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*Assessing Marginalization of Cham Muslim  
Communities in Cambodia*



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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Cham in Cambodia have been described using many different labels and descriptions that illustrate the dynamic nature of Cham identity in Cambodia today. These various descriptions of Cham make it clear that they are not a monolithic group, rather they are a minority group who assert differences among them, including their ethnic origins, religious practices and languages spoken. This study has three main objectives: 1) to gain an updated understanding of the current Cham identity in Cambodia, 2) to determine the degree to which Cham in different areas of the country feel marginalized in various service sectors, 3) to offer recommendations to those involved in decision-making about future strategies in designing relevant development programs for and with Cham communities in Cambodia.

Specific research methods were selected to elicit data from a small, but wide representative sample of Cham including leaders who work at the national level and reside in the capital city; local leaders who work and reside within different Cham communities in the rural and urban (or semi-urban) areas; and from Cham men and women of various ages, educational backgrounds and socio-economic status. A total of 202 Cham individuals were interviewed. Quantitative survey data was collected from 168 Cham Parents who have school-aged children and live in three different provinces; Phnom Penh, Kampong Cham, and Kampong Chhnang. Qualitative data to support the quantitative findings was also collected from 27 local Cham leaders and from seven national leaders.

In research it is commonly understood that a number of factors can affect the accuracy and completeness of self-reporting sensitive perceptions, hence less overt experiences of exclusion or marginalization are not easily detected, even when the questions are more open-ended in nature. More subtle or indirect experiences of exclusion are often not even recognized by the targets, which perhaps results in an increase in under-reporting of feelings of or experiences with marginalization. In this study, field researchers reported a tendency among some respondents to answer with overly positive responses. Researchers believed that, in some cases, respondents tried to offer the 'right' response rather than reveal their true feelings or opinions.

Overall, this study found that Cham have been assimilating into mainstream society in various ways. Yet data also suggests that some Cham have begun to feel more confident to embrace their cultural differences and to celebrate their diversity. Feelings of exclusion, if and when they exist among the Cham communities in Cambodia today, are much more subtle and difficult to detect. This study did not attempt to measure all questions related to marginalization among the Cham Muslims, however, it did highlight a combination of cultural and institutional barriers that Cham face in accessing and using state services. Study findings also offered useful insights into the complexities of trying to understand the perceptions of ethnic, religious or minority groups in Cambodia. The main study findings are the following:

- As a group, Cham in Cambodia feel very united, yet inter-relationships among them are complex.
- Cham Muslims are forging connections to Islamic communities outside Cambodia, where they are exposed to new ideas and information. These connections create both challenges and opportunities for them and contribute to their changing attitudes and practices.

- Cham feel they share a common vision with mainstream society on the development of their community and the larger society. They also acknowledge additional factors that help facilitate understanding between Cham and Khmer, including an increased number of Cham leaders in the government, globalization, and an increasing number of Cham and non-Cham marriages.
- Cham parents want to send their children to school and their first preference is for children to be able to participate in **both** state schools and religious studies. However, some Cham perceive access to state schools is still limited due to both economic factors and cultural differences.
- Gender bias (favoring boys) and conservative attitudes about educating girls, as well as a perceived lack of access to state schools (i.e. schools are too far away) are key factors that affect Cham parents' decisions about level and type of schooling for their daughters.
- Most Cham perceive access to health services as quite limited. Critical barriers include those factors which are endemic and fairly well-documented within Cambodia's fledgling public health system (e.g. poor quality of treatment at health centers), as well as factors which are more specifically related to gender inequities and cultural vulnerabilities among Cham.
- Job diversification and economic opportunities are increasing among Cham, however, Cham feel that their low capacity due to lack of formal education is still a significant barrier to getting higher-earning, skilled jobs.
- Traditional gender-based inequalities still exist within some Cham families. One-third of the men in this study claim they would not allow their wives to work outside the home. However, national Cham leaders recognize the importance of continuing to work with local Cham communities toward achieving more moderate views of Cham women.
- Evidence from indirect measures that examined interpersonal relations and perceptions of exclusion, did not point to any feelings of alienation (a critical factor in creating terrorists), or extremism among the Cham communities interviewed.
- Overall, local and national Cham leaders are positive about the future outlook of Cham. There is also widespread agreement among Cham leaders that all Cham need to: 1) continue to learn about and follow Islam, 2) ensure that all Cham are achieving access to higher education that will lead to improved social development, better living conditions and increased economic opportunities, and, 3) strive to preserve Cham identity and to live in peace and harmony in Cambodia.

The Government has taken specific actions to ensure that Cham feel part of the mainstream society (e.g. officially naming Cham "Khmer Islam"), yet these actions may also indicate suppression of non-Khmer ethnicity. It is not surprising that very few respondents were confident enough to offer specific examples of being marginalized or discriminated against. However, the findings illustrated references to marginalization at the individual and institutional level that were expressed by some respondents. Most notable were actions (or **inaction**) by the state that marginalize or make it more difficult for Cham to access or use state education and health services. This suggests that despite efforts to assimilate and integrate into mainstream society, there is also a need for the government, donors and NGOs to recognize that Cham (and other minority groups) have diverse cultural concerns that need to be considered in program planning.

Findings in this study reaffirm an already identified need to improve State education and health systems through central level actions and policies. However, findings also suggest the need to address particular cultural barriers at the community level in order to significantly improve access and use of state services for the Cham minority in Cambodia. Capitalizing on Cambodia's decentralization efforts and taking action to implement positive changes at the local level are necessary to lessen any feelings of exclusion by Cham residents.

Based on these study findings, the following is a list of specific suggestions and recommendations to guide action for policy and programming for and with Cham communities:

- Investigate and ensure that increases in public expenditure for education that have occurred in Cambodia as a whole in recent years (especially at the primary and secondary education level), are also happening consistently within the Cham communities (e.g. girls' scholarships). Also, ensure that these spending increases (on education) are not only pro-poor initiatives but recognize cultural barriers (perhaps higher gender bias among Cham).
- Work at both national and local levels to increase access to education for Cham girls: Specifically, work with Cham leaders in national NGOs to further promote education among Cham girls, and with commune councils and other local structures to address parents' concerns about sending girls to schools that are not in the immediate environs (e.g. affirmative action in teacher recruitment, scholarships for girls at all levels, etc.). Partner with Islamic school teachers (*Tuan*) and religious leaders (*Imam*) to develop programs that enable parents to see the benefits of sending their girls to state schools. And help Cham parents to understand the non-economic returns to educating their daughters.
- Improve communication and coordination between Islamic schools and public schools to complement one another to benefit Cham children's all around education/learning.
- Increase understanding of the public health service delivery system among Cham communities and in so doing, increase these communities' confidence about utilizing it for their health needs. This could be facilitated by the deployment of more trained Cham staff (such as mid-wives, health assistants, doctors and nurses), particularly for reproductive and maternal health. Public health outreach campaigns specifically targeting Cham, the largest minority (even if classified as a religious minority by the government) in Cambodia would be a worthwhile investment to ensure their continued participation and inclusion in this important social service system.
- Review relevant interventions in the region where cultural factors have been successfully incorporated into reproductive health service delivery, and then adapt these efforts at the community level to address specific gender and cultural constraints identified by Cham communities in Cambodia.
- Develop partnerships with Cham religious leaders to implement culturally sensitive health programs that are developed, endorsed and implemented by Cham. Specifically, recognize that these leaders have considerable influence on moral issues in their communities.

- Conduct more in-depth research to better understand Cham knowledge and attitudes towards western medicine and their cultural perceptions of disease causality.
- Design programs or initiatives to build the capacity of Cham to transition from farmers to workers, and as more Cham gain the necessary education to qualify for better jobs, ensure that they have equal access to these somewhat limited alternatives sources of earning.
- Work directly with Cham leaders to challenge gender biased cultural practices that prevent more women from seeking higher education and more employment opportunities.
- Develop and implement programs designed to both enhance Khmer and Cham cooperation *as well as* provide explicit opportunities for Khmer and Cham to share their cultural differences.

## **Contents**

1. INTRODUCTION.....	6
1.1 Study Background and Rationale.....	6
1.2 Study Goals & Main Objectives.....	6
2. CAMBODIAN CONTEXT.....	8
2.1 Country Context.....	8
2.2 Ethnic Groups in Cambodia.....	9
2.3 Cham in Cambodia.....	9
3. STUDY METHODOLOGY.....	12
3.1 Research Design.....	12
3.2 Sampling Procedure.....	13
3.3 Data Collection Instruments.....	14
3.4 Research Team.....	15
3.5 Field Preparation.....	16
3.6 Data Processing.....	17
3.7 Study Limitations.....	17
4. SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHICS AND CHARACTERISTICS.....	18
4.1 Response Rate.....	18
4.2 Characteristics of the Respondents.....	18
4.3 Household Assets and Access to Facilities.....	22
4.4 Socio-Economic Status (SES) Measurement.....	24
5. STUDY RESULTS.....	26
5.1 Cham Identity.....	26
5.2 Marginalization.....	34
5.3 Access and Use of State Education Services.....	39
5.4 Access and Use of State Health Services.....	51
5.5 Economic Participation.....	64
6. CONCLUSIONS.....	70

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Study Background and Rationale**

In 2007, Kampuchean Action for Primary Education (KAPE), a subgrantee in the Educational Support to Children in Underserved Populations (ESCUP) Program, carried out a small research study to assess the degree to which Cham children residing in Kampong Cham Province<sup>1</sup> in Cambodia were able to access educational services from the State education system. The study, funded by Save the Children Sweden and assisted by ESCUP, examined a range of issues in relation to this topic including language proficiency of Cham children when they first start school, representation of Cham teachers in the State teaching force, attitudes of Cham parents towards mainstream Khmer society and the State schools, and the increasing role of Islamic schools in Cham communities. The study concluded that while there did not appear to be any evidence of radicalization in the Cham community, there was an alarming tendency for many Cham parents to defect from the state school system and send their children to Islamic schools over which the state has no control or oversight. To a large extent, this was due to the feeling that the State schools did not address local cultural needs, i.e., Cham children were somewhat marginalized by their unique cultural background.

USAID expressed interest in the study and asked many questions regarding the generalizability of the study to other areas of the country and the degree to which the same trends with respect to marginalization might be occurring in other sectors. In addition, it was recognized that there has been several non-scholarly, editorial-type articles (e.g., newspaper articles) written about the Cham in Cambodia, yet up-to-date information that examines Cham perceptions and attitudes about themselves and their situation in Cambodia today is lacking.

The rationale for this current study stems from this recognized need for a follow-up to KAPE's 2007 study, with a broader scope that would look at additional service sectors, including health, and the need for an updated analysis of the Cham identity as perceived by Cham. The American Institutes of Research (AIR), the prime awardee of the ESCUP Program, which is implemented through the EQUIP 1 mechanism, has allocated funds for the study from its budget. The main oversight and coordination for the study has been carried out by World Education, the primary implementer of ESCUP in Cambodia. AIR hired an expatriate research consultant with research experience in Cambodia to work with staff members from World Education, KAPE, and the Cambodia Islamic Youth Association (CIYA), a local NGO that works with the Cham communities in Cambodia, to carry out the study.

### **1.2 Study Goals & Main Objectives**

The overall goal of this research study is to better understand the current situation of the Cham in Cambodia and to make recommendations to provide assistance more effectively. The three main objectives of this study are:

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<sup>1</sup> Kampong Cham province has the highest number of Cham residents out of all provinces in Cambodia.

***Objective #1: To gain an updated understanding of the current Cham identity in Cambodia.***

The Cham in Cambodia have been described by others using many different labels. These various descriptions of the Cham population in Cambodia make it clear that “the Cham” are not a monolithic group, but a minority group comprised of different sub-groups distinguished by ethnic origin, religious practices and primary languages spoken. Thus, this study aims to offer an updated description of the current structure of the Cham communities, to learn how Cham perceive themselves, and to validate the differences among the various types of Cham, particularly with respect to the various criteria used to classify them such as ethnicity, religious affiliation, and language spoken. Key research questions are the following:

- *How do Cham perceive their current identity in Cambodia?*
- *In what ways do Cham feel their identity is changing?*
- *What are the main differences within the Cham communities in Cambodia today?*

***Objective #2: To determine the degree to which Cham in different areas of the country feel marginalized in various service sectors.***

This study captures self-reported evidence of marginalization at the individual and institutional levels. Specifically, the aim is to better understand what, if any, factors cause Cham Muslims to feel excluded from government services in education and health, as well as to discern how Cham view their relations with the ethnic Khmer majority, and how they perceive their current civic and economic participation within the larger society. Information was collected about respondents’ perceptions and experiences of marginalization and discrimination; however direct measures of marginalization and discrimination are not necessarily validated. To obtain such direct measures requires collecting more national level data (which is generally not available) and collecting more ethnographic data through a longer term study that involves more observation and gathering of useful information to validate or indicate inaccuracies of self-reported accounts. Key research questions are the following:

- *What are Cham views and preferences for education for their children?*
- *What difficulties do Cham feel they face in accessing and using state education services?*
- *What difficulties do Cham feel they face in accessing and using state health services?*
- *How do Cham perceive their relations with Khmers?*
- *How do Cham feel about their participation in wider Cambodian society?*

***Objective #3: To make recommendations for positive action strategies for both government and non-government organizations to work effectively with the Cham population.***

It is expected that the findings from this study will offer important information to those involved in decision-making about future strategies in designing relevant development programs. The study explores the connections between policy and local knowledge and practice, and offers specific suggestions to guide action for policy reforms needed to overcome identified constraints. Key research questions are the following:

- *What kind of assistance do Cham receive?*

- *What kind of assistance programs do Cham feel they need?*
- *What are key recommendations for social and development programs (government and non-government) working with the Cham communities in Cambodia?*

## **2. CAMBODIAN CONTEXT**

### **2.1 Country Context**

The information below briefly outlines the current overall socio-economic, political, health, and educational context within Cambodia.

#### ***Socio-economic and political context***

Cambodia has among the lowest social and economic performance indicators in Asia, and is one of the poorest countries in the world with 34% of its people living on less than \$1 a day. Cambodia is slowly making efforts to transition from a predominantly agriculture-based economy to a diversified market-based economy. However, up to 85 % of the Cambodian population still lives in the countryside. Agriculture accounts for 43% of GDP yet employs 73% of the active population. (World Bank, 2006)

“Weak governance” is recognized by foreign donors as one of the biggest problems in Cambodia. Corruption is very rampant and can be witnessed at every level from top to bottom. While problems related to governance may be common in many developing countries, in Cambodia the concern is particularly significant because of recent history and the current political situation. The country virtually started from scratch in 1991 rebuilding its infrastructure and institutions (after three decades of fighting). By many historical accounts, the Khmer Rouge regime (1975-1979) was responsible for wiping out more than one million people out of a population of seven million. Those with any education were either killed or fled the country. Hence, Cambodia is today a very “young” country, 50% of the population is below the age of 25, which has a definite impact on capacity within government and other institutions. New policies in all development sectors have been established, but implementation and enforcement is uneven or slow, and participation of citizens in the process is poor (practically non-existent).

#### ***Health Context***

The health status of Cambodians is also among the lowest in Asia. The Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) is the highest in South East Asia at 437 per 100,000, and Cambodia has the highest incidence of tuberculosis outside of Sub-Saharan Africa. Malaria is still the leading cause of morbidity and mortality and Dengue Hemorrhagic Fever is the leading cause of death among children aged 1-5. Mental health is more recently recognized by the government as a major contributor to morbidity. Estimates of up to 80% of Cambodians over the age of 30 suffer from post traumatic stress disorder.

*“Despite much effort and donor support, Cambodia's public health service does not yet meet the population's healthcare needs. The health center and hospital systems function poorly. Faced with low salaries, many health workers have developed 'coping' strategies including informal*

*fees, drug embezzlement and private practice. Patients resort to various forms of private provision including untrained drug vendors. Private out-of-pocket health expenditure in Cambodia exceeds the public health budget by many times, and is one of the highest in the region.” (World Health Organization, 2006.)*

### ***Education Context***

In spite of significant donor investment, and the fact that basic education is guaranteed to every Cambodian child in the country’s constitution<sup>2</sup>, a significant number of rural Cambodian children do not attend school or do not participate in a quality basic education program. Specifically, while increasing numbers (more than 90%) of primary school children enter school, only about 43% of children complete primary education. Repetition rates are high and it takes an average of 10.8 years for a child to complete the six-year primary education cycle. Only 33% of children aged 12-14 years attend lower secondary, and only 9% attend upper secondary schools from the age group 15-17 years. These are among the lowest secondary education access rates in the region (EMIS, 2007).

Most recently, several national plans, strategies, and policies have been developed and implemented by the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport (MoEYS). The long-term mission of the MoEYS is “*to ensure that all Cambodian children and youth have equal opportunity to access quality education consistent with the Constitution and the Royal Government’s commitment to the U.N convention on the Rights of the Child, regardless of social status, geography, ethnicity, religion, language, gender and physical form.*” (MoEYS, 2006).

## **2.2 Ethnic Groups in Cambodia**

Cambodia has a fairly homogeneous population. More than 90% of the 14 million people are ethnic Khmers. There are twenty other ethnic groups comprised of a number of ethnic hill tribes who are known collectively as *Khmer Loeu*, and three other main ethnic groups Cham, Chinese and Vietnamese. Some research suggests that the difference between the national minorities (indigenous people –ethnic hill tribes) and other ethnic groups who have migrated to Cambodia (e.g. Cham, Chinese and Vietnamese) characterizes two markedly different patterns of cultural diversity in Cambodia. The *Khmer Loeu* continue to maintain a way of life considerably different from the mainstream society while the Cham (*Khmer Islam*), Chinese (*Chinese-Khmer*), and Vietnamese ethnic groups have integrated into Khmer society in many ways. (Ehrentraut, 2004) However, unlike ethnic Vietnamese and Chinese, Cham don’t have a state maintaining their distinct culture elsewhere.

## **2.3 Cham in Cambodia**

### ***Cham History***

Cham are believed to be descendents of Champa, an ancient Indianised kingdom of Indochina that existed from 700-1471 A.D. and was situated on what is now the southeast coast of Vietnam. Cham from Champa were conquered during a series of invasions which caused many

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<sup>2</sup> The 1993 Constitution of Cambodia mandates the obligation of the state to provide nine years of free and compulsory education to all its citizens.

of them to migrate to Cambodia. It is believed that Cham have lived in Cambodia since at least 1456. Some time before the seventeenth century, the Cambodian Cham converted to Islam. Cham were welcomed by ancient Kings of Cambodia and they formed a close relationship with the Cambodian royal family.

Despite their loss of homeland, Cham in Cambodia maintained their distinct language (*Cham*) and religion (*Islam*) from the Khmer majority. It is believed that more than 700,000 Cham were living in Cambodia by the 1950-1960s. Cham built their own Mosques and by the 1960s there were over 100 mosques in the country. However, during Pol Pot times, Cham, like many ethnic groups, were heavily persecuted by the Khmer Rouge and most of their Mosques were destroyed. Thus, during the Khmer Rouge regime (1975-1979), it is estimated that there were less than 200,000 Cham in Cambodia, and that only 20 Cham clergy survived the regime (So, 2006).

Religious freedom in Cambodia was restored in 1991 and today, with outside funding from other Muslim countries, the numbers of Mosques continue to increase, and today Cham make up the largest ethnic minority group in Cambodia, with estimates of more than 500,000 Cham in Cambodia today, representing about 3.5% of the population. Furthermore, it is recognized that the Government generally respects religious freedom in practice and continues to make efforts to demonstrate its tolerance and acceptance of other religions. Two specific actions taken this year (2008) by the Government that illustrate their acceptance toward the Muslim community are the construction of two Islamic prayer rooms at the Phnom Penh International Airport, and a Government directive that all Muslim students be allowed to wear Islamic attire in class.

### ***Defining the Cham***

Cham are assigned to a particular group through self-identification, by mutual recognition among various members of their group, by a classification given to them by others, including the government, and/or by outsiders who seek to classify or identify distinctions among the Cham (e.g. researchers). Whichever classification one uses, it is apparent that Cham are not a single monolithic group and that the inter-relationships among Cham communities are complex. Cham self-identification (discussed in more detail in the Results section of this report) is not always consistent with labels and classifications imparted on them by others.

Researchers who have studied and written about Cham communities in Cambodia have identified three separate groups of Cham that reflect both their ethnic background (country of origin and mother tongue) and their religious practices (type of Islam they practice). These three groups are most commonly labeled by researchers as *Cham*, *Chvea* and *Jahed* (Collins, 1996) 'Ethnicity' is a social construct and is usually understood in terms of common descent and culture. Using this definition one can identify two groups who are *ethnic* Cham and one group is not ethnic Cham:

- 1) Cham who originated from Champa, use the Koran, pray five times a day and make-up the majority of Cham living in Cambodia. They are estimated to make up about 70% of the current Cham in Cambodia (*Cham*).
- 2) Cham who also originated from Champa, pray once a week (and still use Cham language scriptures) and constitute the smallest group of Cham. They are estimated to represent about 5% of the Cham in Cambodia (*Jahed*).

3) *Chvea*, who are not *ethnic Cham*, as they did not originate from Champa nor is the Cham language their mother tongue. *Chvea* have origins tied to Java Indonesia. The *Chvea* make up about 20-25% of the Cham Muslim population in Cambodia today.

The Cambodian government has labeled all Cham as “Khmer Islam,” which negates any ethnic background, but defines the Cham as a religious minority that are essentially Khmer who practice Islam.

Islam is central to all Cham in Cambodia, however, as noted above, not all Cham follow the same practices of Islam. While there is not universal agreement in self-identification among the various Cham communities, the majority of Cham individuals in this study who were asked to define Cham claimed that there are two groups of Cham and the main distinction between the two groups is their practices of Islam. Thus most Cham self-identified using religion as a marker, essentially assigning ethnic Cham who pray five times a day and *Chvea* into one group. These are the Cham Muslims who follow orthodox practices of Islam. And the second group is comprised of ethnic Cham who practice a different version of Islam and follow more traditional Cham practices and beliefs, the most notable distinctions being that members of this group pray only once a week on Fridays and use Cham language scriptures for prayer.

