken for the overall group of the study, demonstrating a comprehensive and well-rounded approach to the study's findings.

## **4. EMPIRICAL RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **4.1 Socio-Demographic Profile of the Study Participants**

Below is the socio-demographic profile of the sample laid-off workers in terms of their sex, age, marital status, education, skills, and income levels.

#### ***Gender Representation of Sample Respondents***

Our study reveals a significant trend in the gender representation of the sample workers. We observe a higher number of female (57.5 percent) than male respondents (42.5 percent), a finding that underscores the growing role of women in the labor market. The percentage representation of female respondents in the target areas ranged from around 50.0 percent to 60.0 percent, with the highest representation in Khan Pou Senchey at 61.7 percent (Table 3.2).

#### ***Age Distribution of Sample Respondents***

The study focuses on the age distribution of the sample workers, with a particular emphasis on the 31–43 age group, which constitutes the majority of the respondents at 52.5 percent. The lowest percentage is part of the oldest age group of 44 and above (9.2 percent). In all age groups, the percentages of the sample female respondents were higher than the male counterparts (Table 3.2).

#### ***Marital Status of Sample Respondents***

When considering the marital status of the sample respondents, it is notable that a significant portion were married (68.3 percent), indicating a stable and committed labor force. This is followed by about a quarter single (24.2 percent). The other surveyed workers were divorced (5.0 percent), and a few study participants were widowed (2.5 percent). Over half were female workers in both single and married categories (Table 3.2).

#### ***Educational Level of Sample Respondents***

A significant percentage of our respondents, 40.8 percent, had attained primary education. The next highest percentages were 26.7 percent and 15.8 percent, for secondary and high school education, respectively. The representation of workers from technical and vocational education was 9.2 percent, and the lowest, 7.5 percent,

had not completed the primary level. Furthermore, 63.3 percent of the surveyed respondents were unskilled. In the unskilled category, 65.8 percent were female, and 34.2 percent were male workers. In contrast, in the skilled category, a higher percentage, 56.8 percent, were male and 43.2 percent were female workers (Table 3.2).

### ***Income Level of Sample Respondents***

More than one-tenth of the surveyed respondents (11.7 percent) had no income, and 37.5 percent of them earned less than US\$ 100 per month. Also, the highest, 44.2 percent had a monthly income between US\$ 101 to US\$ 200. A small percentage of respondents (6.7 percent) had earned more than US\$ 200 per month. Among respondents of ‘no income’ category, the female representation was 78.6 percent (Table 3.2).

**Table 3.2: Survey Respondents’ Demographic Profile**

<i>Profile</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>
Sex	120	100%	69 57.5%	51 42.5%
<i>Survey Areas</i>				
Khan Pou Senchey	60	50%	37 61.7%	23 38.3%
Khan Mean Chey	60	50%	32 53.3%	28 46.7%
<i>Age Group</i>				
18–30	46	38.3%	29 63.0%	17 37.0%
31–43	63	52.5%	34 54.0%	29 46.0%
44 and above	11	9.2%	06 54.5%	05 45.5%
<i>Marital Status</i>				
Single	29	24.2%	17 58.6%	12 41.4%
Married	82	68.3%	49 59.8%	33 40.2%
Divorced	06	5.0%	– –	06 100.0%

<i>Profile</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>
Widowed	03	2.5%	03 100.0%	– –
<i>Educational Levels</i>				
Incomplete Primary	09	7.5%	06 66.7%	03 33.3%
Primary level	49	40.8%	33 67.3%	16 32.7%
Secondary level	32	26.7%	18 56.3%	14 43.7%
High School level	19	15.8%	08 42.1%	11 57.9%
Technical & Vocational	11	9.2%	04 36.4%	07 63.6%
<i>Skills Levels</i>				
Skilled	44	36.7%	19 43.2%	25 56.8%
Unskilled	76	63.3%	50 65.8%	26 34.2%
<i>Monthly Income Levels</i>				
No Income	14	11.7%	11 78.6%	03 21.4%
Less than US\$ 100	45	37.5%	31 68.9%	14 31.1%
US\$ 101 – US\$ 200	53	44.2%	25 47.2%	28 52.8%
More than US\$ 200	08	6.7%	02 25.0%	06 75.0%

Source: Field survey

In addition to the field survey, four FGDs were conducted which include participants stratified by sex, age and specific sub-populations: participants without work, persons with disability, informal economy workers, and participants with no/low skills and no/low education. Verbal consent was sought from all the FGD participants before the group discussion was conducted.

## 4.2 Level of Understanding of Social Protection Coverage and Satisfaction with Access to Services

Study respondents reported having access to social protection services during the pandemic and post-pandemic period. The majority of them (89.2 percent) were the beneficiaries who accessed special assistance during and after the COVID-19 pandemic (COVID-19 cash transfer for IDPoor/COVID-19 lockdown food package) and National Social Security Fund’s contributory member (85.8 percent) for informal economy workers. The level of understanding of respondents of social protection in Cambodia was assessed with a scale of 1–10, where 1 is “no understanding,” and 10 is “significant level of understanding.” The self-assessed mean value of overall understanding of the social protection landscape was 6.2 (male: 6.5; female: 6.1), indicating moderate to significant levels of understanding among the respondents.

