

# PROFILE: CAMBODIA



**Scarred by genocide in the late 20th century, Cambodia has experienced economic growth in recent years. But the country's rural and urban poor are seeing few of the benefits.**

In just four years, Pol Pot's paranoid Khmer Rouge regime killed 1.7 million Cambodians – through overwork, starvation and execution. The regime collapsed in 1979, but a decade of conflict with neighbouring Vietnam ensued.

A generation later, unprocessed traumas play out in the form of fatalism and a lack of social cohesion and trust. Women's unequal cultural status feeds high levels of domestic violence.

A widening gulf between a rich urban elite and rural poor is causing an exodus to the capital Phnom Penh – swelling slum and squatter populations. Meanwhile, thousands of children live on the streets after losing parents – many to AIDS-related illnesses.

Deforestation has increased the risk of floods, and more than half of rural people lack access to safe water. Unexploded mines still claim lives.

Cambodia is a source, destination and transit country for adults and children trafficked for sexual exploitation and forced labour.

Amid these problems, the church is growing. From just a handful of believers who survived a Khmer Rouge purge, there are now more than 3,000 congregations.

## TEARFUND'S WORK IN CAMBODIA

Tearfund began work in Cambodia in 1982 following our support for Cambodian refugees in Thailand. Initially, this work focused on aid for the war-displaced. As peace took hold in the 1990s, our focus switched to rebuilding the nation and helping the poorest Cambodians establish sustainable livelihoods.

We currently work with seven partners in the county. Here are a few examples of their work:

Cambodia Hope Organisation (CHO) works in the border town of Poipet – a Las Vegas-style resort – where children are bought, sold and often trafficked into Thailand's slave trade.

The resilience of children and their families is built through skills training, small business loans and raised awareness of child trafficking.

Another partner, TASK, works in a deprived area of Phnom Penh with hundreds of children orphaned by AIDS.

TASK's support costs a fraction of an orphanage place and equips grandmothers, aunts or uncles to care for orphaned relatives. Activities include emergency aid, a 'big brother and sister' mentoring scheme, home visits, help with school fees, vocational training and a 'memory book' to help children express grief.

Meanwhile, International Cooperation Cambodia helps churches and village leaders to realise the development potential of their communities and overcome poverty.

- **Pray for people living in poverty in Cambodia.**
- **Pray for our Cambodian partners as they seek to help others.**
- **And pray for Cambodia: for justice, peace, health and hope for everyone.**