***Current Cham Statistics***

There are Cham communities in virtually all of Cambodia’s provinces but there is no place where Cham people form anywhere close to a provincial majority. The majority of the Cham communities in Cambodia however are concentrated along or near rivers in six out of Cambodia’s 22 provinces: Kampong Cham, Kampot, Pursat, Battambang, Phnom Penh/Kandal, and Kampong Chhnang. Various sources report different estimates of the number of Cham currently in Cambodia, and these estimates range from between 320,000 to 700,000 Cham. Cham national leaders interviewed in this study suggested to researchers that the most up-to-date and accurate statistics on the Cham population are held by the Mufti, the highest council for the Muslim community in Cambodia. However the research team was unable to obtain these numbers from the Mufti. Table 1 below presents the most up-to-date data available from the Ministry of Cult and Religion (2007) on the number of Cham, Mosques, and Islamic Schools for Cambodia as a whole, and within the three study provinces included in this study.

**Table 1: Cham Population in Cambodia**

<i>Area</i>	<i>Number of Cham</i>	<i>Number of Mosques</i>	<i>Number of Sarav*</i>
<b><i>Cambodia Total</i></b>	<b>320,167</b>	<b>232+</b>	<b>321+</b>
<i>Phnom Penh</i>	22,951	3	8
<i>Kampong Cham</i>	137,582	88	210
<i>Kampong Chhnang</i>	30,209	42	10

Source: Ministry of Cult and Religion, Cambodia, 2007.

\*Sarav refers to a small mosque where the Islamic schools often exist.

+ the total number of mosques and saravs found in Cambodia could be slightly higher than reported here as data was unavailable for four provinces where very few Muslims reside.

### **3. STUDY METHODOLOGY**

Specific research methods were selected for this study to elicit data from a small, but wide representative sample of Cham including leaders who work at the national level and reside in the capital city; local leaders who work and reside within specific Cham communities, primarily within the rural areas; and Cham parents of various age, educational background and socio-economic status.

The data collection instruments were designed to include both quantitative surveys as well as semi-structured questionnaires (with open-ended questions), and questions that asked respondents to offer their views about themselves (individual level data), their communities (community level data), and state institutions as well as mainstream society (institutional level data). However a number of factors can affect the accuracy and completeness of reporting sensitive perceptions and thus less overt experiences of marginalization are not easily detected. More subtle or indirect experiences of exclusion are often not even recognized by the targets, which can result in an increase in under-reporting feelings of marginalization.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

To carry out this assessment both quantitative and qualitative research methods were used and primary data was collected at three different levels:

##### ***Level 1: Interviews with leaders of Cham/Islamic Organizations***

The purpose of data collection at this level was to better inform the research strategies and questions for the other two levels of data collection, to validate certain assumptions made by researchers, and to gather updated information on the current status of the Cham population (as viewed by Cham leaders) in Cambodia.

Through literature review, web search, and discussions with the Cham partner organization for this study (CIYA), the Consultant developed a list of recognized Cham leaders from various organizations. The Consultant and her Khmer colleague from World Education together conducted individual interviews using open-ended guiding questions.

##### ***Level 2: Interviews with local Cham leaders***

The purpose of data collection at this level was to determine differences (if any) in the opinions expressed by local leaders compared to those leaders working at the national level; to gather demographic data about the Muslim population in the study areas; and to seek local leaders' views on factors that contribute to marginalization within their specific communities at either the community or institutional level.

Field researchers identified the local leaders within the targeted areas. They met individually or in small groups with these leaders before approaching Cham residents in the area.

##### ***Level 3: Interviews local Cham residents***

The purpose of data collection at this level was to gather information from various individuals within communities regarding their perceived marginalization at the individual and institutional level. The researchers interviewed married men and women who have school-aged children. The

men and women were randomly selected from all the households in the target areas.<sup>3</sup> Only men and women with school aged children were included in the sample at this level because the study aimed to assess issues related to access and use of education services. Since it is a relatively small sample size, the goal was to maximize the number of men and women with children in it since they would be more likely to have exposure to the State education system. The assumption was that these parents would be able to offer more substantive comments and personal opinions about the school system.

Only one person per household was interviewed. No more than 12 respondents from one village were interviewed. Researchers were instructed to first explain the purpose of the study to potential respondents. Respondents were then asked if they were willing to participate in the survey and to sign an Informed Consent form. Some respondents were hesitant to sign the consent form and thus elected to agree verbally to first answer the questions and then sign the consent form giving the researchers permission to use the data.<sup>4</sup>

### **3.2 Sampling Procedure**

The main goal was to identify a small but representative sample of the Cham in Cambodia. The sample was a purposeful one.

#### ***Site selection***

The following criteria were considered in selecting study sites:

- *Type of Category of Cham:* The study aimed to include the various types of Cham found in Cambodia as defined by both their religious practices (orthodox versus traditional; mainstream versus localized practices) and their ethnic background or category (e.g. previous research has identified three main categories of Muslims as defined by ethnicity) and/or any other classifications identified in Level 1 in-depth interviews.
- *Geographical Scope included:* both urban and rural areas; provinces with high Cham population; (within provinces), districts inhabited primarily by Cham groups; and (within districts), communes that differ in geography and distance to a district center (i.e., more and less remote).

Based on these two main criteria the following areas were selected for data collection: Kampong Cham and Kampong Chhnang Provinces (both with high numbers of Cham and mainly rural),

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<sup>3</sup> In the Data Collectors' Training the researchers were given a choice of easy methods to implement for random selection of the households. Researchers were also asked to make the random selection process transparent to village leaders and other villagers who inquired about the study in an effort to help demystify the research.

<sup>4</sup> *Informed Consent* is an ethical obligation of any research study. In Cambodia signing a piece of paper, particularly if one lacks the necessary literacy skills to read it on his/her own, is very frightening. Furthermore, *Informed Consent* is not always used in research studies done in Cambodia. The concept was new to both the data collectors and the respondents. Data collectors noted that in some cases respondents were not willing to sign the form before being interviewed, but felt more comfortable to sign the consent form once they were interviewed and recognized that the questions were "safe." Only participants who signed the consent form, before or after responding to the questions, were included in the data analysis.

and Phnom Penh (also with high number of Cham residents, and urban). CIYA staff, who are very familiar with and have worked in these areas, helped to identify the communes and villages based on the criteria outlined above.

### **Sample Size**

A total of 202 Cham were interviewed, including 168 Cham parents with school-age children, 27 Cham local leaders, and seven Cham leaders working at the national level. The following table shows a breakdown of the individuals interviewed by the level of data collection and province.

**Table 2: Sample of Surveyed Cham by Province**

<b>Province</b>	<b>National Leaders</b>	<b>Local Leaders</b>	<b>Local Residents (parents)</b>
Phnom Penh	Male: 5 Female: 2	Male: 9	Male: 26 Female: 30
Kampong Cham	—	Male: 10	Male: 29 Female: 31
Kampong Chhnang	—	Male: 8	Male: 26 Female: 26
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>168</b>

### **3.3 Data Collection Instruments**

Both quantitative and qualitative questions were designed to gather objective information to measure very subjective phenomena.

#### **Qualitative In-depth Interviews**

The aim was to identify a few leaders from large Islamic organizations or NGOs and use the snowball effect by which these individuals would then identify other non-government or government Cham leaders. However, it became difficult to identify NGO leaders who did not also have official positions within the Government. Six people from four different Islamic organizations (either NGOs or associations) were interviewed. Four of these leaders also hold national level government positions. The seventh person interviewed at this level is Cham who works for an independent Cambodian research institute.

An in-depth interview protocol with open-ended, guiding questions was used for interviews with national Cham leaders. These interviews were conducted in English and Khmer and were carried out by the Consultant and a World Education/ESCUP staff member. The guiding questions covered five main topics: *Cham Identity, Marginalization & Participation, Cham & Khmer Relations, Outside Assistance, General Perceptions of Cham and Cambodia*. Efforts were made to include both men and women leaders.

### ***Semi-structured Questionnaire***

Local Cham leaders were defined as Cham individuals who worked at the community level. This includes Islamic religious leaders such as *Hakem*, *Imam*, and *Tuan*<sup>5</sup>, as well as Cham village chiefs or commune leaders, or other Cham individuals who work specifically with the Cham community (e.g. Cham English teacher, Local Mosque committee's members)

Local leader interviews were carried out by two male and one female data collectors from the research team. All three of these data collectors are Cham. A semi-structured interview protocol was used to interview Cham local leaders. The protocol included both quantitative and qualitative questions. The interviews were conducted almost entirely in Khmer and were done individually and in some cases in small groups. The protocol had five sections including: *Community Context & Cham Identity*, *Cham Access and Use of Services*, *Assistance to Cham Community*, *Cham & Khmer Relations*, *General Perceptions*.

### ***Quantitative Survey***

A quantitative survey tool was developed for interviewing married Cham men and women with school aged children. The interviews were conducted by eight young Cham data collectors. In most cases, the Cham female researchers interviewed Cham women, and the male researchers interviewed the male respondents. The interviews were done primarily in Khmer, with translation of certain questions into Cham when necessary. The survey included 92 questions. A few questions related to women's health and their economic participation were only asked of the female respondents, while three specific questions on economic participation of their wives were asked of the males only. The survey instrument included five sections: *Demographic and Background Data*; *Access and Use of State Education Services*; *Access and Use of State Health Services*; *Community, Civic and Economic Participation*; *Cham & Khmer Relations*.

### ***Field Researchers' Feedback***

Upon completion of data collection in the field, the researchers were asked to participate in a half-day de-briefing session. This session was held after preliminary analysis of the quantitative data was done. The de-briefing session was held in a group discussion format and field researchers were mainly asked to share their field experience and provide any specific examples or supporting data for some of the quantitative findings, and to offer insights as to some of the limitations of the survey work as viewed through their experiences in the field. They were also asked to individually and confidentially complete a short, open-ended questionnaire. The aim of the written questions was two-fold: 1) to seek their individual thoughts about what they learned about Cham (after interviewing many Cham and visiting many different Cham villages) with regard to the study's three main objectives, and, 2) to solicit their own personal opinion and views about Cham in Cambodia.

## **3.4 Research Team**

The research study was led by an expatriate consultant who worked closely with a team of Cham data collectors from CIYA, and two ESCUP project staff from World Education and KAPE. The

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<sup>5</sup> *Hakem* –leads the community and the mosque, *Imam* – leads the prayers, *Tuan* – Islamic teacher

Consultant was responsible for developing all research tools and training materials, working with the team to ensure smooth data collection/field work was carried out, conducting data analysis, and preparing the final written report.

The ESCUP staff members from World Education and KAPE were responsible for field testing the questionnaires, assisting the consultant to finalize the survey instruments, translating the instruments, training the data collectors, overseeing the field research, conducting some interviews with Cham local leaders and translating the qualitative findings. The colleague from KAPE was herself of Cham ethnicity, which helped to provide additional insights about the data collection process.

CIYA offered input into the final survey questions and was primarily responsible for the data collection, including input and identification of the final sample selection at the district, commune and village level. CIYA recruited seven data collectors, all of whom were Cham. Six of the seven data collectors were relatively young (age 20-29), and all were living in or near Phnom Penh. Some of them were part-time employees of CIYA, and four of them were also currently studying at University. Six of the seven spoke Cham.

### **3.5 Field Preparation**

#### ***Field Testing***

The data collection tools were field tested in Kampong Cham by the two ESCUP staff from World Education and KAPE. Based on the field test results, several changes were made to the instruments. The main changes were in the specific wording (translation issues) of some questions. It was recognized that in some cases more formal ways of stating something were not easily understood, and more familiar language was needed to make the questions clear to the respondents.

After the field test subsequent meetings were also held with two CIYA senior staff, who recommended additional changes to the survey instruments. Suggestions were made by CIYA to further delete or change the wording of a number of questions that in their opinion were either 1) too difficult for respondents to answer, or 2) were “too risky” or had too much potential to make respondents feel uncomfortable to participate in the study. Efforts were made to revise the questions to be worded in a positive way and to not make direct comparisons between Cham and Khmer.

#### ***Training and Data Collection***

A two-day training was conducted to prepare the researchers for the field. Activities were designed to help the field staff to: 1) understand the purpose and objectives of the overall research; 2) understand each person’s role(s) in the research study; 3) feel confident to use the research data collection tools; and 4) be clear on the procedures (including random selection of households, desired sample size, etc.) and the timing of the data collection to be carried out.

Seven data collectors and two supervisors (ESCUP staff from World Education and KAPE) went to the field for a total of seven days from August 30 to September 5, 2008. Two CIYA senior staff joined the team for one day and the lead Consultant joined the team for one day. The team traveled to three Provinces to collect data from 168 Cham men and women and 27 Cham local leaders.

### **3.6 Data Processing**

All quantitative responses were coded by the data collectors daily in the field and then given to the field supervisors (ESCUP staff) for a final check. The collected and coded surveys were brought to the World Education office in Phnom Penh. The Consultant worked with an ESCUP staff member to develop a database using the statistical software SPSS (version 16.0). Data was entered and cleaned and selected variables were re-coded in preparation for data analysis. Open-ended responses were translated and coded accordingly. Data analysis including general descriptive statistics, composite measures, cross-tabulations, comparison of means, and other statistical analyses were done in Phnom Penh by the Consultant. The open-ended responses collected from the local and national leaders were discussed in detail among the Consultant and the two ESCUP staff to understand and interpret some of the statements. Many of these open-ended responses were simply categorized into different topics and the specific statements or examples were used to support or contradict quantitative findings.

### **3.7 Study Limitations**

#### ***Timing of the Data Collection***

The proposed field schedule had originally called for all the data to be collected by the beginning of June, seven weeks before the national election and one month before the official campaigning period for that election was to begin. Due to a number of unavoidable factors (unrelated to politics or the election), the data schedule was postponed until one month after the election. It should be recognized that increased apprehension due to tensions that generally escalate around election time in Cambodia (both before and after the election), could have caused respondents to answer more cautiously.

#### ***General ‘Fear’ to Express Personal Opinions***

Apart from fear related to the election, the simple fact that the research study was asking questions about a sensitive topic (i.e. feelings of exclusion) and asking respondents to offer their own personal views, which may differ from the majority, proved challenging for some respondents. Collecting sensitive data may raise concerns and fears. Researchers were instructed to remind respondents (numerous times) that the purpose of the study was to seek individuals’ own thinking and perceptions, that there were no right or wrong answers, and to assure respondents that their answers would be confidential. Researchers reported that in some cases it was difficult to elicit more than “don’t know” responses to questions that asked those respondents to ‘agree’ or ‘disagree’ with various statements that aimed to assess their attitudes on a number of topics. Careful efforts were made to ensure understanding of the questions, and researchers felt that for some respondents it was not a matter of miscomprehending, but “fear” of answering “incorrectly” (i.e., against perceptions of the majority opinion) was more likely the reason for responding with a “don’t know.”

#### ***One-Sided Study: Only Cham Perceptions Measured***

This research study design did not have a comparison group. It did not collect primary data about other perspectives or viewpoints regarding the Cham. Specifically, this study did not gather information from Khmer or other minority groups on their views about Cham in Cambodia.

Given the specific objectives and limited scope of this study, it was decided to focus on gathering data from Cham themselves. Secondary sources including articles written about the Cham community were reviewed however, and offer some evidence of how other groups or individuals both in and out of Cambodia view the Cham.

### ***Limitations in the Questionnaire Design***

It is important to note that the final survey questionnaire did not reflect the original plans of the expatriate consultant leading the study. Plans to include additional questions designed to yield a better understanding of current Cham views on the extent, if any, of their marginalization or social exclusion as they are reflected by interactions with the Khmer majority and their perceptions of their treatment by this group were jettisoned by the strong objections of the local NGO, an Islamic organization, which felt that such questions would be too incendiary or cause fear or misunderstanding among the respondents. Repeated discussions to devise questions thought to be less controversial or yield proxy indicators of marginalization did not find a successful resolution and some of the lines of questioning were simply dropped.

## **4. SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHICS AND CHARACTERISTICS**

### **4.1 Response Rate**

Overall the response rate was very high. One hundred and eighty two respondents were asked to participate in the survey and 168 agreed to participate and signed the Informed Consent Form (91% response rate). Of the 14 respondents who were not willing to participate in the study, the main reason given was lack of time. However, refusal rates were higher in Kampong Chhnang (9 out of the 14 who refused were from Kampong Chhnang). It is worth noting that neither CIYA, the implementing partner on this survey, nor World Education work in Kampong Chhnang. World Education and CIYA both have programs in Kampong Cham and CIYA works with the Muslim community in Phnom Penh as well. Lack of familiarity with the organizations carrying out the research by residents of Kampong Chhnang may have made potential respondents in that area more hesitant to participate in the study; perhaps they viewed the data collectors as outsiders.

### **4.2 Characteristics of the Respondents**

Detailed demographic data was collected for the 168 Cham parents in the study and this data is described in detail below. National and local leaders included in the survey were defined mainly by their role in the community (i.e., detailed demographic data was not collected from these individuals). Among the national leaders, four of them are leaders of Islamic NGOs or associations who **also** currently hold national Government level positions, two respondents are employed by one of the Islamic development organizations, and one individual works for an independent research institute (and works specifically on Cham research within the institute). Among the 27 local Cham leaders, there were: 4 *Hakem*, 3 *Imam*, 9 *Tuan*, 5 local Mosque committee members, 1 English Teacher from local Mosque, 2 Village Chiefs, and 1 Commune Council member).

Key individual and household characteristics for the 168 Cham parents who participated in the quantitative survey are provided in Table 3 below. The table presents figures for the overall

sample and it also breaks the information down by the three study areas visited. Statistical tests were performed for all demographic variables found in the table to identify any statistically significant differences between men and women across the whole sample, and to determine any differences among respondents from each of the three different provinces included in the study. Any significant differences found between male and female respondents are reported in the text. Differences between the provinces are indicated in the table.

**Table 3: Individual and Household Characteristics of Cham Parents Surveyed**

Characteristic	Whole Sample (N=168)	Within Province		
		Phnom Penh (n=56)	Kampong Cham (n=60)	Kampong Chhnang (n=52)
Mean Age	45.2	46.7	44.4	44.5
Mean # of children (living)	4.3	4.3	4.2	4.3
Attended state school (%)	55%	64%	52%	48%
Attended Islamic School (%)*	76%	79%	85%	64%
Speak Cham 'very well' or 'well' (%)*	95%	86%	100%	100%
Speak Khmer 'very well' or 'well' (%)	77%	92%	69%	73%
Speak other language (%)	15%	21%	25%	12%
<i>Language spoken at home</i>				
Cham only*	63%	41%	84%	64%
Khmer only*	13%	27%	7%	4%
Mix Cham & Khmer	24%	32%	10%	33%

\*Indicates statistically significant difference among the three provinces.

### **Age**

The age of respondents in this study ranged from age 23 to 76, with a mean age of 45.2. The average number of living children reported by respondents was 4.3 (*range 1 -12*). Since Cambodia is considered to be a very 'young' country with more than half of the population under the age of 25, the average age of interviewees in this study is perhaps on the high end. However, as noted in the methodology section of the report, the purposeful sample was designed to interview parents who had school aged children, and so one would expect the average age to be slightly higher. Another factor that may have contributed to the somewhat higher mean age of respondents is that while households were selected randomly (*and only interviewed if the potential respondent verified that he or she had school age children*), there was no call-back system if a mother or father in the targeted household was not available. Researchers simply moved on to the next randomly selected household. Thus it is possible that somewhat older

individuals who were less likely to be working or were not too busy caring for very young children were the most available respondents.

### ***Respondents' Participation in School***

Respondents were asked about their own schooling experiences. They were asked if they had ever attended a state school or an Islamic school and if they had ever studied outside of Cambodia. As Table 3 above indicates, respondents were most likely to have attended an Islamic school. Three-quarters of the sample (76%) said they had gone to an Islamic school, while just over half (55%) reported having ever studied in a state school. Only 2.4% (n=4) have studied outside of Cambodia. Both men and women were equally likely to report having attended a State or Islamic school. However no females and only four male respondents reported studying outside of Cambodia (two in Malaysia, one in Saudi Arabia and one in France).

#### *State School Participation*

Fifty-five percent of the respondents reported having ever attended State school, and the average number of years they attended school was six. About one-third of the sample attended school up to grade three, and less than one-fifth (17%) of the respondents attended secondary school (grades 10-12). While male and female participation rates were similar, the mean number of years to participate in school was higher for males (6.8 years) compared to females (5.2 years) ( $F=4.9$ ,  $p<.05$ ). A higher percentage of respondents in Phnom Penh reported attending a State school compared to the other two provinces, but these differences across the provinces were not statistically significant. Younger respondents (less than 35 years of age) were more likely to have attended State school.

An analysis of the data that compares those parents who reported studying in State schools versus those who did not, is not associated with their reported preferences for their sons' and daughters' schooling. However, parents who attended a State school themselves were more likely to report that their children currently attend a State school. Ninety-three percent of parents who attended a State school said their children currently attend a State school, where as 79% of parents who never attended a State school report having children currently in the State school education system. This difference was statistically significant ( $\chi^2=5.2$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

#### *Islamic School Participation*

Kampong Cham residents were the most likely to have studied in an Islamic school (85%) and residents in Kampong Chhnang were least likely to have studied in an Islamic school (64%). These differences across provinces were statistically significant ( $\chi^2=7.4$ ,  $p<.05$ ). Of all who reported having ever attended an Islamic school, just under half (45%) had attended for one to two years only. Three-quarters of the sample had studied for less than four years, and one-quarter reported studying for five or more years.

The survey did not ask specifically when in time (recently or not) individuals studied in Islamic schools; however, it is likely that respondents have attended Islamic studies more recently. Islamic schools in many areas are relatively new, having come to more villages with fairly recent and increasing access to outside assistance coming in from Muslims and other countries. Also, as noted above, fewer residents from the villages in Kampong Chhnang reported having studied in an Islamic school. This finding is consistent with researchers' observations and discussions with

local Cham leaders who confirmed that in fact they do not have enough funds or assistance to start Islamic schools in at least two of the villages visited.