The study also found that respondents were largely satisfied with the social protection services they received. The mean satisfaction score of 4.1 indicates a positive perception of the information provided about social protection schemes, the administrative process for enrolling, and the quality of benefits received (Table 3.3). This high level of satisfaction instills confidence in the system’s performance. Respondents felt that the services they received were timely and need-based, further reinforcing their positive experience.

**Table 3.3:** Respondents’ Satisfaction Levels with Different Aspects of Social Protection

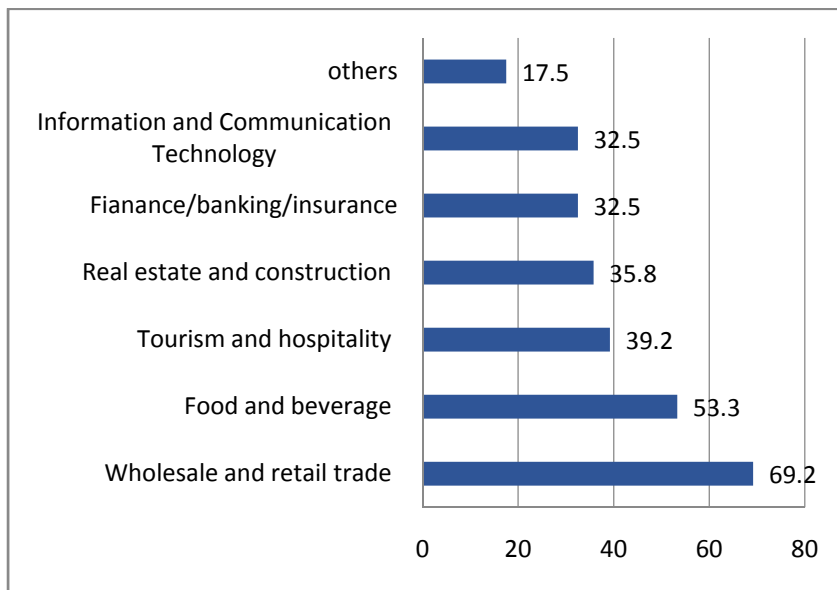
<i>Aspects of Social Protection</i>	<i>Satisfaction Levels of Respondents (f)</i>				
	<i>Very Dissatisfied</i>	<i>Dissatisfied</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Satisfied</i>	<i>Very Satisfied</i>
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
Receiving information about social protection schemes	–	2	7	67	44
Administrative process for enrolling to avail social protection benefits	–	5	13	64	38
Quality of social protection benefits received	–	6	15	63	36
Overall Mean: 4.1					

Source: Field survey

### 4.3 Labor Market: Supply-Side Analysis

#### ***Perceived Potential Sectors for Employment***

In the post-COVID-19 recovery phase, the sample respondents identified a diverse range of potential sectors that could offer them employment in Phnom Penh. The wholesale and retail trade sector, perceived by 69.2 percent of our target respondents, leads the way, followed by the food and beverage sector (53.3 percent), tourism and hospitality (39.2 percent), real estate and construction (35.8 percent), and others (Figure 3.1). Also, the diversity of potential employment sectors, as reported in our FGDs, includes the opportunity to work for new construction of high-rise buildings, the growth of automotive mechanics, and the opening of new business units, particularly restaurants and retail stores, food and beverages, and others that create employment opportunities.



**Figure 3.1:** Perceived Potential Sectors for Employment

Based on their education, skills, and experience, respondents demonstrated a diverse range of sector preferences. The top three sectors were food and beverage (63.3 percent), wholesale and retail trade (52.5 percent), and real estate and construction (32.5 percent). The primary data also revealed intriguing differences in the preferences of female and male respondents. For the female respondents, food and beverage was the clear favorite (76.8 percent), followed by wholesale and retail trade (73.9 percent). In contrast, the male respondents' top choice was real estate and construction (56.9 percent), followed by food and beverage (45.1 percent) and automotive mechanics

(37.3 percent). This diversity in sector preferences among the respondents is one of the key findings of this study (Figure 3.2).