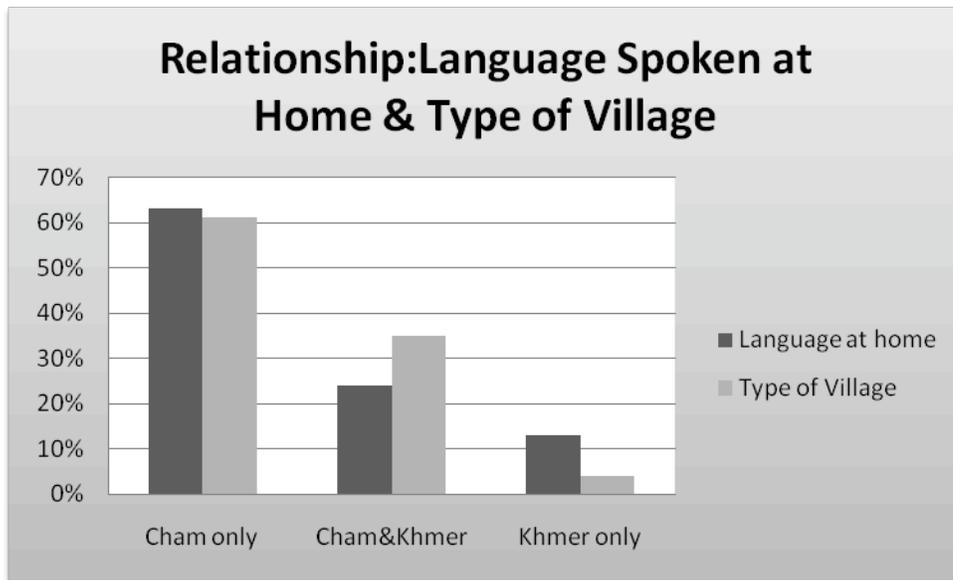
### ***Language Data***

#### ***Cham and Khmer languages***

The overwhelming majority of those interviewed said they speak Cham language ‘very well’ or ‘well’ (95%), and just over three-quarters of the respondents said they speak Khmer ‘very well’ or ‘well’ (77%). Five percent (n=8) said they speak either ‘little’ or no Cham. All eight respondents who do not speak Cham live in Phnom Penh, and slightly less than 1/3 of the respondents in Kampong Cham and Kampong Chhnang said they spoke only “a little” Khmer. This data is consistent with known information about the Muslim population in Cambodia because many Cham who reside in Phnom Penh are not ethnically Cham, but have migrated to Cambodia from the Malay Peninsula or Indonesian archipelago, while in Kampong Cham and Kampong Chhnang the overwhelming majority of Cham living in those areas trace their ethnic origins from Champa.

The vast majority of respondents speak both Khmer and Cham, a sign that at least linguistically Cham appear to be assimilating into the mainstream society. Figure 1 below shows the relationship between language spoken at home and ethnic make-up of the villages in which the respondents reported living. As the figure reveals, the majority of people report living in a Cham only village (61%) and 63% of respondents say they speak only Cham at home.

**Figure 1: Relationship between Language Spoken at Home and Type of Village**



Nearly all Cham who speak Cham language at home also reside in a Cham only village, but whether a respondent lives in a Khmer village or Cham & Khmer mixed village does not necessarily predict his or her language spoken at home.

There was greater variation in language spoken at home across the three provinces. The majority of those who speak Khmer at home are from Phnom Penh. If one uses language spoken at home as a crude indicator of assimilation, this suggests that urbanization corresponds with more intensive assimilation. It was noted earlier that eight respondents from Phnom Penh do not speak Cham, which is only 5% of the Phnom Penh respondents, however, 27% of Phnom Penh residents reported that Khmer is the language spoken at home, compared to only 7% and 4% of Kampong Cham and Kampong Chhnang residents, respectively.

### *Other languages spoken*

Twenty percent of the sample reported speaking a language other than Cham or Khmer. The two most common languages spoken are English (n=18) and Malay (n=11). Very few individuals reported speaking Arabic (n=4), Thai (n=2) or French (n=1). Men and women were equally likely to report speaking another language, and whether an individual reported speaking Cham or Khmer at home was not associated with whether he or she spoke another language. While the numbers are too small for statistical comparisons, there was a trend that shows that respondents in Kampong Chhnang were less likely to report speaking another language. With regard to Malay and Arabic languages, it is logical that Kampong Chhnang has fewer individuals who speak these languages, since many of the Cham communities in this province follow a different practice of Islam than what is found in either Malaysia or Arabic countries. This refers to the tendency of Cham in this province to fall into the category of *Jahed*, a classification that refers mainly to the practice of praying only once a week rather than several times each day. Therefore, people in this province have less affinity with these countries than do other Cham communities in Cambodia.

### **4.3 Household Assets and Access to Facilities**

Several wealth indicator questions were included on the survey. Table 4 shows the ownership of various household and agricultural assets and whether families have access to toilet facilities and electricity in their household. Data is presented for the whole sample and with a comparison of three study areas.

**Table 4: Household Assets and Access to Facilities**

<b>Assets (%)</b>	<b>Whole Sample</b>	<b>Phnom Penh</b>	<b>Kampong Cham</b>	<b>Kampong Chhnang</b>
Have radio in household*	70%	90%	62%	57%
Have TV in household*	75%	96%	65%	64%
Have motorbike in household*	68%	91%	63%	48%
Own the land currently on	94%	90%	98%	94%
Own livestock*	52%	29%	75%	52%
Have access to toilet facilities*	61%	93%	57%	31%
Have electricity in household	54%	98%	32%	31%

\*Indicates a statistically significant difference among provinces.

As expected, Phnom Penh residents interviewed owned more household assets and had access to more facilities than those in Kampong Cham and Kampong Chhnang. Among the latter, Kampong Cham residents had more. More than half of all households owned a radio, a television (including 96% of those in Phnom Penh) and, with the exception of Kampong Chhnang (48%) a motorbike. Nearly all those interviewed (even those in Phnom Penh; 90%) claimed to own the land on which they are currently living, which was somewhat surprising. Access to toilets and electricity were significantly lower in Kampong Cham (57% and 32%, respectively) and Kampong Chhnang (31% and 31%, respectively) than Phnom Penh (61% and 54%).

A comparison to the overall Cambodian population, using data from 2005, suggests that Cham included in this study are not worse off than the average urban or rural Cambodian. The Cambodian Demographic and Health Survey (CDHS) 2005 found that in urban areas two out of three households had electricity, and that only one in five households had electricity in rural areas. Also the CDHS found that three out of four rural and one in three urban households did not have a toilet facility. Respondents in this study report comparable, and slightly higher rates for access to electricity, and considerably higher rates of access to a toilet facility compared to the CDHS for both urban and rural areas. However, in this study the question asked was “Do you have access to a toilet facility at home or very near to your home?” Many Cham live communally with a group of houses close together, and it is not uncommon for them to share common toilet facilities.

Among this study sample, ownership of household assets including TV, radio and motorbike were also slightly higher than averages reported by citizens in the CDHS 2005. In 2005 just over one-half of all households owned a television, which was a considerable increase compared to 2000 data which showed only one-third of the population owned a television (CDHS 2000). Similarly, in 2005 one-third of all households in Cambodia owned a motorbike, compared to one-quarter in 2000. Hence with Cambodia’s continued recent development and economic growth (at a fairly quick pace) it is very likely that nearly 4 years later (in the last quarter of 2008) that the numbers for the general population would be higher now and thus comparable to data presented here for Cham in this study. Most importantly, the findings reported in this study sample suggest that Cham are at the very least gaining ground comparable to the larger society.

However, it should also be noted that both Phnom Penh (Cambodia’s largest urban center) and Kampong Cham (also with significant urban areas) are two of Cambodia’s wealthiest provinces. As the table above reveals, rates for ownership of household assets and access to facilities for Cham are consistently lower in Kampong Chhnang. Again this finding is consistent with national data in which Kampong Chhnang consistently ranks considerably lower than Phnom Penh or Kampong Cham on a number of development and wealth indicators (CDHS 2005). In fact, one basic indicator examined whether children age 5-17 possessed three basic needs: shoes, two sets of clothing, and a blanket. Kampong Chhnang did the worst on this indicator out of all the provinces (with only 39% having all three possessions), in sharp contrast to Phnom Penh and Kampong Cham who scored the best with 86% and 81% respectively. Of course, these assessments must be weighed against the existence of considerable within-province variation in Kampong Cham and the existence of large pockets of food insecure areas.

#### **4.4 Socio-Economic Status (SES) Measurement**

To examine the overall socio-economic status of the respondents in the study, a composite measure was created to rank the status of each respondent on a common scale. The SES measure contained eight different variables which included household assets, access to facilities, educational experiences of the respondent, and reported household income source.<sup>6</sup> The SES measure was an 11-point scale (ranging from 1-11 points). It includes the following variables and points:

##### *Household Assets (0-3)*

1. Have a radio in the household = 1
2. Have a television in the household = 1
3. Have a motorbike in the household = 1

##### *Access to Facilities (0-2)*

4. Have access to toilet facilities = 1
5. Own the land house is on = 1

##### *Education Participation (0-3)*

6. State school Participation: Never went = 0, Attended elementary = 1, Attended higher than grade 6 = 2
7. Have ever attended Islamic school = 1

##### *Main Income Source (1-3)*

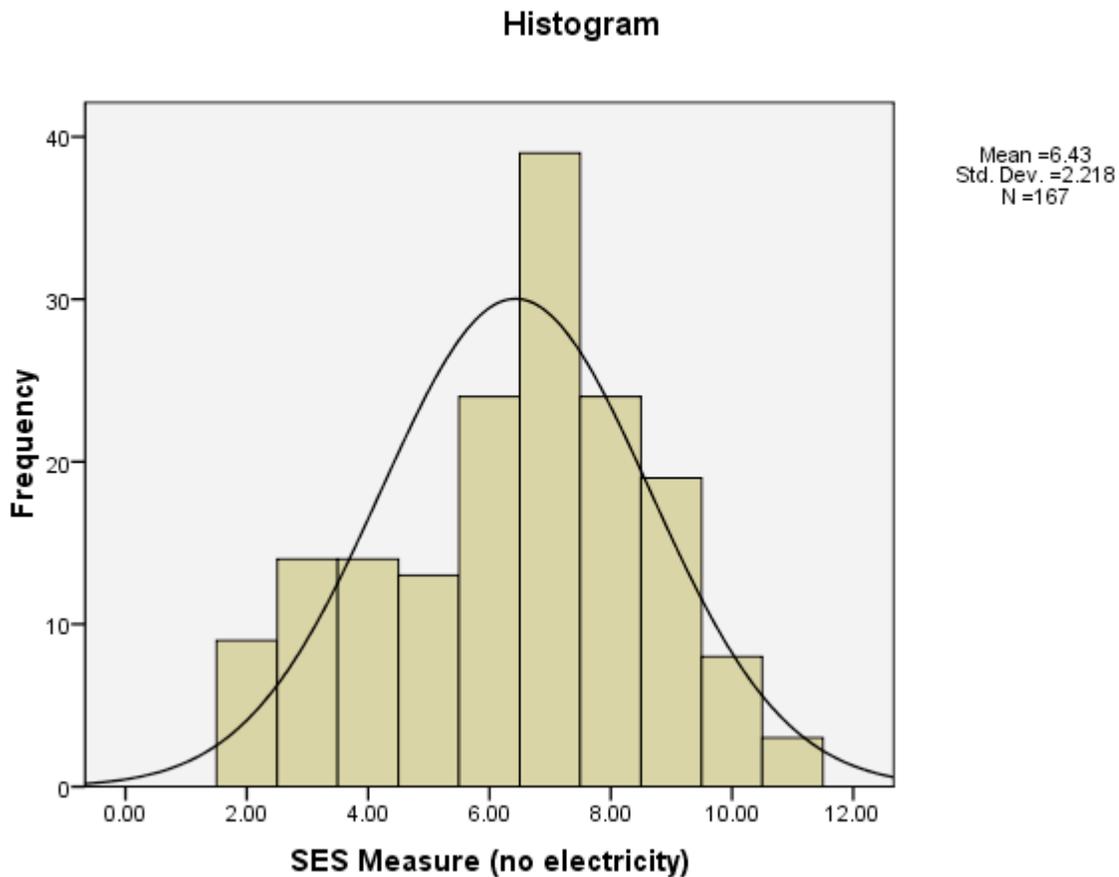
8. Engaged in low earning, unsteady work = 1, Engaged in low earning, steady work = 2, Skilled employee = 3.

Figure 2 below shows that across the sample, the SES mean score is 6.43 and is fairly normally distributed.

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<sup>6</sup> Livestock ownership and whether respondent had electricity in their household were two variables not included in the SES measure. It was decided that livestock ownership is a measure with a bias for those living in the rural areas, and electrification is bias for those in the urban areas since electricity is not available in all of the study areas.

Figure 2: Cham Parents' Mean Socio-Economic Status Scores



However, an analysis across the three provinces shows significant differences. Phnom Penh has the strongest SES, with a mean SES score of 7.86. Kampong Cham is next (mean=5.95), and the lowest average SES score is Kampong Chhnang (mean=5.43). One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) statistical test shows that these mean differences are statistically significant ( $F=22.9$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Again this finding is consistent with national level data for these three provinces. Phnom Penh generally scores higher than the other two provinces on a number of development indicators, and Kampong Chhnang is recognized as a considerably poorer province than Kampong Cham on a number of development indicators (CSES 2004, CDHS 2005).

## 5. STUDY RESULTS

### 5.1 Cham Identity

#### **Key Findings**

- ***Islam is central to all Cham and most Cham self-identify through their religious practices.***
- ***As a minority group in Cambodia, Cham feel very united, yet inter-relationships among them are complex.***
- ***Cham Muslims are forging connections to Islamic communities outside Cambodia, where they are exposed to new ideas and information that contributes to their changing attitudes and practices.***
- ***Cham are gaining confidence to celebrate their diversity.***
- ***Cham exhibit multiple cultural identities.***

Interviews reveal that most Cham feel that differences in religious practices, as opposed to any cultural or language difference (whether they speak Cham or not) is what most distinguishes Cham from one another. This is not unusual since ethnic groups usually do not utilize all aspects of their culture or history as markers of their identities. In addition, as one leader stressed, “*many Cham do not even know their cultural background,*” while another leader confirmed that “*while we are separated by language and culture from Khmer, it is our Islamic practice that is still strongest and defines us.*”

Cham interviewed in this study made very few direct comments about their ethnicity and focused more on describing their identity in terms of their religion. Previous (anthropological) research has identified that;

*Many Cham believe that stressing Cham ethnicity or nationality in Cambodia is dangerous. Issues of nationality, says the Cham, referring especially to the situation of the Vietnamese, quickly lead to violence. Whereas religion in Cambodia is much less a problem. The Cham point out that Khmers are generally tolerant of various faiths. And according to Muslim Cham, an emphasis on Cham ethnicity and national heritage might lead to controversy and violence (Collins, 1996).*

Several Cham respondents in this study suggested that they simply want to ‘live in peace and harmony’ in Cambodia and perhaps they recognize that identification by religion enhances their chance for security and peace in Cambodia.

### ***Cham Self-Identification***

This study aimed to better understand how Cham currently self-identify, which factors unite and separate Cham from one another, and in what ways Cham identity may be changing in Cambodia today.

#### ***Self-Identification by Cultural Background***

When asked “*How would you prefer people to call you with respect to your cultural background?*” the majority of Cham interviewed said they prefer “Khmer Islam” (83%), while 16.5% said “Cham,” and one respondent said “Khmer.” However, the fact that the responses differed significantly among the three provinces coupled with more in-depth discussion with Cham leaders suggest that there is not widespread agreement. Furthermore preferences on how to refer to themselves vary considerably among Cham. Those in Phnom Penh were most likely to say their preference is “Khmer Islam” (95%). Only three respondents (5%) of those interviewed in Phnom Penh said they prefer to be called “Cham,” compared to 25% in Kampong Chhnang, and 20% in Kampong Cham.

It is not surprising that nearly all respondents in Phnom Penh prefer to be called Khmer Islam since many Cham living in Phnom Penh are not ethnically Cham and do not have historical ties to the kingdom of Champa. They consider themselves Khmer who practice Islam making the term “Khmer Islam” very fitting. While Cham living in both Kampong Cham and Kampong Chhnang are mostly ethnic Cham (whose ancestors come from Champa and who still speak the Cham language today); it is also logical that compared to Phnom Penh, a higher percentage of these respondents say they prefer to be called “Cham.” Yet, a relatively high percentage of respondents in these provinces (80% in Kampong Cham, and 72% in Kampong Chhnang), still claimed that they prefer the term “Khmer Islam.” Comments from respondents on Cham identity shed light on possible explanations for these findings:

*“There are many different definition and classifications. If you say ‘Cham,’ some will say they are not Cham and will not be satisfied. If you say ‘Khmer Islam’ this is the term given to us by the government, and so more people will be satisfied with this term because it seems to integrate us into the majority culture, but when this term is used you lose the Cham identity. But many Cham don’t know their identity and they simply want to live in harmony, so they accept Khmer Islam.”* (Phnom Penh)

*“Being called ‘Khmer Islam’ can help us with job opportunities because it recognizes us as ‘Khmer,’ and therefore it is a good term even though it negates our cultural identity. We still feel Cham and we still know that we are Cham.”* (Kampong Cham)

*“If you ask them (referring to Cham who reside in rural areas) where they come from, many cannot answer. They mostly identify by religion, but that is because there is no history of Cham in education.”* (Phnom Penh)

This acknowledgement that some Cham are less familiar with their ethnic origin and that some feel a strong desire to do whatever it takes to fit into society (and benefit from the associated opportunities), offers logical explanations as to why perhaps some Cham have accepted a label that fails to recognize their ethnicity.

Despite the lack of universal agreement on a suitable label or classification among Cham themselves, all 27 local Cham leaders interviewed responded “yes” to the question *Do you feel the*

*Cham identity is protected in Cambodia?* Given the emphasis on identifying themselves and their communities by their religious practices, it is possible that “protection of identity” was interpreted as “religious freedom.” Insufficient follow-up to this question, however, does not allow for further interpretation of this finding. However these findings highlight the problems related to the ability of individuals to classify their ethnicity, including difficulty in self-identification, and possible reticence to self-identify due to potential discrimination.

### *Self-Identification by Religious Practices*

*Chvea* is the Khmer word for Java. As noted earlier in this report, *Chvea* do not have ethnic ties to the kingdom of Champa and do not generally speak Cham. They do not refer to themselves as *Chvea*, a term that suggests a foreign origin. *Chvea* prefer to call themselves “Khmer Islam.” This term, of course, stresses their national belonging, yet also acknowledges their separate religion from the majority of Khmers.

The majority of the Cham living in Kampong Chhnang are referred to as *Jahed* (from the Arabic word *zahid* which means recluse or ascetic) by researchers as well as other Cham who do not follow the same religious practices as this group. Their ancestors were members of the royal Champa family. When this group first fled to Cambodia they originally settled in Cambodia in the former Khmer capital of Udong with permission from the Khmer king. The *Jahed* are proud of this royal affiliation and Khmer royal privilege (Trankell & Ovesen, 2004). The *Jahed* are a minority among the Cham Muslim community in Cambodia, and today there are approximately 37,000 *Jahed*.<sup>7</sup> They primarily reside in two districts in Kampong Chhnang and there are also small numbers of *Jahed* who live in Battambang and Pursat.

According to at least two local leaders interviewed in the *Jahed* community, they do not call themselves *Jahed*. They prefer to identify themselves as the followers of Kan Imam San. (Imam San is considered to be the founder of their community. He was given a place for his mosque near Udong in a sacred place where many Cambodian kings also have their burial monuments. Today this place is still highly valued by the *Jahed* community and they take great pride in the fact that their leader’s monument is with the great kings of Cambodia.<sup>8</sup>) One respondent, an English teacher at the local mosque, presented the researcher with his business card that includes his name and “Islamic Community of Kan-Imam San.” Followers of Kan Imam San acknowledge that they practice a different version of Islam than the majority of Muslims in Cambodia. They recognize they are distinct from other Cham Muslims because of their strong efforts to preserve ancient Cham culture.

*Jahed* are also quick to point out the influences from the larger Muslim community to change their more “traditional’ and ancestral Cham beliefs and practices to convert to more “modern” (i.e. orthodox) practices. Most of these reported pressures to change come from Muslim communities outside Cambodia (this is discussed in more detail *Outside Financial Assistance: Influence on Islamic Practices* section below). However, findings also suggest evidence of more subtle efforts by other Muslims in Cambodia, particularly from the younger generation, to convert them to more modern Muslim practices:

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<sup>7</sup> This number was given to a researcher by an Imam in Kampong Chhnang.

<sup>8</sup> For more detailed description of the *Jahed* and Imam San refer to William Collins 1996 study “The Cham in Cambodia.

(Referring to the *Jahed* community), “they are Cham, but they are not Muslim because they do not follow the Koran book, and only the men pray once a week.” (From a youth group interview)

“When I visited Kampong Chhnang I see they are not very strict at following Islam. We should work to change that. They don’t use the Koran. But I think we cannot change their thinking because they believe praying one day per week is very easy and they want to follow that way. But I think we should continue to persuade them to change and if there is any training to help them to learn to follow the way... but we cannot force them if they do not want. Many people have tried to convert them, but they don’t change. So if they do not want to change, we must respect them.” (Field researcher reflection)

Cham living in Kampong Cham were also clear to point out that they too are “Cham from Champa” but they do not hold onto as many Cham traditional beliefs. They are more concerned with “being a good Muslim” and “following proper Islamic practices.” Discussions with local leaders from both communities (*Jahed* in Kampong Chhnang and Cham in Kampong Cham) strongly support findings made by an anthropologist more than a decade ago that “the *Jahed* base their identity in Cham history, literature and script, and the Cham base their identity in religion, Islam” (Collins, 1996). In this respect, Cham self-identification has not changed over time.

### ***Cham Unity***

Nearly all Cham leaders said they feel that the Cham community is united or closely connected and the majority of local leaders (21 out of 27) reported that Cham are most united by their religion. Five leaders said ethnicity is what unites them most, and only one person said language is a key uniting factor.

Sharing the same religion, Islam, is what most unites Cham, yet different interpretations or practices of this religion were also the most commonly mentioned factor that separates Cham from one another. Just over half of the local leaders (15 out of 27) responded “yes” to the question of “*Are there any factors that separate Cham from one another?*” However, it is worth noting that although several respondents affirmed that there are aspects that separate Cham from one another, nearly all emphasized that these differences are only “small things,” “a bit of difference,” or “minimal.” All but one of the differences highlighted were related to differences in either attitudes or practices of Islam including responses such as: “some have a different attitude about how to respect Allah”; “there are different practices with respect to Allah”; “some follow old Islamic laws and some have learned and follow new Islamic laws”; and “there are different fasting practices during Ramadan even within one Cham village” (e.g. some follow the sun and some practice according to Islamic calendar). Many of these differences in religious practices reflect changes being introduced to the Cham through recent and increasing connections with Muslim communities from other countries.

### ***Changing Cham Identity***

#### *How is the Cham identity changing today?*

Identities are not fixed or constant and they frequently change depending on context and situation. Cham national and local leaders were asked how the Cham identity is changing. As the table below indicates, several of the changes identified simply illustrate the generation gap; differences in attitude and thinking among older and younger generations.