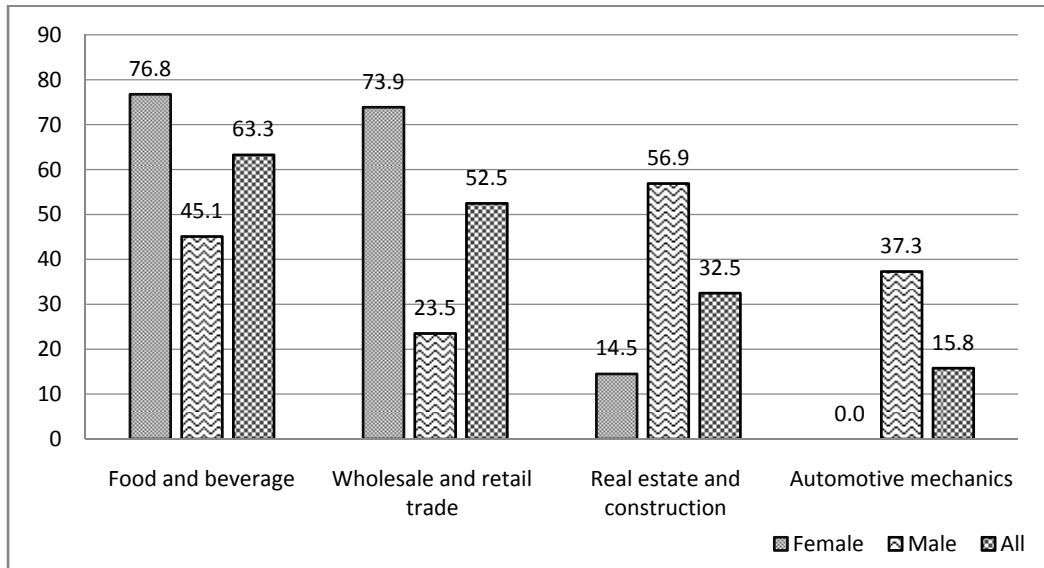


Figure 3.2: Gender Diversity in Sector Preferences for Work

### ***Perceived Technical Skills for Employment in Preferred Sectors***

The study participants identified the required technical skills to secure a job in their preferred sectors (Table 3.4). Notably, Phnom Penh has seen a significant surge in the food and beverage sector, with promising growth in the e-commerce platforms. This growth, further fueled by the COVID-19 and post-COVID-19 pandemic, has created a demand for workers with digital skills to enter the food and beverage industry. Among a number of skills, the common skills required are food and beverage management, product knowledge, quality checking, customer service, inventory management, and social media management, including mobile integration. Most technical skills required for the second most employment potential sector – wholesale and retail trade, were business skills, wholesale and retail sales, product knowledge, quality checking, stock management, and business relationships. Likewise, according to the respondents, the most demanded technical skills for real estate and construction were the use of tools and machines, construction knowledge and skills in structural design, building and engineering, and others. The growth of construction and other related sectors, including transportation, raise the demand for automotive mechanics who need to possess a number of critical skills. These include engine management, using scanners to check failures, power train systems, automotive electronic control chassis and body, automotive hybrid systems, and others.

**Table 3.4:** Perceived Technical Skills Required for Employment in Preferred Sectors

<i>Preferred sectors</i>	<i>Perceived technical knowledge and skills required</i>
Food and beverage	Food and beverage management, product knowledge, quality checking, customer service, inventory management, social media management
Wholesale and retail trade	Business skills, wholesale and retail sales, product knowledge, quality checking, stock management, business relationships
Real estate and construction	Use of tools and machines, construction knowledge and skills
Automotive mechanics	Engine management, using scanner to check failures, powertrain system, automotive electronic

Source: Field survey

### **Level of Knowledge and Technical Skills of Respondents**

Most respondents interested in working in their preferred sectors possessed little or some technical knowledge and skills, including a few; the preferred sector was new. More than half of the respondents (n = 39; 51.3 percent) possessed slight technical knowledge and skills in the food and beverage sector. However, more than two-fifths of respondents (n = 29; 46.0 percent) in the wholesale and retail trade were somewhat knowledgeable as previously some of them were engaged in the retail trade, a sector with significant employment potential. In the real estate and construction sector, only 7.7 percent of respondents (n = 3) were knowledgeable, and most (43.6 percent) were slightly knowledgeable. Also, most automotive mechanics (n = 10; 52.6 percent) had slight technical knowledge and skills. Finally, none of the respondents possessed

**Table 3.5:** Perceived Technical Knowledge and Skills Possessed by the Respondents

<i>Preferred Sectors</i>	<i>Perceived technical knowledge and skills possessed (f)</i>					<i>Modal Value</i>
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	
Food and beverage (n = 76)	18	39	12	7	–	2
Wholesale and retail trade (n = 63)	11	18	29	5	–	3
Real estate and construction (n = 39)	10	17	9	3	–	2
Automotive mechanics (n = 19)	7	10	2	–	–	2
All preferred sectors	46	84	52	15	–	2

Note: Scale 1 to 5: 1- Not at all knowledgeable, 2- Slightly knowledgeable, 3- Somewhat knowledgeable, 4- knowledgeable, 5- Very knowledgeable

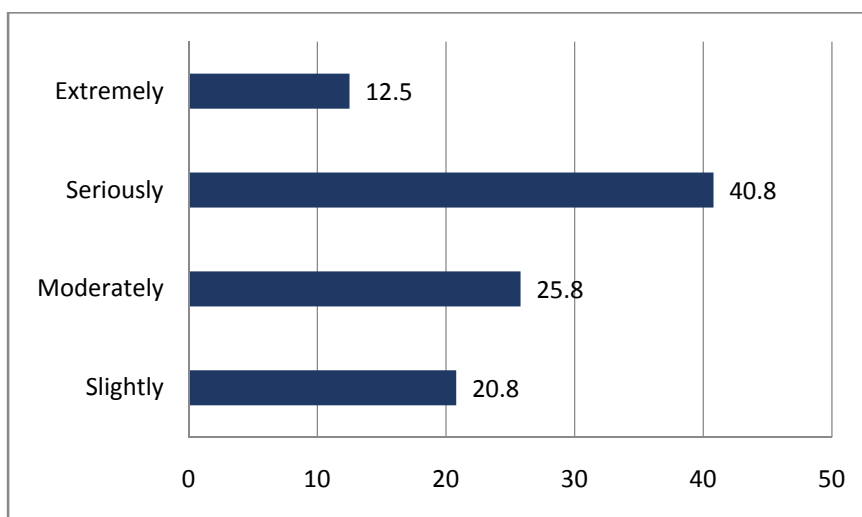
Source: Field survey

high expertise in their preferred work sectors. The overall modal value of 2 clearly shows that most respondents were slightly knowledgeable or had a shallow level of technical knowledge and skills in their preferred sectors of work (Table 3.5). The findings strongly underscore the urgent need to build the capacity of potential beneficiaries in these crucial sectors, which requires technical knowledge and skills for possible employment.

### **Perceived Levels of Skills Gap**

When we consider the skills demanded by the labor market and the skills possessed by our survey respondents, a significant finding emerges. Seven out of ten respondents ( $n = 82$ ; 68.3 percent) perceive a substantial skills gap. Notably, there are gender differences in this perception. 69.6 percent of female respondents ( $n = 48$ ) and 66.7 percent of male respondents ( $n = 34$ ) believe that the skills gap is substantial. This underscores the need for gender-specific interventions, which have the potential to bridge this gap, as the majority of both female and male respondents acknowledge possessing skills that are significantly lower than those demanded by the labor market.

Having perceived that possessing skills was below the labor market demanded skills, survey respondents self-assessed how their skill shortage affects the opportunities to secure a job in the market. The results are alarming. Although, one-fifth (20.8 percent) of respondents considered it would affect them slightly, around one-quarter of them (25.8 percent) felt moderately, and more than half of them ( $n = 64$ ; 53.3 percent) firmly realized that it would affect the opportunity to secure a job seriously or extremely (Figure 3.3).



**Figure 3.3:** Extent of Skills Shortage on Employment (%)

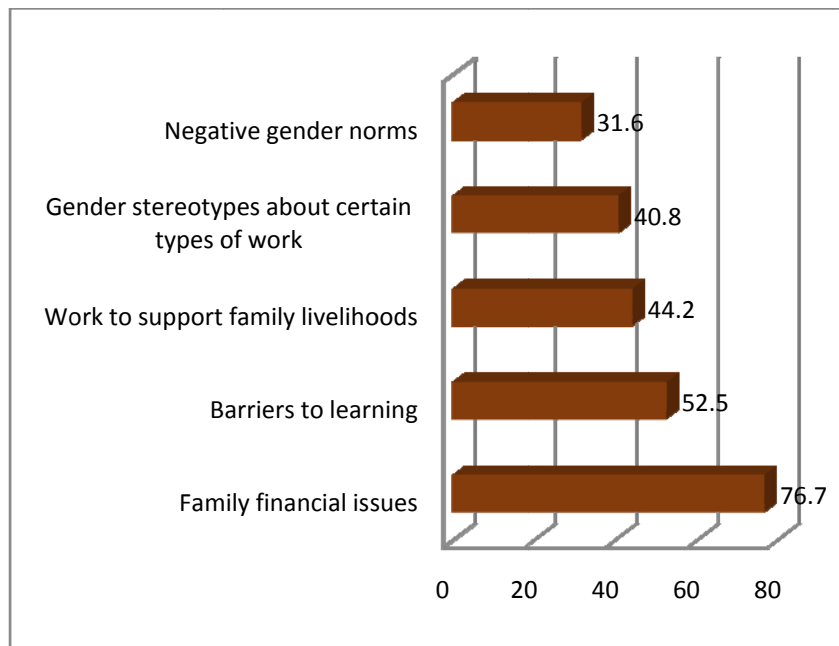
In the post-COVID-19 context, the FGD participants perceived the need to diversify and reinforce their professional skills. They admitted that potential employers would like to see several soft skills among them besides technical knowledge and hard skills. These soft skills include:

- Communication skills, particularly Chinese and English language skills, are key to success in the hospitality industries, especially in food and beverage and retail trade.
- Problem-solving skills are mostly cited as a requirement for the real estate, construction, and automotive sectors.
- Interpersonal skills and teamwork are universally required for all jobs, underscoring their broad applicability in the labor market.

In the present labor market context, participants felt the necessity of upskilling to optimize their performance and reskilling to grab other opportunities as they became available.

### **Possible Barriers to Acquiring Technical Knowledge and Skills**

The survey respondents identified several potential barriers to acquiring technical knowledge and skills training, which is crucial for securing a stable job. Family financial issues emerged as the most prevalent obstacle, with nearly eight out of 10 respondents (76.7 percent) highlighting its impact. Other significant barriers included



**Figure 3.4:** Perceived Barriers to Acquiring Technical Skills (%)

participants' learning ability (52.5 percent), the need to work to support family livelihoods (44.2 percent), gender stereotypes about specific types of work (40.8 percent), and the negative gender norms that hinder girls' education, as perceived by nearly one-third of respondents (31.6 percent). These findings underscore the need for immediate and concerted action to address these barriers (Figure 3.4).