**Table 5: Identified Changes in Cham Identity**

<b>Category of Change</b>	<b>Examples of Changes</b>
<i>Language</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Parents are not speaking Cham with their children as much</li> <li>- Most young Cham want to speak Khmer and English (be part of the larger community)</li> <li>- Before we spoke Khmer very little, but now we speak well</li> </ul>
<i>Education</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Children can now learn both Khmer and about Islam</li> <li>- Increase in state schools in Cham areas (<i>“we have advocated to Government to provide state schools because Khmer language is important for Cham in Cambodia”</i>)</li> <li>- More education and new knowledge about Islam (from other Islamic countries)</li> </ul>
<i>Religion</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Spread and teaching of Islam (<i>“before there was no one spreading information about Islam, now many more people spreading the word and getting villagers to follow”</i>)</li> <li>- Increase in those who come to mosques to pray (due to increase in available places to pray)</li> <li>- Different Islamic practices coming from abroad and some Muslims converting to more orthodox practices</li> </ul>
<i>Dress (External Appearance)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Introduction of Islamic clothes from other countries</li> <li>- Confident to wear Islamic dress (especially Islamic cap for men and scarf for women)</li> <li>- Older people wear traditional Cham clothes, but the young don’t</li> <li>- Young, urban Cham less likely to wear clothes that identify them as Cham</li> </ul>

Many Cham, regardless of age, recognize that use of the Cham language is decreasing as more Cham place value on learning Khmer and English. Leaders noted that this linguistic shift is a natural shift given the current global context:

*“Most Cham who speak it do not know how to write it, and because of globalization many want to integrate into modern society and mix with other communities and speak common languages.”*

*“Increasingly parents don’t speak Cham with their children and the young generation is starting to lose the language, however, they are not intentionally trying to lose Cham language, it is simply that Khmer and English have much wider use, and Cham language is used just for communicating with one another.”*

Cham comments about their changes in the way they dress, suggest that perhaps Cham are gaining confidence to celebrate their diversity at least by their external appearance. One leader spoke about his community and said:

*“Nowadays Cham men are more developed and we dare to wear our Cham clothing (cap) while traveling. We show the Cham identity by dressing according to Islamic way.*

However while many Cham leaders interviewed feel confident to overtly show their cultural differences, evidence from one youth group interview suggest that young Cham students are more split and they all do not share this level of confidence. A few respondents suggested that they often try to conceal their identity in Khmer society, for example when they are at school or in the public because they are shy and afraid that friends may look down on them.

Another young Cham spoke against his peers and claimed:

*“Many Cham now have much education on religious practice so they follow and practice effectively and they are happy to demonstrate their identity to people all over the world to know their culture and tradition. We all know that Islamic Rule is strict and we are really satisfied to follow it well, both young and old. We are proud to be Muslim.”*

Findings from this study suggest that many Cham feel more integrated into Khmer society, have good relations with Khmer, and that Cham believe that the Government recognizes and accepts Cham religious differences from mainstream society. These conditions have perhaps made some Cham more confident to share, embrace or celebrate their cultural and religious differences. However, since this study did not interview many unmarried Cham youth (15-25), further investigation would be helpful to see if these feelings of cultural and religious pride are as commonly held among that generation. In general, respondents’ ease in expressing pride in their religion and culture indicates their lack of embarrassment over these traits, and suggests that they may feel confident as a minority—even if only classified as a religious minority—within a greater Khmer majority society.

Against the wider backdrop of Islamic radicalism, it is easy to see how the pride in being Muslim Khmers often expressed by younger members of this minority group can be interpreted as nascent extremism, as yet unrealized. While there is certainly the possibility that this pride could morph into something that is more akin to radicalism seen in other countries, the state of things in Cambodia’s Cham community clearly has not arrived at this juncture, nor is there any indication that it is moving in such a direction. This is probably due to the absence of any serious grievances against mainstream society, particularly as they might relate to the free practice of Islam where the Cambodian government has afforded considerable freedom.

### *Re-connecting to International Islam: Challenges and Opportunities*

Transnational and cross-border influences are creating both challenges and opportunities for Cham. It is becoming increasingly common for Muslim from other countries to visit Cham communities and offer direct financial assistance to these communities and to sponsor young Cham Muslims to study abroad. This reconnection to international Islam is viewed by many Cham as very positive. Such assistance and opportunities, as one leader expressed are both natural and necessary:

*“We are Muslims living in a non-Muslim country. It is therefore important for us to connect with other Muslim countries. Every Muslim village wants a mosque for prayer and religious school to learn about Islam. This is what other Muslim countries can help us with – they provide us money for religion, not development.”*

However, findings from this study also suggest that influences from outside Muslim communities may also, in some cases, cause tensions within a community. Discussions with leaders in Kampong Chhnang, as well as field observations made during data collection, reveal evidence that Cham residing in that community (mainly the *Jahed*) appear to be influenced by others to convert to more orthodox practices of Islam. As one Cham respondent from this community who teaches English at the local mosque noted:

*There is a strong influence from abroad and poor people are easily influenced by outsiders (other Muslims) because they come in with their bags of money and offer to help improve the community by building a mosque or a school and promise to make life better.*

This respondent pointed out, however, that residents in his village are still avid followers of Imamsan and that they plan to maintain their traditional practices (which includes praying once a week on Fridays only, using the Cham language and script versus Arabic prayer books). He also noted that Cham in his community they have, “...a desire to preserve our culture and traditions, and we have documentation (old Cham documents) that illustrate our ways, and if we are better educated we will not allow this (outsiders converting us) to happen. But it seems that for now many seem to accept assistance from whomever because they feel they have no choice.”

However, just a few kilometers away in a nearby commune, evidence of traditional Cham converting to more orthodox Islamic practices was found in at least one of the study villages. Leaders at a newly built mosque explained to data collectors that they used to pray only once a week, but within the past three years they have begun to pray five times a day and adopt more “modern” Islamic practices. These Islamic leaders interviewed did not directly report that they were influenced by any group within or outside of Cambodia, they simply explained that they were learning more modern Islamic laws and practices. However, they also explained that much of their funding for their new mosque had come from Indonesia. Additional interviews with survey respondents in that village revealed that there were still individuals within that community who continued their more traditional practices.

In addition to examples of communities who appear to be transitioning from traditional to more orthodox practices of Islam, at least two national leaders suggested that foreign influences on practices of Islam present challenges. As they explained, in some cases foreigners (Muslims) come to a community and introduce a new version or new practices of Islam and “*some people accept it and some do not which can cause tensions among Cham within a community.*” A few leaders also noted that in some communities one can see separate parts to a mosque –divided by a temporary wall– that separates conservative and modern followers of Islam. Researchers also saw evidence of a physically divided mosque in at least one community.

#### *Returning Cham Students: Influence on Islamic Practice*

Study findings also suggest that increasing numbers of Cham students are getting support to study abroad, and that the majority of these young Cham go abroad for religious studies. Many of them return to their communities to share their newly acquired knowledge. Survey respondents were asked if they knew of any Muslim students who had studied abroad. One-third (33%) of the survey respondents knew of someone who has gone abroad from their community, and of those, just over half (52%) said the students had returned to share “new ideas” in their community. Many respondents reported they knew of students who had gone abroad and had not yet returned from overseas. However, of those who knew students who had returned, all but two respondents said that these students had come back to their communities with “new knowledge

about Islamic practices,” and that they shared this knowledge in both formal and informal settings. For example respondents indicated that students speak to the community about Muslim culture, help to improve the religious school, offer advice us about new practices, teach Cham students or assist teachers with teaching methods. Some of the general responses related to teaching could have been referring to teaching language (Cham, English, Malay, or other), and/or other general subjects, however, the majority of the responses were clearly related to communicating about religious practices.

It is interesting to note that ‘modern’ practices in this context means greater orthodoxy in religious practice. This suggests a paradox in which a growing number of young Cham are actually becoming more conservative than their parents. Thus, current trends in the Cham community have the potential to exacerbate generational differences, introducing yet another important intra-community form of tension.

One leader explained that tensions created within Cham communities are often caused by conflicting ideas between “conservative versus modern” beliefs or practices and are not unlike what is happening in the Khmer majority community as foreigners spread western concepts in Cambodia and issues of identity are constantly being questioned. These conflicting ideas are often attributed to the generational gap. It was recognized by young Cham that some of the challenges brought on from the outside are perhaps also due to different attitudes between young and old. Youth group interview notes provide evidence of this:

*There are many mosques and Islamic schools for Cham children to learn in Cambodia. Young Cham have a chance to study in a Muslim country. It means that they learn something new from the Koran Book and that they then have to practice what Allah (in the book) has said. When they come back they teach about what they have learned. It is common that when we bring something new to receivers, at first it seems strange to them. They may reject it immediately because they always have followed their grandparents’ ways, but some think that the new ideas are reasonable for them. If they bring new ideas to the Cham community and they don’t accept it, it doesn’t really cause ‘big’ problem. Allah said if we know something about religion we have to share that knowledge with someone who hasn’t understood yet. If someone doesn’t accept it that is up to them and we must still have a good relationship together.*

*In some cases, the traditional ways of religious practice by Cham people is stricter than the way of religious practice from the Koran book.*

And as two, relatively young national leaders observed:

*[Tensions within a Cham community are] mostly due to conflicting ideas about what is ‘new’. It actually becomes concerns over conservative versus modern practices, and actually both types [of practices] are coming into Cambodia.*

*At the village level, before older people were practicing Islam with limited education about Islam. Now we send many students outside to learn about Islam and they have a much greater understanding about it. However some of the more traditional Cham beliefs contrast with Islamic law, so when students come back and say to elders that this or that is wrong, it can cause some tensions within villages. These young students feel they are telling about ‘the right way’ because it is what they have learned.*

## 5.2 Marginalization

### **Key Findings**

- ***Very diverse viewpoints of Cham marginalization still exist today.***
- ***Cham feel positive about Government efforts to provide assistance to their community and to facilitate positive relations between Cham and Khmer.***
- ***Many Cham prefer to physically live separately to continue to practice important cultural practices, yet that they still share a common vision with mainstream society on the development of their community and the larger society.***
- ***The majority of Cham local leaders believe that Cham understand and value Khmer culture, however, they are less confident that Khmers understand or value Cham culture.***

*Marginalization: feeling of exclusion that is frequently encountered by people who are not part of the majority culture”*

*Marginalize: to prevent from having attention or power, to take or keep somebody or something away from the center of attention, influence or power*

In this study both of these definitions were used to try to measure feelings or experiences of marginalization among Cham. The second definition is more closely linked to ‘discrimination.’ Direct discrimination measures were not included based on the request of our partner Islamic organization. Leaders from the Cambodian Islamic Youth Association (CIYA) believed that such direct questioning about perceived discrimination would make respondents uncomfortable and hesitant to participate in the study. However, as the study results show, some individuals, in response to open-ended questions, reported instances of discrimination.

Due to time and financial limitations, the scope of this study was limited to identifying Cham feelings of marginalization issues in two main service sectors: education and health. Specifically, respondents were asked about their access to and use of State education and health services, and to determine what, if any, factors excluded Cham from using these services. Questions about Cham parents’ economic participation were also included, as both health and education status are determinants of economic opportunities.

### ***Are Cham marginalized or discriminated against in Cambodia today?***

Below are five quotes made recently (within the past two years) about perceptions of how Cham are treated and viewed in Cambodia. These quotes clearly illustrate the different perspectives held about Cham marginalization and discrimination today:

*Today, Cham are not marginalized like highland peoples and successfully participate in public institutions, are well represented in government and various political parties and active in many sectors of the economy. (Source: Report Minorities, the State, and the International Community in Cambodia: Towards Liberal Multiculturalism? p. 10, 2008, written by Stefan Ehrentraut, doctoral student.)*

*Discrimination against ethnic Cham Muslims (in Cambodia) is widespread. The Cham have come under new suspicion from the Khmer majority in the wake of Islamic terrorist attacks in Southeast Asia, the United States, and elsewhere. Rumors that the Chams are plotting to secede and re-establish the Cham kingdom of Champa have further aggravated relations with the Khmer majority. Extreme poverty and the lack of government assistance have compelled many within the Cham community to seek help from overseas donors, many of whom are advocates of orthodox forms of Islam. (Source: UNHCR, The UN Refugee Agency from Freedom in the World – Cambodia (2006).*

*The Cham community has never been oppressed by Cambodian governments from the past until now, except during the Khmer Rouge, when both Cham and Khmer people shared the same plight. One can say that the RGC [Royal Government of Cambodia] today has good relations with the Cham people. A number of Cham people have become strong economically. Another good example is the development of Cham women. As one sees the example in other parts of the world, some Muslim women live with the strictest tradition, but Cham women in Cambodia have made a lot of changes ... from 1991 until now, young Muslim women go to school like men, both in rural and in urban areas... (Source: Speech made by the President of the Cambodian Islamic Women Development Association, in March 2008 during a meeting with Lok Chumteav Bun Rany Hun Sen, printed in article “Cambodians Enjoy Harmony with Cham Community,” The Mirror, March 2008.)*

*Cham people always follow Islam without extremism, but harmoniously living with tolerance in society. Cham people do not feel that they are hated or treated unfairly, which can cause terrorism like in other countries across the globe. In fact, Cham people are poor, but most of them have access to education. We are still worried about the recent influx of an Islam without tolerance. At the time of the Khmer Rouge regime, all Cham mosques were destroyed, and almost all educated persons (including the Cham) were executed. Unfortunately, a gap started again with funds from extremists who intend to impose a strict form of Islam on the Cham people. (Source: U.S. Ambassador to Cambodia, Joseph A. Mussomeli in a report to Washington D.C. as cited in The Mirror,<sup>9</sup> March 2008.)*

*We Cham are the same as everyone else, in terms of doing business or other work it is related to our own capacity. Our traditional occupations are fishing and farming but with education we build our capacity, however, many Cham still are not educated, which excludes us but it is not necessarily exclusion by anyone else. That is why I say we need to focus so much on continuing to develop through education. Lack of education is a big problem for both Cham and all of Cambodia. (Cham leader interviewed for this survey, April 2008)*

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<sup>9</sup> *The Mirror* was a weekly publication in English and Khmer that provided an overview of major issues appearing in Cambodian newspapers. It aimed to facilitate dialog between different positions, by mirroring a wide variety of information and opinion. Due to lack of funding since 2007 it has become an online blog (in English only). It is produced in cooperation with the Open Institute, an NGO which has been created to provide information, tools, and knowledge, and to promote open dialogue in society.

These five quotes from a diverse range of informed individuals are evidence of the complex picture that the Cham community in Cambodia offers today. They may also illustrate the dynamic nature of Cham identity in Cambodia today as reflected by these diverse viewpoints. They are even more striking when juxtaposed with responses from Cham individuals about their place in Cambodian society, which can be seen below.

***How do Cham themselves view their rights in Cambodia and their relationship with the Government?***

Table 6, Figure 3, and Table 7 below present Cham parents’ responses to several agree/disagree questions about their views on how they are treated by the government, whether they feel they are represented in the government, how they perceive their rights as citizens, and their perceptions about their relationship with Khmers.

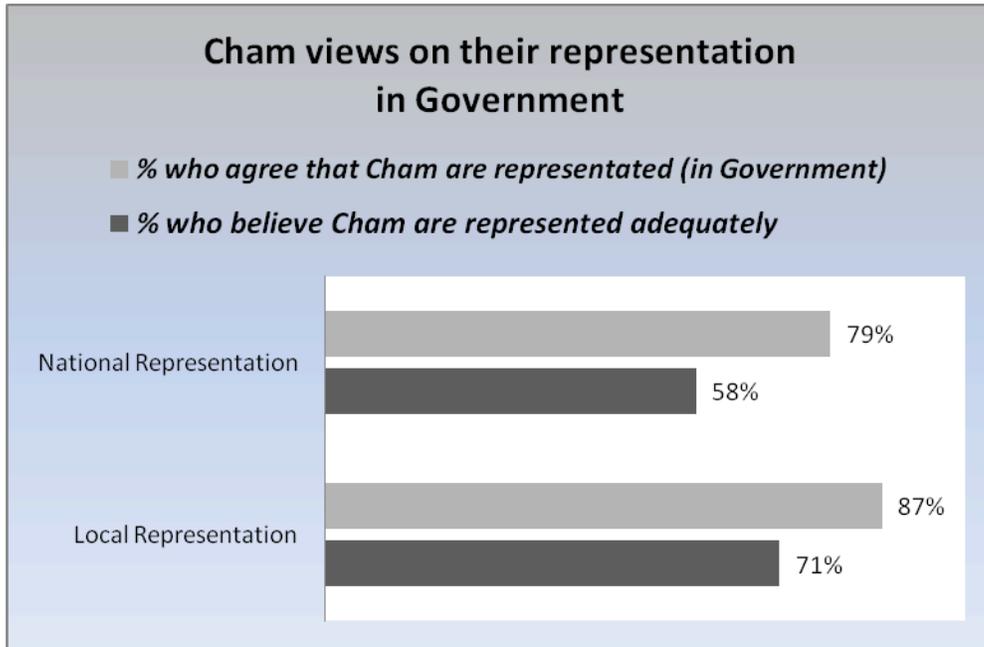
**Table 6: Cham Perceptions about Cambodian Government and their Rights as Citizens**

<b><i>Cham Perceptions</i></b>	<b><i>Agree</i></b>	<b><i>Disagree</i></b>	<b><i>Don’t Know</i></b>
<b><i>Cham attitudes about Cambodian government efforts</i></b>			
Government helps Cham & Khmers equally	90%	0%	10%
Government encourages connections between Cham & Khmer	89%	2%	9%
<b><i>Cham attitude &amp; knowledge on their rights as citizens</i></b>			
Cham enjoy all the same rights as Khmer	88%	4%	8%
Cham women enjoy all the same rights as Khmer women	83%	8%	9%
Cham have the right to stand for election for MP	81%	3%	16%

As can be seen from this table, overall Cham feel very positive about government efforts to provide assistance to their community and to facilitate positive relations between Cham and Khmer. In fact, the Cambodian government has made concerted efforts to strengthen ties between the Khmer majority and Cham or “Khmer Islam” minority. Furthermore, respondents mostly said their rights are comparable to the Khmer majority and that they can stand for parliament if they should choose to do so. Although 16% gave “don’t know” answers, which may be evidence of genuine confusion on the issue or a reluctance to affirmatively state their political rights in Cambodian society today.

A majority of Cham parents expressed knowledge that Cham are represented both nationally and locally in their government, although a higher percentage (20%) of respondents said they were “not sure” whether there are Cham representatives in the national government. (Only 1% of the sample “disagreed” with the statement “Cham are represented in the national government.”)

Figure 3: Cham Views on their Representation in Government



These results show an encouraging level of awareness among parents. As one leader noted *“the more people see that there are Cham leaders in the national government, the more encouraging for Cham to continue to improve their education and try to improve their situation.”* It is also not surprising that a higher number of Cham parents were more aware of Cham representatives at the local level (*Is there a Cham representative on your Commune Council?*) since this person is presumably living in closer proximity with them and this affords them more frequent contact. Eighty seven percent gave the correct answer—as all the communes in which data was collected had at least one Cham person on the commune council—while 10 percent said they were not sure.

The data also reveals that Cham parents would still like to see more representation locally and especially nationally, as only 58% of the respondents felt that Cham are represented adequately in national government. However, this attitude may reflect the lower level of awareness of the actual number of Cham leaders in the national government. Currently there are at least 19 Cham national representatives, working in various ministries, which is not a small number given that Cham make less than 4% of Cambodia’s population. Furthermore, 89% of the Cham local leaders feel that Cham are represented adequately in local government, and all (100%) said that Cham are represented adequately at the national level. These local leaders presumably have more contact with national government leaders, which may explain their confidence about national representation. Additional outreach from Cham elected officials and community leaders would be instrumental in raising Cham awareness of the level of their representation.

***How do Cham perceive their relations with Khmers?***

**Table 7: Cham Views on their Relations with Khmer**

<i>Cham views on their relations with Khmer</i>	<i>Parents' Views (n=168)</i>			<i>Local Leaders Views (n=27)</i>		
	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Don't Know</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Don't Know</i>
Cham & Khmer have good relations	88%	4%	8%	*	*	*
Most Cham prefer to live separately from Khmer	84%	14%	2%	74%	26%	0%
Many Khmer have a positive view of Islam	70%	8%	23%	82%	11%	7%
Cham value Khmer culture	*	*	*	93%	7%	0%
Khmer value Cham culture	*	*	*	44%	41%	15%
Cham understand Khmer culture	*	*	*	93%	7%	0%
Khmer understand Cham culture	*	*	*	33%	52%	15%

\* = did not ask this group

These responses are notable for the commonly held set of views that, despite feeling positive about their relations with Khmers, a majority of Cham prefer to live in their own communities, distinct from the Khmer majority. A fairly large number of “don’t know” responses were reported by Cham parents to the statement regarding Khmers’ positive view of Islam, yet Cham local leaders were more likely than parents in the community to believe that Khmers view their religion positively. However, a note of caution may be seen in the responses by local leaders who expressed the belief that an understanding of Cham culture by Khmers is rather limited (only 44% say that Khmers value Cham culture, and 33% say that Khmers understand Cham culture). In contrast, Cham leaders indicate that they believe that the overwhelming majority of Cham value and understand Khmer culture. It is impossible to verify these statements about Khmer understanding of Cham without further research into these questions with the Khmer majority, however, these findings do suggest that more efforts should be made to increase mutual understanding of the two cultures. Perceptions of a willingness to learn and understand about each others’ culture is an important factor that will contribute to consolidating trust and more solid collaborative relations.

Follow-up responses offered by both parents and local leaders with regard to their relations with Khmer provide further explanation about Cham preference to live separately from the Khmer majority. Many Cham explained that they prefer to ‘physically’ reside separate from Khmer (or other ethnic groups) simply to make it easy to continue to practice important cultural practices (e.g. prayer at local mosques, not having pigs in the village, etc.), yet that they still share a common vision with mainstream society on the development of their community and the larger society. One respondent explained:

*“Cham want to live collectively, together in one community. Wherever they go they build a mosque or some place for worship. They also live together so they can preserve their culture. If they are not distracted by other people, they can preserve it, however, they also share everything with Khmers.”*

Many respondents also stated how similar their needs are to Khmers in terms of improving their lives and communities. Moreover, national and local leaders noted that Cham seek to work together with Khmer to work for their mutual benefit and the overall common good. Despite many (but certainly not all) Cham wanting to physically live in separate from Khmers, the majority of respondents at all levels (parents, local and national leaders) described Cham relations with Khmers as “moving forward together and becoming more and more cooperative with one another.” A smaller percentage of respondents said they feel that Cham and Khmer are “segregated but respectful of one another.” Respondents confirmed that there are many factors that help facilitate understanding between Cham and Khmer. These factors include having Cham leaders in the government, globalization, and increasing numbers of Cham and non-Cham marriages. One respondent also emphasized that “people (in Cambodia) are beginning to recognize differences from one another and most do not want to fight over religion or culture.”