### ***Enabling Factors to Acquire Technical Knowledge and Skills***

The survey respondents reported several enabling factors that could motivate them to acquire technical knowledge and skills in the post-COVID-19 context. As most respondents admitted, the significant enabling factor was the financial support to the family (93.3 percent). More than half of the respondents (53.3 percent) considered the work opportunities or the possibility of earning soon after acquiring the skills as the second most enabling factor (Figure 3.5). The other factors raised by the respondents were encouragement from families (46.7 percent), supportive attitudes of trainers and peer learners (34.2 percent), and provisions of hands-on practice (32.5 percent).

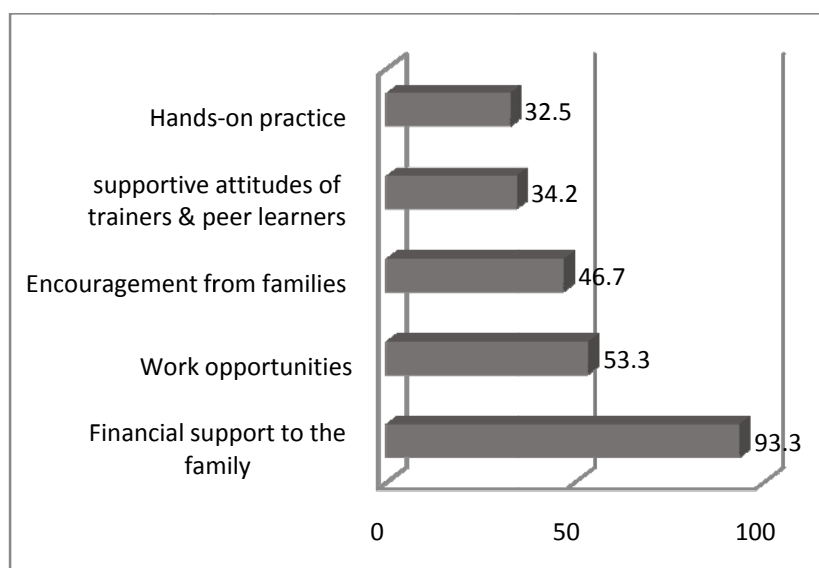


Figure 3.5: Perceived Enabling Factors to Acquire Technical Skills (%)

## **4.4 Labor Market: Demand-Side Analysis**

### ***Perceived Potential Sectors for Employment***

In the post-COVID-19 recovery phase, sample enterprises have identified a wide range of sectors that could offer potential employment in Phnom Penh. The top

three industries they perceive as having the most potential include real estate and construction (66.7 percent), food and beverage (58.3 percent), and wholesale and retail trade (58.3 percent). Additionally, tourism and hospitality (50.0 percent), finance and banking (41.7 percent), online retail trade (41.7 percent), and others (33.3 percent) have also been cited as potential job providers in the post-pandemic context. This diversity of sectors provides a broad range of opportunities for job seekers.

### ***Job-Specific Skills and Soft Skills***

Most enterprises acknowledge that job seekers must possess not only adequate knowledge and technical skills in their domain area, but also a range of soft skills. For instance, in the field of automotive mechanics, enterprises require skills such as gasoline and diesel engines, injection control systems of both electronic gasoline and electronic diesel engines, using scanners to check for failure in automobiles, battery charging systems, ignition systems, starter and preheating system, automatic gearbox, brake system, suspension system, steering system, and others. Similarly, enterprises installing solar panels on rooftops or other places require their workers to understand solar panel technology and their ability to safely install and maintain the panels. Some of the skills needed by them include photovoltaic (PV) systems (panels and other equipment that make up a solar power system), using power tools (to cut, shape, and connect solar panels), solar energy systems (for proper installation of panels, fixing batteries into a system/connecting inverter to panels, and others). In addition to these technical skills, knowledge and skills about roofing and safety standards are highly required. However, it is not just about hard skills. Job seekers must also possess soft skills. Communication skills are crucial for explaining complex technical issues to non-technical team members, problem-solving skills are essential for troubleshooting and finding solutions to unexpected problems, interpersonal skills are critical for building relationships with colleagues and clients, and teamwork is necessary for collaborating on complex projects. According to the enterprises, these soft skills are increasingly recognized as essential for success in the workplace.

In addition, enterprises cited that the experience required for a particular job depends on its position and level. According to them, various positions require different levels of experience, which become increasingly necessary for higher-skilled jobs. For instance, at the entry-level, most jobs do not need experience as new entrants can learn from their senior peers, including attending the enterprise's in-house training and development programs. Enterprises also expressed that what matters more than the experience level is a good work attitude and communication skills.

### **Employment-Related Challenges Faced by Enterprises and Measures to Tackle Them**

The interviewed enterprises were currently confronted with employment-related challenges involving hard and soft skills. Soft skills are critical, including workers' attitudes, honesty, work ethic, and behavior. These skills are not just desirable, but essential for a productive workforce. Enterprises suggested various measures to tackle these challenges (Table 3.6).