### 5.3 Access and Use of State Education Services

#### ***Key Findings***

- ***Gender bias among Cham (educating sons over daughters) is still pronounced.***
- ***Most Cham prefer their children to attend both state school and Islamic school despite the challenges and obstacles they face with the State systems.***
- ***Reported school and/or teacher fees incurred by Cham parents is still a great financial burden, however, minimal parental involvement or knowledge about school matters perpetuates a lack of understanding of State school procedures.***
- ***For most Cham, Islamic schools are easier to access than state schools (closer to home and not as many ‘fees’).***

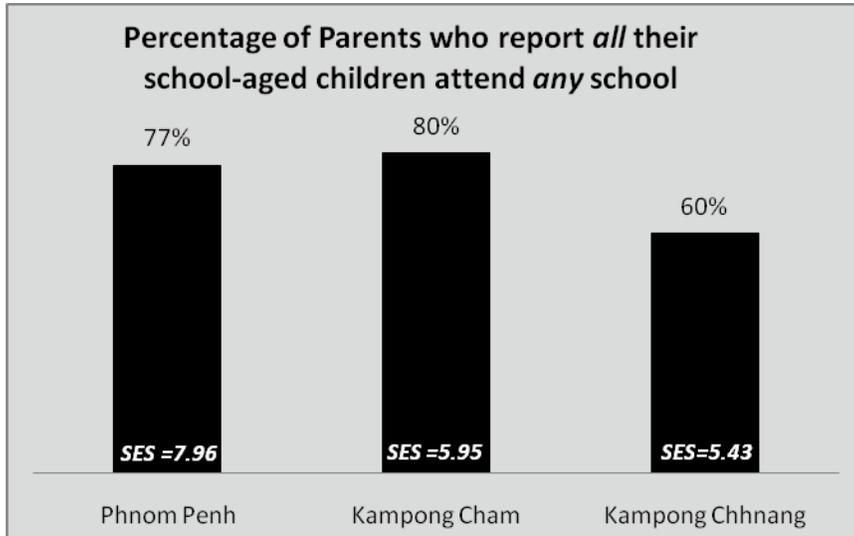
#### ***Cham Participation in School***

Seventy-three percent of the respondents reported that **all** their children attend a school (either State or Islamic), and nearly 28% of parents said they have at least one school-aged child who does not attend school at all. Research has shown that inequalities in access to education reflect inequalities in wealth. And that parents’ educational status influence children’s education achievements and participation (World Bank, 2007). Findings from this study confirm that a family’s socio-economic status is a factor related to whether a child from that family attends school or not. Across the sample, parents who reported that all their children attend school show a higher average SES score ( $x=6.7$ ) compared to those families who report that all their children

are **not** enrolled in a school ( $x=5.7$ ). This difference in mean SES score is statistically significant ( $F=6.83, p<.01$ ).

However, a breakdown of the school attendance rates among Cham in the three study provinces indicates that factors beyond individual or family SES also impact these Cham children's participation in school.

**Figure 4: School Participation Rates among Cham by Study Provinces**



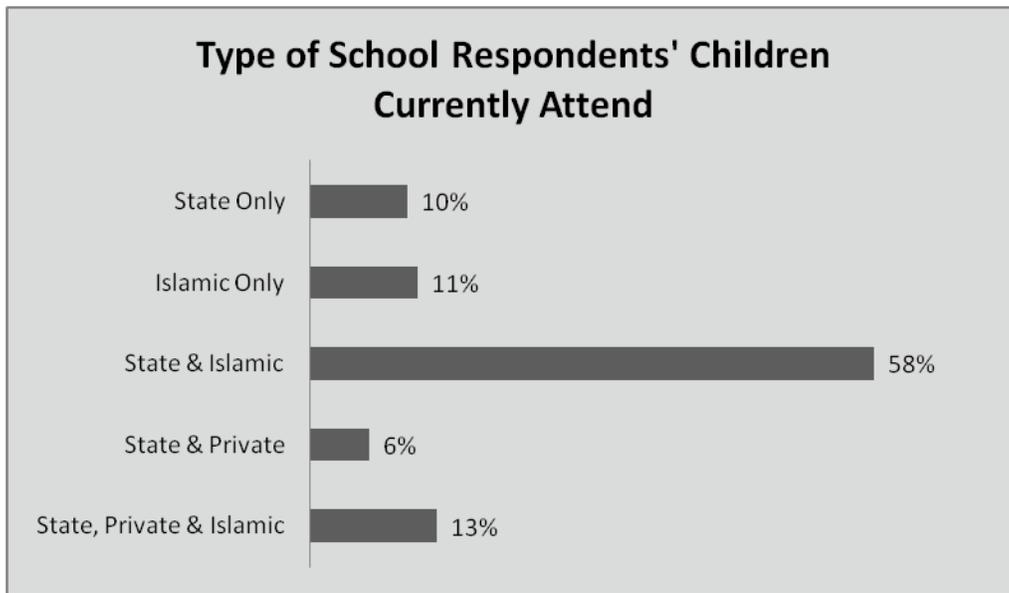
As noted earlier in this report and shown in the figure above, Phnom Penh parents in this study have a higher mean SES score than the other two provinces. Kampong Cham and Kampong Chhnang mean SES scores are lower and more comparable to one another. Yet Kampong Cham's reported rates of school participation (80%) are closer, and even slightly higher than Phnom Penh participation rates (77%). Possible explanations for this are that "participation in school" for this question includes participation not only in the State school system but in Islamic or other private schools as well. There are much higher numbers of Cham in Kampong Cham, and there are also more Islamic schools in Kampong Cham, compared to both Phnom Penh and Kampong Chhnang. Thus the increase in reporting could be due to Kampong Cham parents having considerably more access to Islamic schools. It could also be due to very large investments in road infrastructure in the province in recent years and the construction of schools by major political parties in Kampong Cham, given the large number of voters there.

It is also possible that these higher rates may be in part due to the specific educational programming targeting Cham students and teachers in Kampong Cham. The USAID-funded ESCUP project has tried to promote Muslim community outreach as a central strategy over the past three and a half years, with the goal to increase enrollment rates among Cham students and indeed to increase the numbers of Cham teachers. Two of the districts in which data was collected in Kampong Cham were targeted by ESCUP.

*Cham participation in school by type of school*

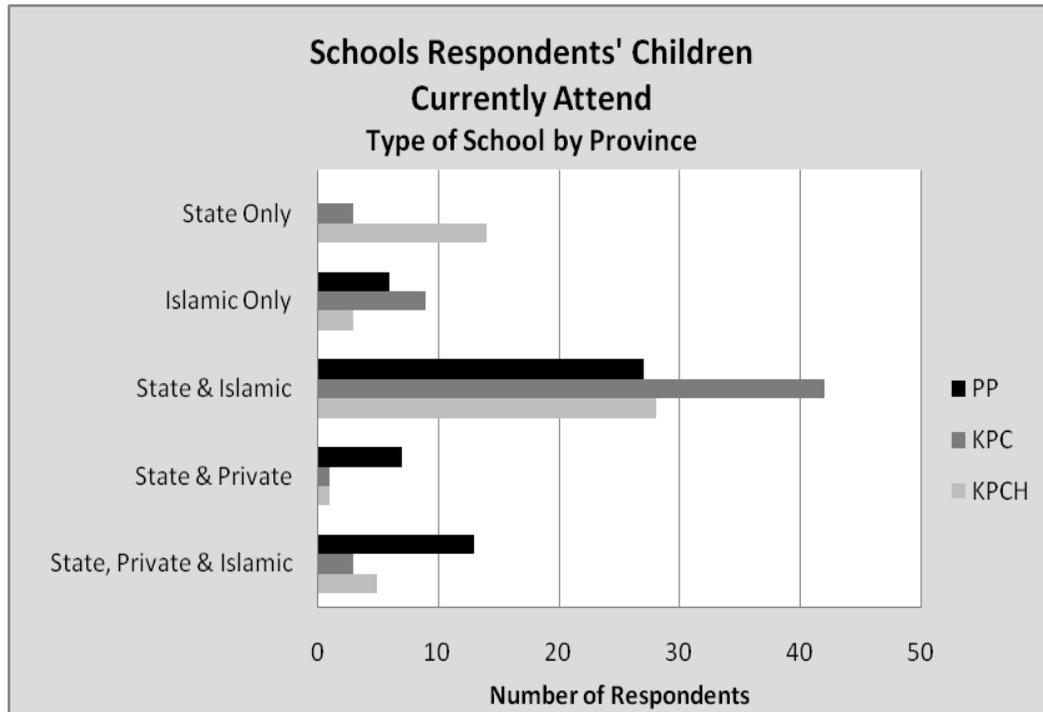
The two figures below show that the the majority of the children attend both State and Islamic schools. Across the sample, 71% of the parents reported that their children attend both State and Islamic schools (58% State and Islamic + 13% State, Islamic and private).

**Figure 5: Type of School Currently Attended by Cham Children**



A breakdown of the types of school(s) children attend by province (see below) reveals that residents in Kampong Cham are most likely to attend both State and Islamic schools.

Figure 6: Type of School Cham Currently Attended by Province



Possible explanations for this include factors such as Kampong Cham has the highest concentration of Cham in the country and so the Cham communities are well-established and may be more likely to have more of their own institutions. Furthermore, Kampong Cham is relatively wealthier than Kampong Chhnang, and so its residents may be in a better position to patronize Islamic schools or afford State and private schools. The figure also highlights the higher participation by students in Phnom Penh in private schools (typically this means attending school part-time for language study, most often for English). The higher participation in private schools among Cham in Phnom Penh is consistent in general with the higher number of and greater access to private schools in Cambodia’s largest urban center.

Cham local and national leaders also affirmed that most Cham parents want their children to attend both State schools and “religious studies” (i.e., Islamic schools). Cham local leaders in each community, when asked to estimate the percentage of students attending the different types of schools, claimed that the overwhelming majority of students in their communities attend both State and Islamic schools. Quotes from these leaders verify that they see the function of each school as serving a different, yet important need. They also emphasize the fact that access to school is still a concern:

*Cham seek both religious teaching and general. Ideas about education are also changing due to globalization. While some may prefer separate schools, **most** want to integrate into modern society and with other communities.*

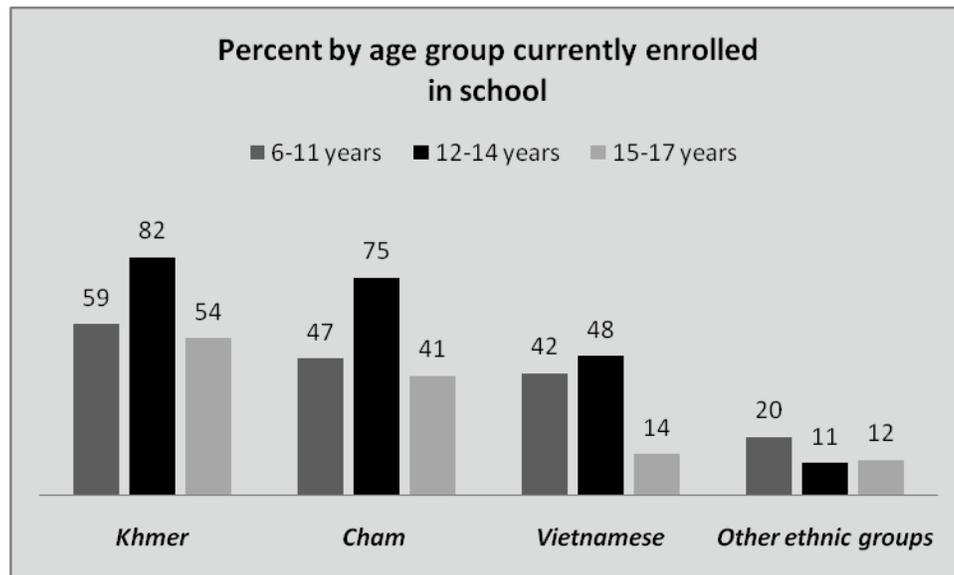
*Most Islamic schools teach about religion only. Now most people see that if their children only study religion they can do nothing. If they send their children only to Islamic school they will study a short time and get married. But those who study in public schools can graduate from high school and go on to University and get better opportunities.*

Parents were asked to identify the main benefits of each type of school. The majority of parents stated that the main benefits of attending a State school is to learn to read and write in Khmer (35%), to get a job (35%), and to do math (12%). Parents said the main benefits of attending Islamic schools are to learn about Islam (75%) and because it is an “obligation” as a Muslim to study religion (19%).

#### *Comparing Cham and Khmer enrollment rates*

This study did not gather age specific enrollment rates of Cham school children. More detailed analysis of secondary data is needed to compare Cham and Khmer enrollment and dropout rates by age. However, data from the 2004 Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey suggest that overall, Cham have lower but similar rates to Khmer, especially when compared to other ethnic minority groups. Figure 7 below presents this data.

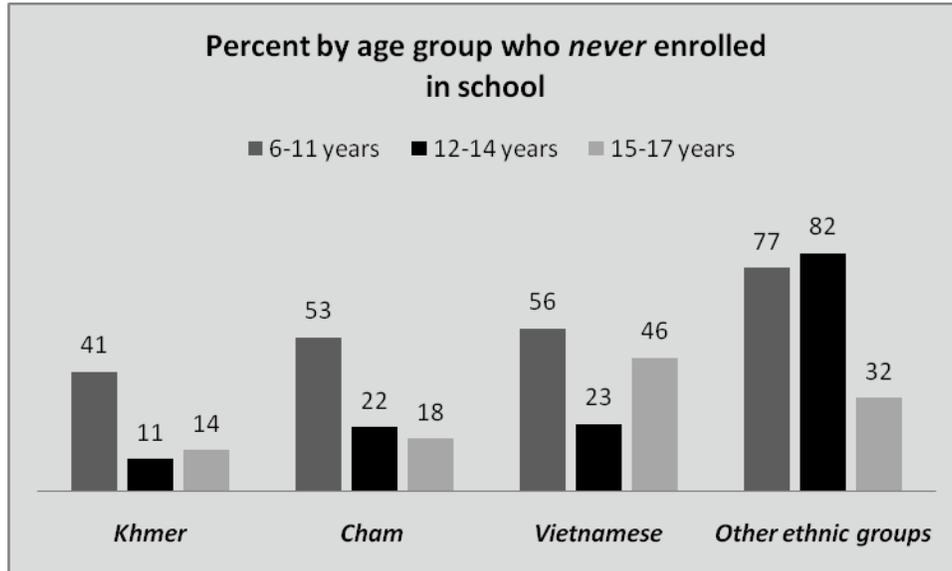
**Figure 7: Currently enrolled in School by Ethnicity and Age Group**



Source: CSES 2004, analyzed in Ragatz 2005 pp. 10-12; Phnom Penh Post July 14-27, 2006

Cham also fared better than other ethnic minority groups and showed rates approaching Khmer children for student by age group who never enrolled, presented below.

**Figure 8: Never Enrolled in School by Ethnicity and Age Group**



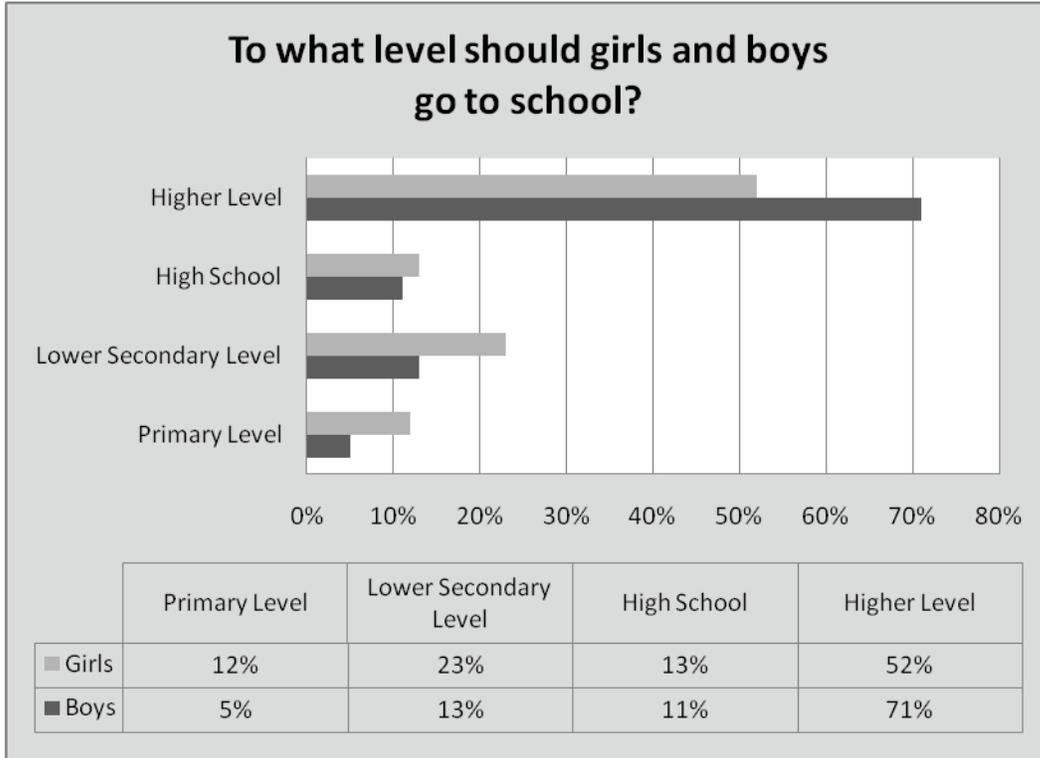
Source: CSES 2004, analyzed in Ragatz 2005 pp. 10-12; Phnom Penh Post July 14-27, 2006

It is worth noting the relatively low non-enrolment rates for 15-17 year old students (those who would be in lower secondary or secondary school) between Cham (18%) and Khmer (14%), when compared to much higher rates among the Vietnamese (46%) and other minority ethnic groups (32%). This finding is interesting given the number of parents among Cham communities in this study who complained that access to lower secondary and secondary schools is very difficult for their children. It suggests that despite identified access difficulties, Cham still persist in sending their children to school. Evidence of this value placed on education by Cham is discussed in more detail below.

Cham general attitudes about sending children to school

In 2003, the MoEYS developed a national plan of action to achieve Education for All (EFA) by 2015. Cambodia has committed itself to achieving universal completion of nine-year basic education by 2015 and to **eliminate gender disparity** in basic education by 2010. Study findings presented in the figure below illustrate that there is still work to be done to overcome gender bias against girls among members of the Cham community. Cham parents were asked their thoughts about how much schooling they believe *boys* and *girls* should receive in general, as well as the type of school they prefer most to send their *own children*. A gender bias in both level of schooling desired (Figure 9) and type of schooling preferred (Figure 10) was found.

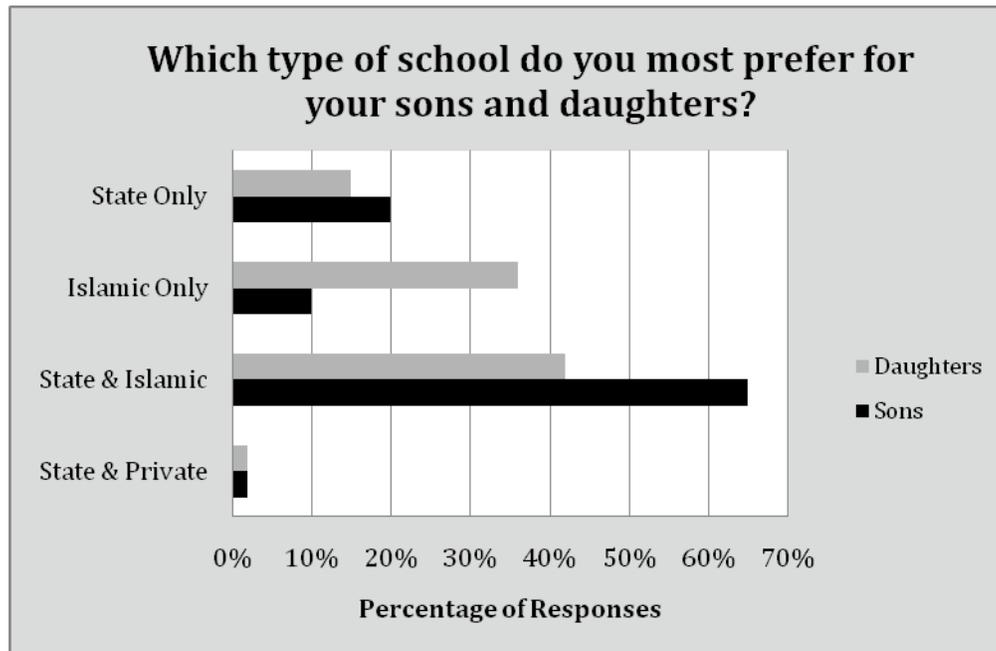
**Figure 9: Cham Parent Views on Level of Schooling for Boys and Girls**



These data indicate that the majority of parents see the value in educating both boys and girls and that the majority also think it is important for their children to study beyond primary school level. However, the gender bias towards educating boys compared with girls is particularly apparent at the higher level of education, where only half of the parents thought girls should continue on to higher education, compared to 71% of the parents who believe that boys should continue to this level. No statistically significant differences between mothers and fathers responses about what level of education boys and girls should be allowed to achieve were found. Both mothers and fathers show a gender bias toward educating sons to a higher level than daughters. This bias however is not unique to Cham. It is also found within the larger Khmer society and is a main reason why the MoEYS has in the last decade made a concerted effort to implement pro-girl (and pro-poor) education programs and policies (World Bank, 2007).

Parents were also asked about the type of school they prefer most for their sons and daughters. Overall, parents' preferences for type of school is consistent with their actual reported behaviors; the majority say they prefer to send their children to both State and Islamic schools.

Figure 10: Type of School Cham Parents Prefer for their Children



At the same time, a difference in parental preferences for type of education between sons and daughters is clearly illustrated. Among those preferring Islamic schools, it was more common to express this preference for daughters rather than sons. While more parents preferred both State and Islamic for their sons compared to their daughters, which would presumably lead to a higher level of academic and cultural advantage for boys rather than girls since a State education is more likely to enable admission to post-secondary institutions. This suggests that traditional attitudes among parents regarding preferred types of education for their children favor boys over girls when it comes to support for a more academic education. It also suggests that tendencies for parents to express preference for Islamic schools, as was found by the KAPE study, is more of an issue for girls rather than boys.

Field researchers’ observations and notes provide additional insight into why some parents prefer to send their daughters only to Islamic schools only. Researchers noted that conservative attitudes still prevailed among some parents interviewed, which may inhibit girls’ access to education: *“Some parents told us that their daughters would marry (young) and so they did not need to send them for higher education because that is not what makes them a good wife. They only need to understand how to practice Islam properly.”* The finding that parents who believe their daughters will marry and not enter the work force, explains partly why they put less emphasis on educating their daughters to higher levels; however, as research shows, educating these daughters will directly impact on future generations of Cham children – since level of mother’s education is a significant determinant of child health (World Bank, 2006).

Qualitative data from a previous research study (e.g. Collins 1996) also suggested that Cham avoid sending their children to Khmer (i.e. State) schools for fear that the children would become Khmer, and that this attitude is more common among fathers regarding their daughters. Results

from this dataset suggest that perhaps this attitude is changing among Cham parents. More than three-quarters of the parents interviewed *disagreed* with the statement that “If my child attends a state school he or she will lose his/her Cham identity.” Only 16% of the parents agreed with this statement; however this data also shows that fathers were more likely than mothers to feel that sending their children to Khmer schools would contribute to a possible loss of Cham identity. Unfortunately, parents were only asked to report about their children in general (rather than separately for their daughters versus sons) for this question. However, given the significant differences between mothers’ and fathers’ responses to the question, as well as the higher percentages that both parents report when sending their daughters versus sons to Islamic schools only, it is likely that this anxiety still exists among some, but fewer, Cham today. These findings suggest an acceleration of assimilative tendencies in Cham communities.

### *Perceived lack of access to schools*

In addition to gender bias and conservative attitudes about educating girls, lack of access to state schools was also brought up by parents as a key factor that affects their decisions or schooling for their daughters. Field researchers reported that several parents complained that lower- and upper secondary schools were too far away (i.e. not in their village) and that it was simply too dangerous to allow their daughters go that far away to study. Specifically, a few respondents said that they feared that perhaps their daughters would not make it to school safely. These anecdotal reports are supported by the survey data where 63% of the parents said that the nearest school to them was an Islamic school. Thirty percent said there was a primary school nearest their home, while only 4% said that there was a secondary school nearest their home. It is difficult to ignore the importance of proximity of schools when parents make decisions about the type of school or level of schooling they prefer for their children, especially their daughters. It is also possible that restrictions on mobility of Cham girls and women may be more prevalent in the Muslim community than in larger Khmer society. To be sure, fear about sending girls to school due to distance issues is also common among Khmer parents making it difficult to determine the degree to which these attitudes contribute to expressed preferences for State or Islamic schools.

### ***School Satisfaction***

Among those with a child at State school, 97% said they were satisfied with the education provided, while 100% of those with a child at Islamic school said they are satisfied. However, it is worth noting that field researchers explained that several respondents who had said they were “satisfied” with the state schools admitted that they actually knew very little about their child’s school and in **many cases** said they had never been to the schools. This is perhaps not surprising, given that overall parental involvement in local schools is not extensive. The ESCUP project has worked to address this through programs designed to promote greater school community governance, holding open days for parents to observe what their children have learned, and other activities aimed at getting more parents and community members involved with the schools.

Despite high rates of general satisfaction reported, more than half the respondents were able to articulate one or more weaknesses with the school their child attends. Respondents were asked

what they saw as the *main* weaknesses with the school their child attends. The table below presents the different types of weaknesses identified for both state and Islamic schools.

**Table 8: Main Weaknesses of Schools Identified by Parents**

	<i>State Schools</i>	<i>Islamic Schools</i>
<b>Percent of parents who identified school weaknesses</b>	<b>58%</b> (n=98)	<b>62%</b> (n=104)
<b>Main Weaknesses</b>	<p><b>Too many costs (32%)</b>                      -ask for money from students                      -too many ‘fees’                      -lack financial resources to pay fees</p> <p><b>Quality of Education Low (32%)</b>                      Teachers:                      - do not explain concepts well/clearly                      - do not teach regularly                      - are not satisfied and so they are frequently absent                      - are focused more on tutoring</p> <p><b>Lack of Access to school (19%)</b>                      -Too far away</p>	<p><b>Lack of financial support for teachers (42%)</b>                      -no salaries for Islamic teacher                      -not enough teachers                      -don’t teach regularly because no salary (so too busy earning money other ways)</p> <p><b>Lack of Facilities (26%)</b>                      -no teaching materials                      -no school building or class space,                      -no classroom materials (desk, chairs)</p>

*\*Responses made by less than 10% of parents are not included in this table*

As the table illustrates, for State schools the dissatisfaction is centered around cost and educational quality, while in the Islamic schools’ dissatisfaction is focused on lack of resources in general for the schools. Lack of financial support for Islamic schools and teachers was stated as the main reason why there are not enough Islamic teachers. Many parents expressed concern that Islamic teachers simply cannot afford to teach regularly (i.e., they need to earn a living doing other kinds of work). For State schools, parents acknowledged that state teachers are dissatisfied with their low government salary, and thus they resort to private tutoring out of school in order to earn additional money. This tutoring is often essential to achieving good grades or passing, and thus parents are helpless to avoid enrolling their children in these “private” tutoring classes, and incur significant expenses as a result. However, it is difficult to determine whether the fees that parents note are for extra tutoring outside of the school or whether these are fees solicited in schools. Since many Cham parents in this study admitted that they were not very familiar with their children’s schools, it is likely that many of them cannot easily distinguish between mandatory cost and an optional cost.

Finally, one-fifth of the respondents also noted limited access to State schools because the schools are not in their village and too far to send their children, especially their daughters. While the access related complaints for those seeking to attend Islamic schools were not that the

schools are too far away, but that in some cases there lacks an actual facility, teacher, or teaching materials.

Previous studies have confirmed and the MoEYS has acknowledged that the overall financing of the education system is still “heavily reliant on households' private contributions to both direct and indirect education costs (MoEYS, 2006).” Hence the Education Strategic Plan for 2006-2010 specifically states that “reducing parental costs barriers (such as informal payments) is a key objective” with a target of “abolishing informal payments in grades 1-9 nationwide by the end of 2008.” Findings from this study indicate that these school and/or teacher fees incurred by Cham parents are still a great financial burden, and minimal parental involvement or knowledge about school matters perhaps perpetuates a lack of understanding of the system or any recognition of guidelines for payments.

Only 5% of the parents surveyed cited any cultural or religious factors as main weaknesses of the State schools. The simultaneous influence of poverty issues, which are similar for Khmer parents, and cultural attitudes among Cham make it difficult to sort out causal links in school attendance among Cham.

Cham parents were asked whether they feel that Cham children have more difficulty learning in state schools than Khmer children. Slightly less than half (42%) of the parents reported they believe that Cham students have more difficulties learning in State schools than Khmer children, a significant proportion. This roughly accords with a language proficiency survey conducted by KAPE that found that approximately one-third of Cham children experiencing difficulties in the classroom due to difficulties in Khmer language proficiency (KAPE, 2007). Parents in this study were asked to describe these difficulties. Below is a list of the most commonly cited responses among the 69 (42%) respondents who said they feel it is more difficult for Cham than Khmer to learn in state schools:

**Main reasons Cham parents feel it is more difficult for Cham than Khmer children to learn in state schools:**

- 
1. No money / too Poor 65%
  2. School is too far 48%
  3. Difficult for girls to sit next to boys 44%
  4. Difficulty with Khmer language 32%
  5. Not safe to travel to school 31%
  6. Unable to follow religious practices (e.g. no place to pray, head scarf not part of uniform) 6%
  7. Other (no time to study due to household chores, too many children in classrooms) 5%
- 

Does not add up to 100%. Multiple responses were accepted.

Even when parents were specifically comparing Cham and Khmer children, or asked what it is about being Cham that makes it more difficult, they still emphasized that general poverty (lack of money to pay for schooling) and limited access to schools (i.e. school is too far from home) are the most significant barriers preventing their children from successfully participating in the state education system. However, as highlighted in gray, responses to this question also suggest cultural, linguistic and religious differences among Cham Muslims are additional perceived

barriers to learning in state schools. This shows that, for some Cham parents, these cultural identity factors perhaps shape their overall attitude with respect to their children's access to school, and may inhibit enrollment.

It is interesting to note that only a few respondents noted that prohibition to wear a headscarf to State schools was an issue. This emerged as a significant barrier to study in two previous studies (KAPE, 2007; So, 2006). Some local leaders interviewed for this study said that state schools in their areas were already allowing girls to wear them, and indeed, in May 2008 a directive was signed by Prime Minister Hun Sen which stated, "In order to provide good advantage for Cambodian Muslim students, especially for female students, the Royal Government of Cambodia would like to advise all public and private educational institutions to give rights and freedom to Cambodian Muslim students to have their own choices in choosing school uniform" (as reported in *The Cambodia Daily*, September 11, 2008). This essentially means that students will have the right to wear either the school uniform and a traditional garment item such as a *hijab*, or headscarf. As noted in this report's recommendations, it is important for the government to undertake outreach for the purposes of making schools more accessible to its Cham population. This is a significant step that is likely to have positive effects on enrollment of girl students, particularly as they reach grades beyond lower primary. It also is encouraging in that it signals the government is willing to effect other policy changes in an effort to make other social services (such as health) more accessible to this religious minority.

***Recommendations for Improving Access and Use of Education Services for Cham:***

Findings presented here clearly illustrate that Cham parents want to send their children to school, and that their first preference is for children to be able to participate in both State schools and religious studies. Data also confirms that some Cham perceive access to state schools is still limited due to both economic factors and cultural differences. These findings, coupled with the apparent gender bias against girls, suggest the need for the following actions to improve access and use of education services for Cham:

- Investigate and ensure that increases in public expenditure for education that have occurred in Cambodia as a whole in recent years (especially at the primary education level), are also happening consistently within the Cham communities.
- Work specifically with Cham leaders in national NGOs to further promote education among Cham girls and to help parents understand the non-economic returns to educating their daughters.
- Partner with Islamic school teachers (*Tuan*) and religious leaders (*Imam*) to develop programs that enable parents to see the benefits of sending their girls to state schools.
- Work with commune councils and other local structures to address parents' concerns about sending girls to schools that are not in the immediate village.
- Ensure that spending increases (on education) are not only pro-poor initiatives but recognize cultural barriers (e.g. affirmative action in the allocation of girls' scholarship funds to address higher gender bias among Cham).
- Help Cham parents to become more informed about their children's schools; to better understand State school systems (including mandatory and optional costs).

- Continue to undertake outreach (particularly the Government) for the purpose of making schools more accessible to its Cham population (e.g affirmative action quotas in teacher recruitment to provide female Cham role models in schools).
- Improve communication and coordination between Islamic schools and public schools to complement one another to benefit Cham children’s all around education/learning

#### 5.4 Access and Use of State Health Services

##### **Key Findings**

- ***Cham parents and local leaders identified factors relating to poor economic conditions and poor quality of service (e.g. lack of transport or money for transport, lack of skilled health workers, lack of medicines, etc.) as critical barriers to using State health services.***
- ***Cham respondents also identified cultural barriers which may significantly contribute to their limited access and use of health services, such as a lack of Cham health workers, lack of women health workers for reproductive services, and lack of prayer places within health facilities.***
- ***Cham parents and local leaders express a strong desire for more Cham/ Islamic health staff, and/or personnel who respect Cham culture and understand Cham language and religion, to work within the State health care delivery system.***
- ***Efforts to build trust and a basic understanding of the public health system are still needed among the Cham communities.***
- ***Cham emphasize the need for more health education and prevention messages to be delivered to Cham by Cham.***

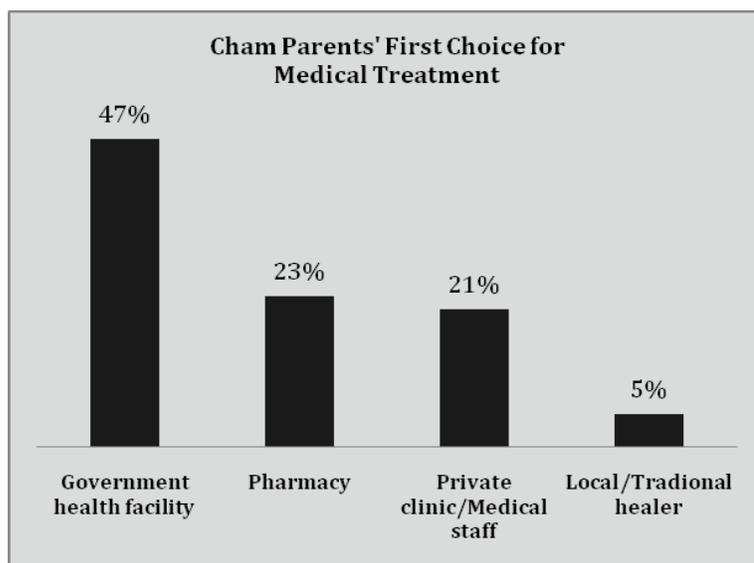
This study did not attempt to look in detail at specific health outcomes among Cham. To do so would have required considerably more time and additional types of data collection. However, the data collected was analyzed where possible against existing secondary data to make additional conclusions about whether the Cham experience significant inequalities in health measures. In general, health indicators for ethnic minorities are low compared to the rest of the country, although it is difficult to develop an accurate understanding of health status as Cambodia does not collect disaggregated data by ethnicity. Statistics on ethnic groups are scarce and mainly based on estimates. (UNFPA, 2008)

Current health initiatives in Cambodia in general aim to improve government health services. “Removal of barriers to utilization by the poor, primarily low quality of services and high cost” has been identified as a main objective to improving health service delivery. Yet the relationship

between health status and utilization of health services is still not fully understood or well documented in Cambodia (WHO, 2006).

### ***Cham Use of State Health Services***

Seventy-four percent of Cham parents say they have *ever* used a State health facility (health center or hospital). And just under half of the respondents (47%) said that a government health facility is their preferred choice for medical treatment. It is somewhat encouraging that nearly half of the parents said that they would prefer to access a public health facility, however, this data also highlights the fact that a fairly large percentage (53%) of Cham parents in this study are not looking to the public health system as their first choice for medical services. Qualitative responses from parents indicate that, in many cases accessing a State health service facility is still perceived as very difficult, and thus Cham parents turn to self-



treatment or seek medicine and advice from a local pharmacy or a local ‘medical person’ in their village. This study did not examine in more detail the qualifications of these private providers (e.g., pharmacy and private clinic/medical personnel), however, previous studies done in Cambodia have shown that the competency of staff within private facilities, including those who sell medicine, have very mixed levels of qualifications, and in many cases are not adequately trained (WHO, 2006).

### ***Maternal Health Care Services***

*Are Cham women accessing health facilities for antenatal care services?*

Respondents were asked about whether they received antenatal care (ANC) and where their most recent child was delivered and by whom.<sup>10</sup> Overall 60% of the Cham parents reported having had at least one ANC check-up during their most recent pregnancy. The Cambodian Demographic Health Survey (CDHS 2005) asked women to report on their ANC for their most recent pregnancy within the past five years. It found that nationally 69% of women who had a live birth in the five years preceding the survey received antenatal care. As was noted earlier, the mean age for this study is relatively high (45 years old). Research shows that younger women are more likely to report having had an antenatal check up (CDHS, 2005). A comparison of the small number of Cham who were under 35 years of age in this study (n=40) with the national sample of all women under the age of 35 surveyed in the CDHS 2005, shows nearly the same rate of

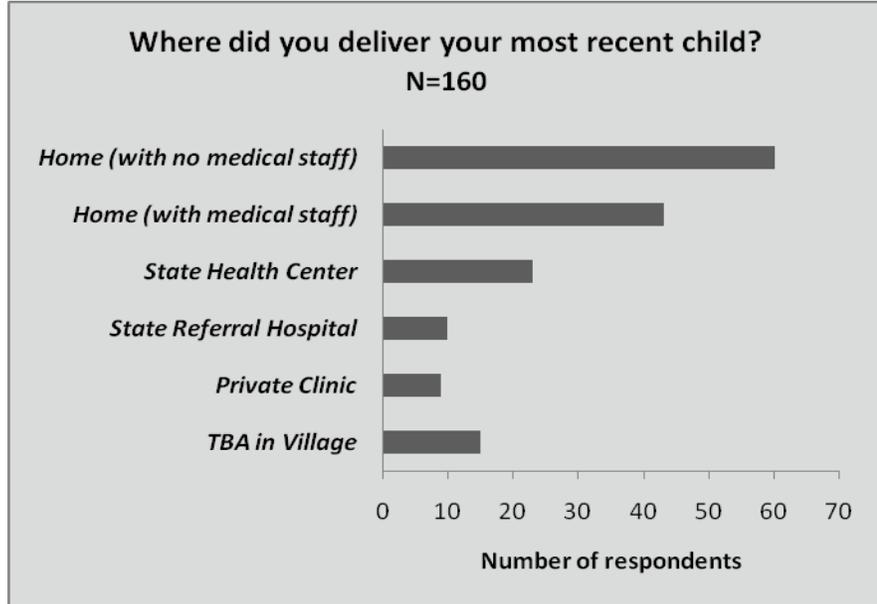
<sup>10</sup> Husbands were asked to report on their wives and the women self-reported.

ANC care among the two groups (73% of Cham women in this study < 35 years old, and 72% of Cambodian women < 35 years old in the CDHS 2005, received ANC).

*Are Cham women accessing State health services to deliver their babies?*

As the figure to the right shows, overall many more Cham women reported delivering their most recent child at home, with **no** medical staff. Very few women in this study delivered in a State referral hospital or private clinic where presumably they would benefit from the safest obstetric care.

However, analysis by age does show that younger Cham women were more likely to have delivered in any health care facility (State or private). Just over half (53%) of the respondents under age 35 delivered in a health facility, compared to only 1/3 (33%) over age 35. This may indicate that trends are positive in terms of utilizing medical services among younger Cham women.



*How do Cham women compare to all Cambodian women with regard to access and use of maternal health services?*

Table 9 below compares findings from this Cham study with the CDHS 2005 data on two key variables: 1) the percentage of respondents who reported receiving ANC by a health professional versus not having an ANC check up at all, and, 2) the percentage of women who delivered their most recent child in a health care facility. Data is presented for the three provinces included in this study.

**Table 9: Comparison of Cham Women with all Cambodian Women on Access to Maternal Health Services**

<i>Province and Two Studies</i>	<i>Percent who did not receive ANC</i>	<i>Percent with ANC care by health professional*</i>	<i>Percent who delivered in health facility**</i>
<i>Phnom Penh</i>			
<i>CDHS 2005</i>	15%	85%	79%
<i>Cham study</i>	12%	84%	67%
<i>Kampong Cham</i>			
<i>CDHS 2005</i>	41%	58%	12%
<i>Cham Study</i>	48%	48%	12%
<i>Kampong Chhnang</i>			
<i>CDHS 2005</i>	12%	85%	18%
<i>Cham Study</i>	37%	63%	20%

The CDHS asked women age 15-49 years of age, thus to make the two study samples more comparable in age, only those women up to age 49 from the Cham study were included in this analysis (age range = 26-49, n= 106)

\*Does not include trained birth attendant

\*\* Public or private facility – does not include reported home birth with trained medical staff

Rates are remarkably similar between the two studies and show that those who report having received ANC from a health professional were highest among Phnom Penh residents, and lowest among Kampong Cham residents. Noteworthy however, are the drastic differences across the three provinces found in both studies among respondents who reported delivering in a health facility. Phnom Penh residents, both Cham and the general population of women in Cambodia, were four times more likely than residents in Kampong Cham or Kampong Chhnang to have delivered their most recent child in a health facility. These findings underscore that access to health services is still a very significant barrier for many rural women. The health care that a mother receives during pregnancy and at the time of delivery is important for the survival and well-being of both the mother and the child. The Maternal Mortality Rate has remained consistently high in Cambodia, and findings reported above illustrate that the overwhelming majority of rural women, including Cham rural women, unfortunately are still not delivering babies with the assistance of health professionals.

Several factors inhibit Cham men and women from using State health facilities. These are presented and discussed in detail below in *Factors Influencing Cham Use of State Health Services*. However, one cultural factor, specifically related to maternal health, which undoubtedly has an impact on Cham families' decisions about where and by whom to deliver their child, is a cultural practice among Muslims in Cambodia that affirms that a man should not touch the blood of a women while she is having a baby. Thus it is not surprising that in this study many Cham parents said they would prefer to seek out a local TBA rather than go to the hospital where they believe there is no women medical staff. Also, many claimed that there is not likely to be anyone who understands Islamic religion or beliefs within the health centers or hospitals. While Khmer women may also not feel

comfortable being examined by a male doctor or health worker, they do not have religious or cultural norms that pose these additional constraints on their health seeking behaviors.

Also, it is not clear from these study results to what extent midwives are available in Cham communities compared to other communities, since most Cham in this study who said they delivered at home with ‘medical staff’ reported doing so with the assistance of a TBA. This finding could simply reflect the national level data that reveal an overall shortage of midwives as well as inadequate levels of competency among midwives in general<sup>11</sup>; further investigation should be undertaken to determine whether current efforts to recruit and train midwives across the country purposefully seek to train and deploy Cham speaking midwives, particularly in areas with a significant Cham population.

A follow-up question to assess Cham women’s comfort level with the State health system was asked to the 92 mothers in this study: “As a Cham woman, do you feel any difficulties to go to the local health center for services for you? Of the 92 women, 19 of them (20%) said they had never visited their local health center, 40 women (43%) said “yes” they face difficulties, and 34 women (37%) said they did not face any difficulties using the state health center. The aim of this question was to identify whether there are any cultural barriers specific to Cham women that prevent or inhibit them from accessing State health services. The numbers are too small for further statistical analyses, and it is not suggested that with such a small sample size these findings represent all Cham women. However, the responses do suggest that indeed cultural barriers may impact Cham women’s decisions to access State health care services for themselves. Of the 40 women who said they face difficulties, half of them noted cultural related factors, while the other half described economic (general poverty) and quality of service factors.