**Table 3.6: Employment-Related Challenges and Suggested Measures**

<i>Area of Challenges</i>	<i>Challenges Details</i>	<i>Measures</i>
Hard skills	Limited/poor job-specific knowledge, no exposure to practical situations, lack of/limited experience	Building capacity, allowing learning from seniors and peers, enabling to work in a team, monitoring job performance, providing continuous feedback
Soft skills	Ineffective communication, poor work attitudes-lazy and misuse of working hours through Facebook; lack of creativity	Building soft skills, conducting meetings and open discussions, encouraging to meet job expectations, monitoring working hours
Honesty and work ethic	Unethical-sharing confidential information to third parties, remaining absent from work without permission, lack of commitment to meeting enterprise expectations	Sharing information about unethical practices and the consequence of lapses, tightening rules and regulations in the enterprises, providing opportunities for open discussions with supervisors
Turnover	Leaving the job with immediate notice and after being groomed	Stating employment-related requirements clearly before the appointment, informing legal consequences in the event of a breach of contract

*Source:* Key informant interviews

## **5. CONCLUSION**

Despite the devastating impact of COVID-19 on the livelihoods of millions, particularly the poor and vulnerable, the Royal Government of Cambodia's CTP played a crucial role in effectively distributing cash during and after the pandemic. This initiative was a lifeline for rural and urban households, providing a much-needed

safety net. The adaptability and resilience of the Cambodian workforce were evident as they strove to become employable, even in the face of job losses and limited employment opportunities due to a lack of education and market-demanded skills. This resilience is a source of inspiration and hope in the context of the labor market's supply and demand dynamics.

The supply side of the labor market reveals laid-off workers' perceived potential employment sectors, including wholesale and retail trade, food and beverage, tourism and hospitality, real estate and construction, and others. Their preferences were based on their educational level, technical skills, and experience. The study respondents' preferred sectors to work include food and beverage, wholesale and retail trade, real estate and construction, and automotive mechanics. Most respondents had little technical knowledge and skills in their preferred work sectors, underscoring the need to build their capacity for potential employment. Among the possible barriers to acquiring technical knowledge and skills, family financial issues topped the list, followed by the learning ability of the respondents.

The demand side of the labor market shows enterprises' three most perceived sectors that offer potential employment in the post-pandemic context, including real estate and construction, food and beverage, and wholesale and retail trade. Most enterprises firmly acknowledge that job seekers must possess adequate knowledge, technical skills, and a range of soft skills to meet their requirements and expectations. Further, a certain level of experience, including a good work attitude and communication skills, is required in the workplace.

In the post-COVID-19 context, workers must adapt to the changing labor market requirements. Laid-off workers must diversify and reinforce their professional skills, including soft skills. These soft skills, often overlooked, are crucial for success in the workplace. Based on labor market demand, workers need upskilling to optimize their performance and reskilling to grab employment opportunities. A holistic approach to skills development, including soft skills, is essential for a successful labor market recovery, ensuring that workers are well-informed and prepared for the challenges ahead.

This study is not free from limitations. First, the study focused on laid-off workers in purposively selected Phnom Penh's urban areas for primary data collection. Therefore, the study findings may not be generalizable to other locations. However, it is assumed that similar results will be expected in other urban areas with comparable socio-economic environments. Future studies in this direction should extend it to different urban communities. Despite limitations, as a micro-level study, in the post-pandemic context, the empirical findings of this study have implications for the government and non-governmental organizations, including the private sector for appropriate interventions. Although the social protection schemes benefit the poor

and vulnerable sections of society and protect them from falling back into poverty, mitigating the impacts of the pandemic on laid-off workers demands evidence-based research, which the study has attempted to do.

## REFERENCES

- Andrade, M., & Borges, T. (2023). Where are the social protection responses to COVID-19 now? *Socialprotection.org*. <https://socialprotection.org/discover/blog/where-are-social-protection-responses-covid-19-now>
- Asian Development Bank. (2018). *Asian Development Outlook 2018: How technology affects jobs*. <https://www.adb.org/publications/asian-development-outlook-2018-how-technology-affects-jobs>
- Asian Development Bank. (2020). *Employment and poverty impact assessment: Cambodia. COVID-19 active response and expenditure support program*. <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/linked-documents/54195-001-sd-03.pdf>
- Aulia, F., & Maliki. (2021). How to overcome the impact of COVID-19 on poverty in Indonesia? *Policy in Focus – What's next for social protection in light of COVID-19: country responses*, 18(1), 43–45. [https://ipcig.org/sites/default/files/pub/en/PIF47\\_What\\_s\\_next\\_for\\_social\\_protection\\_in\\_light\\_of\\_COVID\\_19.pdf](https://ipcig.org/sites/default/files/pub/en/PIF47_What_s_next_for_social_protection_in_light_of_COVID_19.pdf)
- Belghith, N. B. H., & Arayavechkit, T. (2021). Impact of COVID-19 on Thailand's households – Insights from a rapid phone survey. *East Asia & Pacific on the Rise. World Bank Blogs*. Nov. 29, 2021. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/eastasiapacific/impact-covid-19-thailands-households-insights-rapid-phone-survey>
- Cambodia Constructors Association. (2020, July 7). Cambodia's construction investment reached US\$4 billion in H1 2020, a 13% increase. <https://construction-property.com/cambodias-construction-investment-reached-us4-billion-in-h1-2020-a-13-increase/>
- Chhoeung, N., Chrea, S., & Nguyen, N. (2022). Cambodia's cash transfer program during COVID-19. ADBI Development Case Study No. 2022-5 (December), Asian Development Bank Institute. <https://doi.org/10.56506/RRMZ8095>
- Dash, T. R., & Dash, S. (2021). Economic conditions of the Cambodian urban informal workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. In T. R. Dash & K. P. Charman (Eds.), *COVID-19: The economy and society* (pp. 29–52). Allied Publishers Pvt. Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.62458/CamEd/OAR/Symposium/2021/29-52>
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. (2019). *Research summary: Promoting greater coherence between small-scale fisheries and social protection policies, mechanisms and programs in Cambodia*. <https://www.fao.org/3/ca4836en/ca4836en.pdf>
- Food Export Association of the Midwest USA and Food Export USA-Northeast. (2022). <https://www.foodexport.org/export-insights/market-and-country-profiles/cambodia-country-profile>
- Gentilini, U. (2022). Cash transfers in pandemic times: Evidence, practices, and implications from the largest scale up in history. World Bank Group. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099800007112236655/pdf/P17658505ca3820930a254018e229a30bf8.pdf>
- Gentilini, U., Almenfi, M., TMM Iyengar, H., Okamura, Y., Downes, J. A., Dale, P., Weber, M., Newhouse, D., Rodriguez Alas, C., Kamran, M., Mujica, I., Fontenez, M., Ezzat, M.,