Specific cultural factors included three main types of difficulties: 1) lack of understanding of Cham needs (e.g., “health center staff do not understand about Cham culture”; “there is no place to pray at a health center and this is very important to us”); 2) communication difficulties (“it is difficult to communicate in Khmer language about very sensitive—reproductive health—needs”; “too difficult to talk with a Khmer man about my concerns”); and, 3) perceived discrimination of Cham in general (“doctors discriminate against us”; “they [Khmer] do not pay attention to us or care about our [Cham] concerns”).

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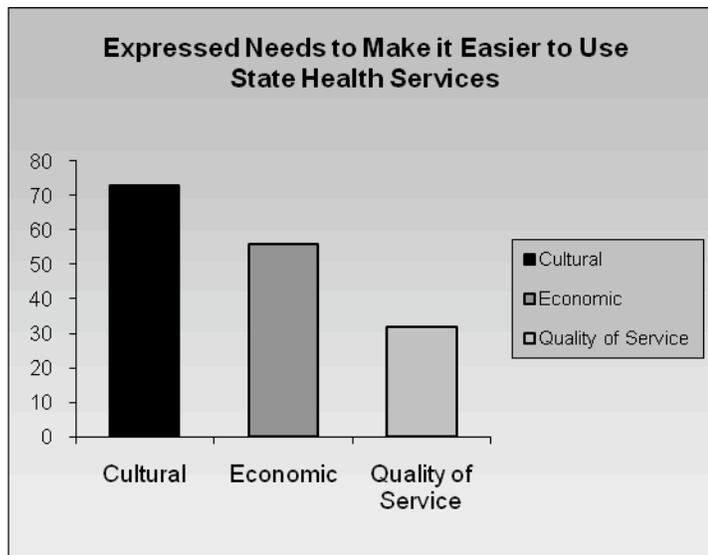
<sup>11</sup> A Midwifery Review demonstrated that the levels of competency among primary midwives are inadequate, as cited in the *Cambodian Ministry of Health Strategic Plan 2008-2015*.

### Factors Influencing Cham Use of Health Services

As noted above, Cham women identified cultural factors that may inhibit Cham women’s use of State health services. To further explore to what extent cultural factors may impact Cham parents’ (both mothers and fathers) decisions to use state health services, all Cham parents interviewed were asked “Do you feel Khmer health staff behave differently to you because you are Cham?” Less than one fifth (18%) of the Cham parents responded “yes” to this more direct assessment of feelings of exclusion or discrimination. Women were more likely than men (21% of women compared to 15% of men) to report that they were treated differently, however, since the numbers are quite small, it is not possible to determine a statistical difference. Parents who said they felt they are treated differently (18%, n=29) were asked to provide a specific example of this differential treatment. Despite researchers’ efforts to probe respondents to offer more specific examples or incidents, some respondents simply offered somewhat vague responses, such as “they discriminate against me,” or “they don’t pay attention to me,” and either could not articulate or were not comfortable discussing more specific discriminatory behaviors. However, a few responses suggest that Cham parents perceive that perhaps Khmer health staff do not value Cham culture. Statements suggestive of this include: “they (health staff) are unhappy when I wear the traditional head scarf,” and “I chose to speak my own language with my family, but I don’t think they (health workers) like this and it makes it difficult to have good relations with them,” and “they do not value Islam or Cham language or dress.” Only a few of these sorts of accounts were given by Cham parents. These self-reports are individual perceptions and it was not possible to verify them further in this study. Nonetheless, these findings do perhaps suggest the need for training in value clarification among health workers.

Cham parents and local leaders were then asked “What do you (your local Cham community) need to make it easier for you as a Cham to use the State health services?” A pre-determined response list was not provided to researchers or respondents, and multiple responses were accepted. Open-ended responses were reviewed in detail and three different categories of perceived needs clearly emerged: cultural, economic, and quality of service.

As the figure to the right shows, across the whole sample, cultural needs were identified by the greatest number of respondents. The specific needs identified within each of these categories are listed below in Table 10.



**Table 10: Specific Needs Identified by Cham Parents and Local Leaders to Make it Easier to Use State Health Services, N=164.**

<i>Cultural</i>		<i>Economic</i>		<i>Quality of Service</i>	
<i>Factor</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Factor</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Factor</i>	<i>n</i>
Need a Cham/Islamic medical staff person	31	Hospital too far away / Need hospital or health center in or near village	27	Lack of skilled medical staff / Improper diagnoses	6
Need a (separate) Cham Hospital	13	Lack of transport or money for transport/need an ambulance	22	Lack of <i>any</i> health workers available / limited time health workers available	5
Need a person who will not discriminate against us/show respect to us	7	Cannot pay hospital fees	7	Lack of medicines available	16
Need medical person who understands us/our religion or is easy to communicate with (eg. speaks Cham)	8			Waiting period too long (for services)	5
Need a prayer place in hospitals/ access to halal food near hospital	14				
<b>TOTAL # of RESPONSES</b>	<b>73</b>		<b>56</b>		<b>32</b>

As the table indicates, among the cultural needs expressed, there is a strong desire for Cham or Islamic staff, or at least individuals who respect Cham culture and understand Cham language and religion, to work within the State health care delivery system. In addition, respondents explained that it is essential for both patients and family members assisting them to have access to space designated for prayer (i.e., a small area where they would not be interrupted). Overcoming these two cultural barriers requires different action strategies, yet they both indicate the need for the public health system to better address the perspectives of all its target groups or clients.

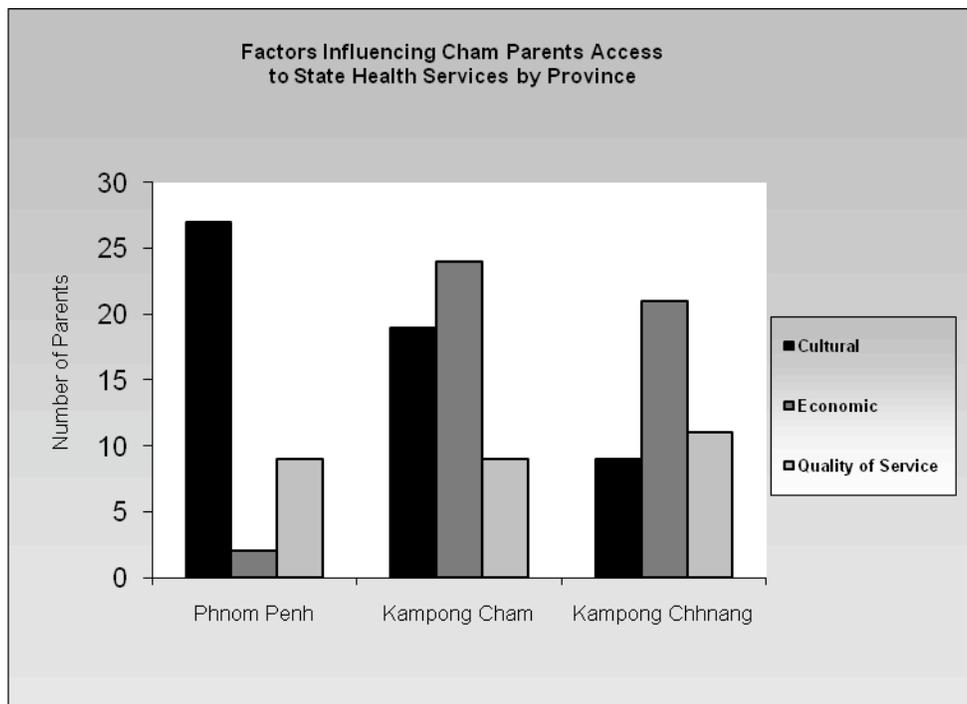
The most obvious way to address the Cham population’s needs vis-a-vis health services include actively recruiting Cham health workers. In the education sector, efforts have been made to recruit ethnic and religious minority teachers in Cambodia under USAID’s ESCUP Program, with positive results for student enrollment rates. Similar efforts may take some time to implement in the health sector, but is worth considering. Other relatively simple efforts include establishing an appropriate space for Muslim prayers on site, making *halal* food available near health facilities, and providing cultural orientation to Khmer majority health service delivery staff to enable them to be more responsive to the cultural practices of the Cham.

It should be noted that some Cham also expressed a need for a separate Cham/Islam hospital, suggesting another aspect in which Cham wish to maintain separate lives from other Cambodians or non-Muslims. However findings show that this view is not shared by the majority of Cham. Perhaps this desire for a separate facility for Cham is due to a lack of trust and basic understanding in general of the current public health system among this

community. Evidence of this can be found in Cham local leaders' responses to the difficulties they feel that Cham in their communities face in accessing or using State health services. Most leaders reiterated the same cultural, economic, and quality of service factors discussed above, yet some also pointed to a general lack of understanding or trust of the public health system. A few leaders commented that the poor in their communities believe they will not get treatment if they have no money: "When we take the patient to the hospital they provide good care only for those who have money, but if we have no money we will not get treated." While other leaders noted that Cham simply "do not trust the health centers and they do not understand the importance of a health center, or of health prevention strategies like getting immunizations." While this lack of understanding or trust may stem from different cultural beliefs, it is more likely they are indicative of the general weaknesses found in the public health system in Cambodia. Although both Government and non-government organizations have been experimenting with a number of fee-exemption systems for rural poor citizens in health care, these programs have yet to be scaled up successfully and implemented into the national framework, and thus it is not surprising that Cham parents still report facing a number of financial obstacles to accessing State health care services.

A further breakdown by province of health service needs expressed by parents clearly illustrates, not unexpectedly, that economic needs are dominant for poor, rural respondents; but as these needs are met, cultural factors rise in importance. As Figure 11 below illustrates, the majority of respondents from Phnom Penh mentioned cultural needs, while economic factors still prevailed for respondents from both Kampong Cham and Kampong Chhnang.

**Figure 11: Factors Influencing Cham Parents Access to State Health Services**



This result is important because it highlights the fact that tackling economic and institutional factors is not enough; addressing cultural needs is critical to improving overall use of State health facilities by Cham.

Quality of service factors noted by approximately one-fifth of the respondents across all three provinces, and key economic factors emphasized by more than half of the respondents from the two rural provinces in this study are consistent with other study findings that report on the endemic weaknesses in Cambodia's public health care system. The CDHS 2005 has also identified lack of transportation as a significant barrier for rural Cambodian citizens. Previous studies that specifically examined constraints faced by ethnic minorities in Cambodia found the following key constraints: *poor physical access to health services, unaffordable costs, limited opening hours and generally poor quality of service, health workers are not from local communities (suggesting language and trust issues), and lack of participation in health development.* (cited in HSSP2/IPPF, 2008)

The Second Health Sector Support Project (HSSP2), the largest externally funded health project designed to help the Royal Cambodian Government to implement its Health Strategic Plan, has included in its work plan an Ethnic Minority Development Strategy. This is a very positive action step because it specifically recognizes at the national level the need to address ethnic minorities' health service needs. While the strategy seeks to work with all ethnic minorities (which by definition includes the indigenous hill tribes and Cham communities), the current main focus of this program is on working with those groups who reside in more remote areas of the country and are considered to have among the worst access to health services (e.g. Mondulakiri and Ratanakiri). The main project implementation focus areas thus are not where the majority of Cham live, however guiding principles developed by and used in HSSP2 should be adopted for use by those working in or with Cham communities. These include: 1) establishing consultation processes with ethnic minority communities to ensure these communities broadly support project objectives, are aware of project benefits, and believe them to be culturally appropriate; 2) ensuring that behavior change communication (BCC) strategies and materials take into account the specific needs of ethnic minorities and that communication approaches and materials are developed that are appropriate for the needs of target minority groups; and, 3) encouraging participation of ethnic minority communities through the development of more participatory planning and monitoring processes at local, district, provincial and the national level. (HSSP/IPPF, 2008)

Establishing culturally appropriate or culturally sensitive health programs is not new to this country or the region, however, it is necessary to gain a deeper understanding of the particular constraints identified by Cham communities and make an effort to address these issues at a community level. As noted in the paragraph above, HSSP2 offers relevant guiding principles for working with ethnic minority groups in Cambodia on health issues. Furthermore, UNFPA published a report entitled *Cultural Programming: Reproductive Health Challenges and Strategies in East and South-East Asia* which offers a review of the challenges of applying a cultural lens to address gender inequalities and cultural vulnerabilities in reproductive health issues, especially among marginalized groups. The report also presents a number of examples of

good or innovative practices in the provision of reproductive health services and strategies in cultural programming. Some of these strategies, particularly those which addressed the cultural and health needs of Muslim women in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Southern Thailand could be adapted and used to develop local, culturally relevant programming for Cham in Cambodia. These examples provide evidence of approaches and partnerships that have proved successful in addressing culturally sensitive issues in reproductive health. They also highlight the relevance that religious or spiritual frameworks can have as important entry points for health programming.<sup>12</sup>

### ***HIV and AIDS and Family Planning Education***

Studies show that nearly all men and women in Cambodia (99%) have heard about HIV and AIDS (CDHS 2005). Detailed knowledge questions about HIV and AIDS prevention and transmission were not included in this study. The limited focus in this study for this topic was on determining if Cham parents have received any HIV and AIDS education messages and more importantly, if they believe that HIV and AIDS prevention education is necessary for their community.

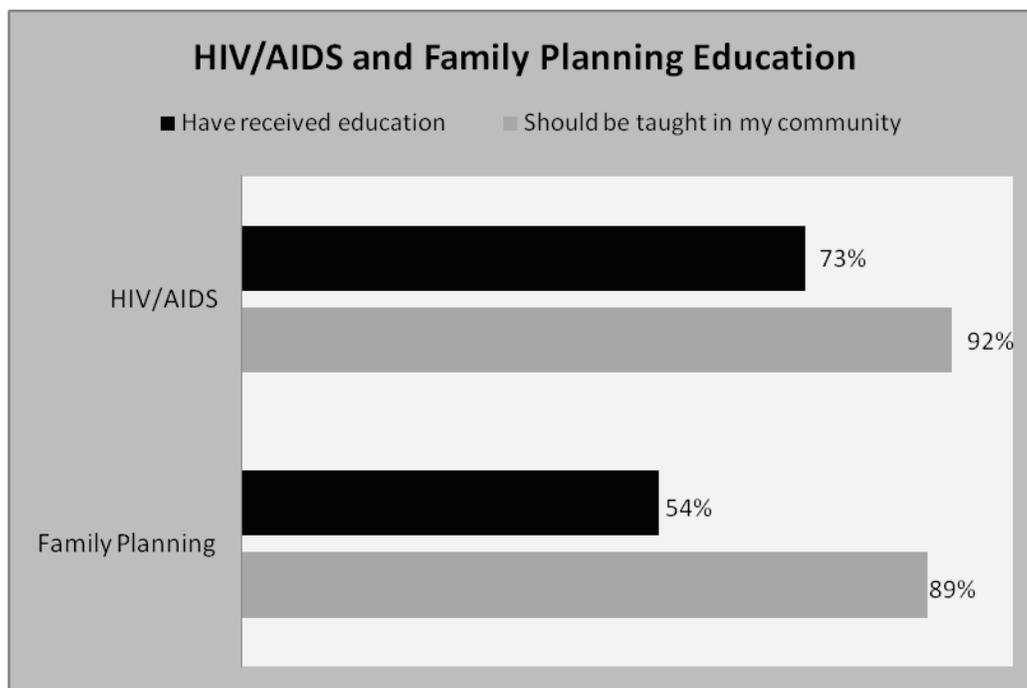
There are many preconceived notions that the Muslim community does not want or need education about family planning or HIV and AIDS because their religion does not recognize practicing modern family planning methods. Data from Cham persons interviewed in this study show that the overwhelming majority believe that HIV and AIDS education and information about family planning is essential for their communities.

Figure 12 below shows that approximately three-quarters of Cham Parents have received HIV and AIDS education from someone (e.g., health worker, family member, member of the community, someone from outside the community). And that only half of the parents (54%) have received any family planning education. However, as the data shows, there is a considerably higher demand for this information. The overwhelming majority of parents feel that both HIV and AIDS and Family Planning education should be taught in their communities.

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<sup>12</sup> For more details on these programs refer to Cultural Programming: Reproductive Health Challenges and Strategies in East and South-East Asia; UNFPA Country Technical Services Team for East and South-East Asia, Bangkok, Thailand, August 2005, available at [http://www.unfpa.org/upload/lib\\_pub\\_file/533\\_filename\\_bkculture.pdf](http://www.unfpa.org/upload/lib_pub_file/533_filename_bkculture.pdf)

**Figure 12: Cham Parents’ HIV and AIDS and Family Planning Education Views**



While the majority of parents feel that both HIV and AIDS and Family Planning education should be taught in their communities, local leaders were a bit more mixed in their views and suggested that there are varying degrees of acceptance of education on these topics. One Cham man from Kampong Chhnang suggested that there are two kind of Islamic leaders. He claimed:

*Some leaders object to family planning because the Quran does not allow “birth spacing” and thus one is not allowed to do anything (to their body) that is “unnatural” however, others, like me, believe that if you are sick it is most important to take action to be healthy, and this may include using family planning. So you see the interpretation of ‘birth spacing’ to ensure health of a woman can be used.*

Another leader similarly noted that,

*We can learn about family planning, but the ‘law’ (Islamic law) says we are not allowed to protect ourselves, but if we are sick God doesn’t force us ... if we are unhealthy we must do what is needed. We are happy to learn about new ways but we can choose to use more natural methods of protection and not use a condom or pill.*

And this national Cham leader made the following comment on the need for HIV and AIDS education;

*Condom use is criticized in Islamic faith but disease transmission knowledge is absolutely necessary.*

A few Cham leaders also expressed that Cham in Cambodia are not living in an insular community but rather are increasingly traveling around the world and being exposed to possible

threats (e.g. HIV and drugs). Thus, as they noted, it is important to understand and be educated about these issues. It is also important to determine existing knowledge, attitudes and practices among Cham regarding both HIV and AIDS prevention and family planning practices before developing specific program interventions. These study findings simply confirm that Cham recognize the need for health education to learn about these important health topics.

Results from a previous study that surveyed more than 700 Muslims in Cambodia (including religious leaders, students, teachers, and other community members) on their attitudes and knowledge about HIV and AIDS also highlight the need for and willingness of Muslims to learn more about HIV and AIDS prevention:

- Many Muslims have misconceptions about HIV and AIDS transmission.
- 35% believe that Islam permits condom use.
- 32% of the respondents thought that condom use is the best way to prevent HIV infection and another 17% said that improving education about HIV was the best method of prevention.
- Respondents recognized important strategies for Islamic NGOs to help prevent HIV in Islamic communities: provide more HIV and AIDS education in general (20%), sensitize religious leaders (20%), develop religious leaders capacity (19%), and integrate HIV and AIDS education into the curriculum of various Islamic institutions (19%)<sup>13</sup>

#### *Health services for Cham by Cham*

As the study results noted above suggest, Islamic NGOs can play an important role in providing health education messages. In addition, the current study findings show that 96% of the parents say it is important that the person providing them with HIV and AIDS education messages or reproductive health messages is Cham. Qualitative responses from Cham leaders also support this strong preference:

*Needs to be Cham telling Cham how to change because many Khmer may support the programs but they do not know how to incorporate religion and therefore they lose credibility. (Cham national Leader)*

*It is easier if it is Cham to Cham because sometimes Cham may want to hide something from Khmer, but with Cham they feel free to ask questions openly and they know that Cham will understand them best. Basically, Cham providing health education messages to Cham means that we will get more out of a training or the information coming in. (Cham local leader-Kampong Chhnang)*

Cham may be divided in terms of what kind of health education is needed for HIV and AIDS and reproductive health. However, they are uniform in their expression that the community does need interventions. As a first step, additional training for Cham health workers and community outreach and health education focused on HIV and AIDS and reproductive health is necessary.

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<sup>13</sup> This study was carried out by the Cambodian Islamic Youth Association, Cambodian Muslim Student Association, and Islamic Local Development Organization in 2005-6 with support from Family Health International.

### ***Cham Perceptions of Health Problems in their Communities***

Finally, Cham local leaders were asked to articulate what they see as significant health problems in their communities. “New diseases” (e.g. diabetes, ulcers and hypertension) were seen as the major health problems in their communities, yet this isn’t the case. These misconceptions and lack of understanding of the real health needs within a community suggests the need for much more outreach with health information. Health outreach activities or materials and campaigns which directly target the Cham and are characterized by a high level of cultural competency could be highly effective. However, once again, the inclusion of Cham in the development and delivery of such outreach activities is essential.

### ***Recommendations for Improving Access and Use of Health Services for Cham:***

- Work should be undertaken to improve the understanding of Cambodia’s public health services and the health service delivery system among the Cham in order to effect positive changes in their attitudes toward using health services. For example, respondents said that they don’t know how to use the health system and show a lack of awareness of the real health problems in their communities, which is indicative of their need for education and outreach.
- As a corollary to this, a program which seeks to actively recruit and train Cham health professionals would likely make great gains in improving utilization of the health care system by Cham. A program such as ESCUP, which actively seeks to increase the numbers of ethnic minority and Cham teachers, placed bilingual teaching assistants in classrooms and helped to bridge cultural divides through cultural life skills programs, has yielded good results in a very short time. A similar initiative in the public health system would be a good way to improve outcomes there.
- Review relevant interventions in the region where cultural factors have been successfully incorporated into reproductive health service delivery, and then adapt these efforts at the community level to address specific gender and cultural constraints identified by Cham communities in Cambodia.
- Forge partnerships with Cham religious leaders to implement culturally sensitive health programs that have been developed, endorsed and implemented by Cham. Specifically, recognize that these leaders have considerable influence on moral issues in their communities, and by working directly with them, programmers can ensure that existing cultural reference points are not ignored and that pre-conceived ideas, or beliefs and practices common among the Cham do not hinder opportunities to improve people’s reproductive health. There are varying levels of openness or social conservatism among the Islamic leaders in Cambodia. Working with those more progressive leaders can be instrumental in securing positive changes in health behavior.
- Conduct more in-depth research to better understand Cham knowledge and attitudes towards western medicine and their cultural perceptions of disease causality.