- Asieduah, S., Martinez, V., Hartley, G., Demarco, G., Abels, M., Zafar, U., Urteaga, E., Valleriani, G., Muhindo, J., & Aziz, S. (2022a). Social protection and jobs responses to COVID-19: A real-time review of country measures. World Bank, Version 16 (February 2). <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/110221643895832724/pdf/Social-Protection-and-Jobs-Responses-to-COVID-19-A-Real-Time-Review-of-Country-Measures.pdf>
- International Labor Organization. (2018). Cambodian Garment and Footwear Sector Bulletin Issue 7. June 2018. [file:///C:/Users/Staffs/Downloads/wcms\\_631686%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/Staffs/Downloads/wcms_631686%20(1).pdf)
- International Labor Organization. (2020, April). COVID-19: Stimulating the economy and employment: *As job losses escalate, nearly half of global workforce at risk of losing livelihoods*. <https://www.ilo.org/resource/news/ilo-job-losses-escalate-nearly-half-global-workforce-risk-losing-0>
- International Labor Organization. (2024). *Situation and priorities: Social protection situation*. <https://www.social-protection.org/gimi/ShowCountryProfile.action?iso=KH>
- Khmer Times. (2020, July 9). *Finance sector in good shape: NBC*. <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/742892/finance-sector-in-good-shape-nbc/>
- Khmer Times. (2021, September 21). *National ICT infra boosts digital Cambodia transformation*. <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50939113/national-ict-infra-boosts-digital-cambodia-transformation/>
- Knomea. (n.d.) *Cambodia – Contribution of travel and tourism to employment as a share of GDP*. <https://knoema.com/atlas/Cambodia/topics/Tourism/Travel-and-Tourism-Total-Contribution-to-Employment/Contribution-of-travel-and-tourism-to-employment-percent-of-GDP>
- Makkar, S., Manivannan, J. R., Swaminathan, S., Travasso, S. M., John, A. T., Webb, P., Kurpad, A. V., & Thomas, T. (2022). Role of cash transfers in mitigating food insecurity in India during the COVID-19 pandemic: A longitudinal study in the Bihar state. *BMJ Open*, 12(6), e060624. doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2021-060624
- Markhof, Y. (2020). *Pakistan's social protection response to the COVID-19 pandemic: The adequacy of Ehsaas Emergency Cash and the road ahead*. Working paper: 188, December, 2020. International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG). [https://ipcig.org/sites/default/files/pub/en/WP188\\_Pakistan\\_s\\_social\\_protection\\_response\\_to\\_the\\_COVID\\_19.pdf](https://ipcig.org/sites/default/files/pub/en/WP188_Pakistan_s_social_protection_response_to_the_COVID_19.pdf)
- Mathew, M. (2023, July 6). \$1.1B disbursed under COVID-19 cash transfer scheme. *Khmer Times*. <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/501319678/1-1b-disbursed-under-covid-19-cash-transfer-scheme/#:~:text=The%20Royal%20Government%20of%20Cambodia,reached%20three%20years%20last%20week>
- Ministry of Information. (2019, January 17). *Higher number of factories opened in 2018*. <https://www.information.gov.kh/detailnews/261132>
- Ministry of Information. (2023, May 25). *Government spends over US\$ 1 billion for cash transfer programme*. <https://www.information.gov.kh/articles/105618>
- Ministry of Planning. (2024). *What does IDPoor 1 and IDPoor 2 mean?* Department of Identification of Poor Households. <https://idpoor.gov.kh/en/faqs/what-does-idpoor-1-and-idpoor-2-mean>
- Ministry of Tourism. (2020). *Tourism statistics report February 2020*. Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

- National Employment Agency. (2018, May). *Cambodia Job Outlook 2018*. National Employment Agency, Cambodia.
- National Employment Agency. (2020, December). *Rapid assessment of emerging needs for workers and skills in times of COVID-19 crisis*. National Employment Agency, Cambodia. file:///C:/Users/Staffs/Downloads/wcms\_840955.pdf
- Nishtar, S. (2021). Tackling poverty amidst COVID-19: How Pakistan’s emergency cash programme averted an economic catastrophe. *Policy in Focus*, 18(1), 37-39. [https://ipcig.org/sites/default/files/pub/en/PIF47\\_What\\_s\\_next\\_for\\_social\\_protection\\_in\\_light\\_of\\_COVID\\_19.pdf](https://ipcig.org/sites/default/files/pub/en/PIF47_What_s_next_for_social_protection_in_light_of_COVID_19.pdf)
- OECD Development Centre. (2017a). *Youth well-being policy review of Cambodia*. EU-OECD Youth Inclusion Project. <https://www.oecd.org/development/inclusivesocietiesanddevelopment/Youth-well-being-policy-review-Cambodia.pdf>
- Office of the Council of Ministers. (2020). *Selected comments Samdech Techo Hun Sen, official launch of cash transfer program for poor and vulnerable households during COVID-19*. <https://pressocm.gov.kh/en/archives/66499>
- O’Connell, C. (2021, July 5). *Cambodia: Additional measures to support private sector workers & revive the post-covid-19 economy (Round 9)*. Legal and Tax Updates. DFDL. <https://www.dfdl.com/insights/legal-and-tax-updates/cambodia-additional-measures-to-support-private-sector-workers-revive-the-post-covid-19-economy-round-9/>
- Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2017b). *Social protection system review of Cambodia*, OECD Development Pathways. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264282285-en>
- Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2020, May). *OECD policy responses to Coronavirus (COVID-19): COVID-19 crisis response in ASEAN member states*. <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/covid-19-crisis-response-in-asean-member-states-02f828a2>
- Pagnathun, T., Cerceau, S., & Riel, de E. (2021). Cambodia’s social protection response to COVID-19. *Policy in Focus*, 18(1), 40–42. [https://ipcig.org/sites/default/files/pub/en/PIF47\\_What\\_s\\_next\\_for\\_social\\_protection\\_in\\_light\\_of\\_COVID\\_19.pdf](https://ipcig.org/sites/default/files/pub/en/PIF47_What_s_next_for_social_protection_in_light_of_COVID_19.pdf)
- Royal Government of Cambodia. (2017). *National Social Protection Policy Framework 2016–2025*. <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/linked-documents/cam-53308-001-tar-ld-02.pdf>
- Royal Government of Cambodia. (2020). *Sub Decree on the implementation of the Cash Assistance Program for poor and vulnerable households during the COVID-19 pandemic* (in Khmer). [https://data.opendevdevelopmentcambodia.net/laws\\_record/sub-decree-no-88-on-the-implementation-of-the-cash-assistance-program-for-poor-and-vulnerable-famil](https://data.opendevdevelopmentcambodia.net/laws_record/sub-decree-no-88-on-the-implementation-of-the-cash-assistance-program-for-poor-and-vulnerable-famil)
- Royal Government of Cambodia. (2022). *Cambodia garment, footwear and travel goods (GFT) sector development strategy 2022–2027*. Supreme National Economic Council.
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2009). *Research methods for business students*. Pearson Education.

- Thapliyal, M., & Goli, V. (n.d.). *How India is securing its G2P beneficiaries from COVID-19 - Lessons for other countries to create a G2P delivery platform*. MicroSave Consulting. [https://www.microsave.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/200507\\_How-India-is-securing-its-G2P-beneficiaries-from-COVID-19.pdf](https://www.microsave.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/200507_How-India-is-securing-its-G2P-beneficiaries-from-COVID-19.pdf)
- United Nations Development Programme, & the General Secretariat for the National Social Protection Council. (2022, May). *Socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 Cash Transfer Programme in Cambodia: Micro and macro-level evaluations*. [https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-07/Economic%20Report%20July%202022\\_Right%20Cover.pdf](https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-07/Economic%20Report%20July%202022_Right%20Cover.pdf)
- Varshney, D., Kumar, A., Mishra, A.K., Rashid, S., & Joshi, P.K. (2021). India's COVID-19 social assistance package and its impact on the agriculture sector. *Agricultural Systems*, 189, 103049. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.agsy.2021.103049>
- World Bank. (2021, June). *Global economic prospects*. <https://doi.org/10.1596/978-1-4648-1665-9>
- World Bank. (2021, June). *An assessment of Cambodia's Cash Transfer Program for the poor and vulnerable households during COVID-19*. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/661201624622956583/pdf/An-Assessment-of-Cambodia-s-Cash-Transfer-Program-for-the-Poor-and-Vulnerable-Households-During-COVID-19.pdf>
- World Bank. (2022, November). *Pandemic checks Cambodia's progress on poverty* [Press Release]. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/11/28/pandemic-check-s-cambodia-s-progress-on-poverty>
- World Bank. (2024). The World Bank in Cambodia – Overview. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/cambodia/overview>
- World Bank Group. (2021, July). *Thailand economic monitor: The road to recovery*. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/260291626180534793/pdf/Thailand-Economic-Monitor-The-Road-to-Recovery.pdf>
- Xinhua. (2019, December 25). *Investment in Cambodia's construction sector up 79 pct in 2019*. [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-12/25/c\\_138657076.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-12/25/c_138657076.htm)