## 5.5 Economic Participation

### **Key Findings**

- ***Job diversification is increasing among Cham, however, low capacity due to lack of formal education is still a barrier for many Cham who seek more skilled jobs.***
- ***46% of Cham parents feel it is difficult for Cham to get a job in Cambodia.***
- ***Cham recognize opportunities to study (both in and out of Cambodia) are increasing and believe this will lead to better job opportunities.***
- ***More than ¾ of Cham women interviewed (78%) earn money for their families.***
- ***Half of the Cham men interviewed say that women should be allowed to work outside the home, yet only 35% of male respondents say they would allow their wife to work outside the home.***
- ***National level Cham leaders emphasize the need to continue to develop more moderate views of Cham Muslim women in Cambodia.***

### ***Job Diversification among Cham***

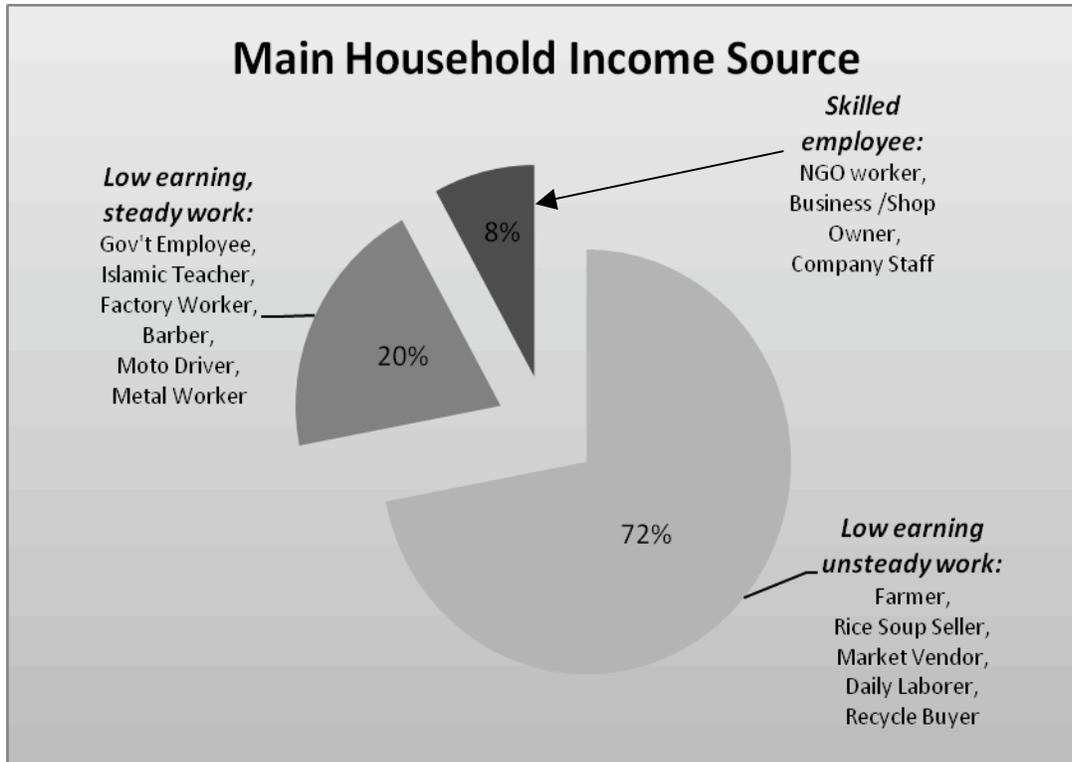
Job diversification and providing non-agricultural job opportunities for citizens continues to be a struggle in Cambodia. Economic data from 2001 shows that the country's total labour force was estimated, at 5.63 million, and that the majority of these workers are engaged in Agriculture (77%). The size of the formal sector labour force (*i.e.* where wages are regulated) is only about 5 percent of the total workforce (Cambodia Development Resource Institute, 2003).

Historically, Cham have been engaged in fishing, primarily residing on or near main rivers in Cambodia. Among the sample of 168 men and women interviewed in this study, only one person reported being remotely involved with fishing as a source of income. This person's main income was making fishing nets. Thirty-eight percent of the respondents reported that their main income is from agriculture or farming and 21% reported "market vendor" as their main income source. It is assumed that most market vendors were selling products from their agricultural efforts.

Data findings about respondents' main incomes sources do suggest that job diversification among Cham is increasing. More than 20 different types of jobs were reported as main household incomes by the study sample. However, a close examination of the specific types or of jobs shows that the overwhelming majority report being engaged in what would be considered low earning (including farming) or 'unsteady' work with limited hours (e.g. daily laborer, bread seller, noodle seller, etc.). Jobs reported were classified into three categories: 1) Low earning/unsteady work; 2) Low earning/steady work; 3) Skilled employee. The figure below

provides a breakdown of the three main categories of work and the specific jobs included in each category for the 168 respondents.

**Figure 13: Main Household Income Source among Cham Interviewed**

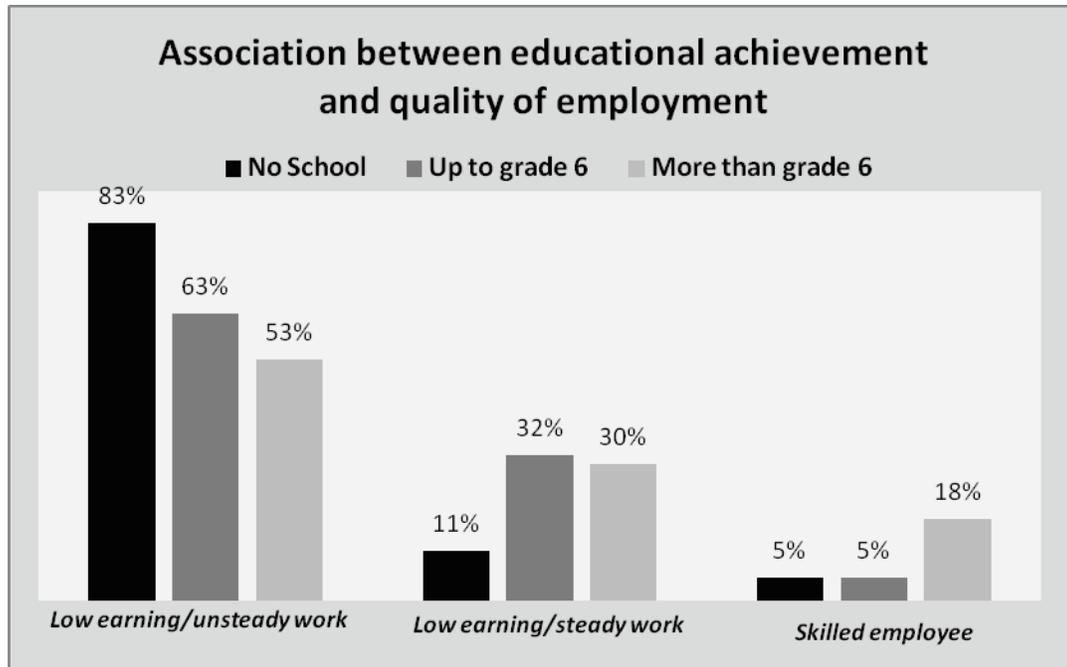


As the figure shows, close to three-quarters of the sample reported low earning and potentially irregular work as their main income source, yet up to 28% (*low earning but steady work and skilled employee data combined*) reported having jobs that are either part of the formal sector (e.g. government employee, factory worker, NGO workers, etc) or at least provide a steady income source (e.g. barber, metal worker, etc.). Considering the extremely low “formal sector” labor force in Cambodia today particularly in rural areas, the Cham communities included in this survey appear to be adequately represented. However, as noted earlier it is possible that since this was a purposeful sample, and random selection of the households was minimal (because researchers interviewed those individuals who they could find at home during their field visit) it is likely that the survey did not capture more households at either end of the economic status scale.

Examining the main income source variable as a single measure does not reveal any statistical differences among the three provinces. However, as noted earlier in the report, a more expanded measure of respondents’ overall Socio-Economic Status (SES) that includes their reported education levels as well as other household wealth indicators (assets and access to facilities) does indicate significant differences among the three provinces.

Furthermore, studies in and out of Cambodia have confirmed that the amount and quality of education an individual receives is positively associated with higher average income and higher standards of living. This association between education and income is apparent in this study as well as highlighted in the Figure below. Those respondents who reported they had never attended a State school were much more likely to be engaged in low earning/unsteady work compared to those with increasing levels of education. In contrast, of those who are in the “skilled employee” category, individuals with higher levels of education (beyond grade 6) were three times more likely to be employed in skilled labor (with presumably higher earnings).

**Figure 14: Association between Educational Achievement and Quality of Employment**



In general, educational access is improving for young Cambodians, and while Cham respondents in this study still noted several barriers to educating their children, the majority did recognize the value of educating their children. Furthermore, many Cham parents interviewed have a positive outlook and believe that educational opportunities for young Cham to study at higher levels are increasing. Many respondents recognize that sending their children to school will help them get a better job in the future. Understanding of the economic incentives and potential value of education should increase the demand for education and ultimately translate into increases in more skilled employees.

***Cham Views on their Economic Opportunities***

“Lack of education” was the most common response given as a primary factor in making it difficult for Cham to get a job. All seven national leaders interviewed noted that the need for more education was one of the top three issues that most impact Cham today. Also, of the 46% of Cham parents who responded “yes” to the question “Do you think it is difficult for Cham to

get a job in Cambodia?” more than half of them gave lack of study (or lack of money to study) as their main reason for facing difficulties in getting a job.

*We have the same economic opportunities as others in Cambodia. It simply depends on our people. We can do business like everyone else but it is related to our own capacity. Our traditional occupations are that we are people who live along rivers and do fishing and farming, but we need education and we still need to build our own capacity, so we are still limited (in our jobs opportunities) but this is because of our own limited capacity, not exclusion by anyone.* (National Cham Leader interview)

*We lack the ability or capacity because we could not study to a higher level.* (Cham local leader)

*I have not studied to a high enough level so I lack the experience, and I do not have any relatives (in a position) to help me get a job.* (Cham Parent)

In addition to lack of education, two additional factors, one specific to Cham cultural practices, and one more telling of Cambodian society in general, emerged within the local leaders and parents’ survey as reasons why many Cham feel it is difficult to get a job. These reasons are presented below.

<b><u>Reasons it is difficult for Cham to get a Job</u></b>	<b><u>N=76</u></b>
<b><i>Education Related Factors</i></b>	n=35
“No knowledge”	
“Not study high enough”	
“No education or support”	
“Have not studied same as Khmer”	
“They only choose the person who has studied very high”	
“Haven’t money to study and develop skills”	
<b><i>Cultural Related Factors</i></b>	n= 21
“Discriminate against us”	
“No place at work to pray (e.g. in factories)”	
“Difficult to find a place to eat (halal food)”	
“(Employers) Give no time to respect Allah”	
“Conditions at work not suitable for Muslim”	
“Difficult because (we have) different religious practices”	
<b><i>No ‘connections’</i></b>	n=9
“No relative to help find/get job”	

\*The other 10 respondents who said it is difficult to get a job did not provide a reason why.

Cham local leader responses were very consistent with parents’ answers. Just about half (13 out of 27) of the local leaders interviewed claimed it is difficult for Cham to get a job in Cambodia. Cham leaders were also asked specifically whether they felt Cham have more, fewer, or equal economic opportunities compared to Khmers. Out of the 27 leaders interviewed, 18 (67%) said Cham have equal opportunities, 6 (22%) said fewer and only three (11%) said Cham have more opportunities than Khmers. Of the six respondents who said Cham have fewer economic opportunities, the main reasons given were that “certain popular businesses Cham are not able to participate in like night clubs or places that have alcohol” and “priority is not given to the Khmer

Islam people.” However three respondents who said Cham have more opportunities than Khmer noted that some Cham have good connections abroad and can find work in Malaysia.

While ‘lack of education’ is seen as the main barrier by many Cham for getting a job, data suggests that some parents see that this situation is starting to change for the better as more Cham youth are gaining access to educational opportunities. The majority of respondents agreed that educational opportunities for Cham both in and out of Cambodia are increasing. Seventy-six percent of survey respondents agreed that Cham youth have more opportunities than before to study at University in Cambodia, and 65% feel that Cham youth have more opportunities to study abroad now.

### ***Economic Participation of Cham Women***

Women were asked about their economic participation. More than  $\frac{3}{4}$  (78%) said that they earned money for their family; however it is not clear whether this work is performed outside the home (much of it could be helping to farm). Cham women interviewed expressed a desire to work outside the home. Sixty-eight percent said if given the opportunity they would want to work outside the home, and another 13% said they were not sure. One-fifth of the women (20%) said they would **not** work outside the home if given the opportunity. However, 26% of the women said that someone in their family forbids them from working outside the home. Data suggests that some women perhaps may have answered this question about their desire to work based more on their situation (i.e. they know they are forbidden to work and do not see themselves as being given an opportunity to do so).

Women were equally likely across the three provinces to report that they earned money, and there were also no significant differences across the provinces among those women who said a family member forbids them from working outside the home. Also, whether one speaks Cham or Khmer at home was looked at to see if it was a possible predictor in determining more conservative attitudes towards women (i.e. not allow them to work), yet no differences were found across the three provinces for that indicator either. However those women whose families have a higher SES mean score were more likely to report that they were forbidden to work outside the home. This could suggest that working outside the home may be more related to poor economic status rather than cultural practices.

Cham men’s attitudes towards women working outside the home differed somewhat from the women, and were overall more conservative. Just under half (49%) of Cham men said that women (in general) should be allowed to work outside the home. This percentage dropped when they were asked specifically about the possibility of their own wives working outside the home. Thirty-five percent of the Cham men said that they would allow their wives to work outside the home if given the opportunity, another  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the men (32%) said they were “not sure,” and 32% said they would not allow their wives to work outside the home. These findings suggest that traditional gender-based inequalities still exist within Cham families. Furthermore, the ‘uncertainty’ among husbands to a general question about allowing their wives to work suggests that certain jobs outside the home may be more acceptable than others. This attitude by males about appropriate occupations for work for women is common in Cambodian society today in general.

However discussions with national Cham leaders regarding Cham women's economic participation and social development suggest that these more conservative or traditional views of women in society are not preferred for Cham women by most leaders. Cham leaders claim that more moderate views of women are the desired outcome.

*In the past the old generation did not want to send some to school because they feared they would become non-Muslim, especially females, and so Muslim women could not do anything, but that is changing now and we are trying to educate and change that and increase the number of females that get skill training and go to university. (National Cham leader)*

*We need to promote women and to make sure they get more education. Before some said "women cannot move out of the kitchen" but we don't believe that and they are not staying home like before or like Muslim women in more strict countries. We continue to work to understand how to help women. (National Cham Leader)*

And this leader who emphasized the importance of targeting Muslim women in development programs claimed that *'Woman is under the man' – this is tradition, not religion. We are working to change traditional attitudes and change negative traditions towards women.... We cannot have social development without women but there are still some Cham whose husbands do not allow the women to work and some Cham who will criticize women if they work. (National Cham Leader)*

While gender-based inequalities exist in all of Cambodia, Muslim women potentially face additional restrictions. Cham leaders suggest however, that Muslim women in Cambodia face relatively few restrictions based on religious practices and that they continue to work to positively influence local Cham attitudes and practices towards women.

### ***Recommendations for Economic Participation***

Findings suggest that Cham, like other rural Cambodians, seek economic opportunities outside of traditional agriculture. Yet the reality in Cambodia is that opportunities for off-farm activities are still very limited. Furthermore Cham in this study report they are primarily engaged in low-earning and unskilled labor occupations due to their limited levels of education. In addition, while Cham leaders explain their efforts to enhance involvement of Cham women in educational and economic opportunities, they recognize that it is a slow process and that conservative and restrictive practices (forbidding women to work, gender-bias against educating girls to higher levels) still exist. The following are recommendations to improve economic opportunities to enhance the standard of living among Cham communities:

- Ensure that Cham, like their Khmer majority counterparts, receive assistance to facilitate their transition out of agriculture and into higher value-added occupations (including service sector activities).
- Design programs or initiatives to build the capacity of Cham to transition from farmers to workers, and as more Cham gain the necessary education to qualify for better jobs, ensure that they have equal access to these somewhat limited alternative sources of earning.

- Work directly with Cham leaders to challenge gender biased cultural practices that prevent more women from seeking higher education and more employment opportunities.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS**

Historical evidence shows that for the most part Cham have consistently ‘fit in’ or been accepted within Cambodian society, despite their religious and cultural differences. The exception, of course, occurred during the Khmer Rouge period, when Cham, like many other groups in Cambodia including Khmers, were persecuted for any “differences.” This study found that Cham have been assimilating into mainstream society in various ways. Yet, it also confirms that Cham have begun to feel more confident to embrace their cultural differences and to celebrate their diversity. Feelings of exclusion, if and when they exist among the Cham communities in Cambodia today, are much less overt. Marginalization and discrimination against Cham is much more subtle and difficult to detect. Its existence is better described as potential or context specific (e.g. based on different generational perceptions).

This study did not attempt to measure all questions related to marginalization among the Cham Muslims; however, it did highlight a combination of cultural and institutional barriers that Cham face in accessing and using state services. It also has offered useful insights into the complexities of trying to understand the perceptions of an ethnic, religious or minority group in Cambodia. As noted in both the study limitations and results sections of this report, it is particularly challenging in Cambodia to seek sensitive information that may highlight hidden fears among a group or community. This is due in part to Cambodia’s recent history, and is also revealing of the country’s current socio-political maturation process. Cham, like other Cambodians, still experience a considerable amount of fear when it comes to expressing or voicing opinions, particularly when those views may differ from the majority thinking. Such behaviors are common throughout Asia where ‘deference’ is an important value. Efforts to avoid creating any conflict or tension within a community or the society at large are still the preferred behavior for many citizens in this country and these feelings may be more pronounced among a group that has worked hard to “fit in.” These fears make it difficult to elicit honest personal opinions from survey respondents.

Researchers in this study recognized a bias in some respondents’ answers and felt that in some cases there seemed to be an effort to express the ‘right’ answer rather than one’s own thoughts. However, the data also illustrates that many respondents were comfortable to articulate criticisms of the state education and public health system. Study findings indicate that the Cham communities in this study perceive access to health services as quite limited for them. Barriers include both that are endemic and fairly well-documented of Cambodia’s fledgling public health system (e.g. poor quality of treatment at health centers), as well as factors which are more specifically related to gender inequities and cultural vulnerabilities.

The Cambodian government has been very intentional in its efforts to ensure that Cham integrate into mainstream society. Many Cham interviewed in this study were quick to point out how similar they are to Khmer in their thinking, common suffering and current efforts to seek a better education for their children. Overall the Cham community expresses a desire to fit into Cambodian mainstream society in civic and economic participation and feel that their assimilation on many levels will help to make life easier for themselves (by “living in harmony

with Khmers”). However, as was discussed earlier in this report, generational differences in attitudes among Cham do exist, and the younger generation is perhaps becoming more conservative in its orientation and so this situation may not remain static.

The government has also taken specific actions to ensure that Cham feel part of the mainstream society (e.g. officially designating the Cham as “Khmer Islam”). Thus it is not surprising that very few respondents were confident enough to offer specific examples of being marginalized or discriminated against. However, references to marginalization at the individual and institutional level were expressed by some respondents. Most notable were actions (or benign **inaction**) by the State that marginalize or make it more difficult for Cham to access or use State education and health services. This suggests that despite efforts to assimilate and integrate into mainstream society, there is also a need for the government, donors and NGOs to recognize that Cham (and other minority groups) have diverse cultural concerns that need to be considered in program planning.

Those who fund social service initiatives, including both government and non-government, need to be more explicit in their actions to ensure that minority issues and cultural considerations are incorporated into project cycles. As a recent UNFPA report, that examined cultural program strategies used throughout South East Asia, declared: *Whatever issue or goal is examined – whether it be access to reproductive health services, elimination of gender disparities in education, employment, and political participation, or eradication of poverty – cultural factors can either act as constraints, or can be harnessed to bring about change for the better.*” (UNFPA, 2005)

More in-depth research could help determine to what degree measures to protect, maintain and promote linguistic and cultural diversity are already being implemented, and more importantly focus more on identifying with Cham which aspects of their cultural identity they want to preserve and promote. One example of this is highlighted by a Cham individual who works at the national level and explained:

*There are still a number of Cham who do not know their identity. If you ask them where they come from they cannot answer. They identify mostly by religion. This is because there is no history of the Cham in education. So of course they are satisfied with being called ‘Khmer Islam’ because if they accept this term they can feel secure and live in harmony. But to accept it you should know what is behind it, and then choose.*

An examination of marginalization among the Cham community must also recognize the reality and current conditions of the State services in Cambodia today. It is easy to recognize that many difficulties in accessing or using State services can be attributed to the way in which the major institutions and public services operate in Cambodia for **all** its citizens. The employment market still offers very limited contemporary non-agricultural opportunities. The educational environment is one in which the Constitution of Cambodia mandates the State to provide nine years of **free and compulsory** education to all its citizens, yet the most common complaint parents in this study (and other studies in Cambodia) have about State schools is that there are “too many school and teacher fees.” Furthermore, the fledgling public health system is most noted for its “absent health workers, limited opening hours and generally poor quality services.” Cham respondents in this study articulated cultural vulnerabilities, mainly related to their distinct religion, that create additional barriers to accessing and using State services. They also clearly

recognized the overall relatively weak status of the State systems. Improving these State systems through central level actions and policies, *as well as* paying attention to particular cultural barriers at the community level is necessary to improve access and use of state services for the Cham minority in Cambodia. It is not necessary to wait for central level decisions to be made. As Cambodia emphasizes more decentralization efforts, these can benefit local communities' ability to implement positive changes at the local level (e.g. recognizing the need for prayer place in hospitals that serve Cham communities, actively recruiting Cham women to receive health training, ensuring that local development projects are consulting with and considering the Cham perspectives).

Cham respondents pointed to other influences that continue to impact and change their cultural identity in Cambodia, including their more recent and increasing connections with other Muslim countries. Many Cham leaders expressed the importance of these relations to them as Muslims living in a non-Muslim country and the resulting benefits are two-fold: 1) financial assistance which is deemed as primarily for religious activities (e.g. to help build mosques), and, 2) to help the Cham Muslims learn more about Islamic law, and to better understand how to follow more "modern" Islamic practices (e.g. start Islamic schools for youth, and send Cham students abroad for studies). Cham respondents in this survey were clear to point out that their relationships with other Muslim countries is mainly positive and that it does not separate them further from Khmer society. It simply allows them to become more educated and updated on their Islamic beliefs and practices. There is wide recognition among the Cham community leaders that some Muslim countries practice different and, in some cases, more strict forms of Islam, and there is acknowledgment among the various Cham communities that interpretations of the Koran and Islamic law can be different.

Cham who receive foreign assistance from other Muslim and non-Muslim countries did not express any ideas that this aid should take the place of receiving other assistance from within Cambodia (either from the Government or NGOs). Nor were there any remarks made to indicate that the Cham community in general felt compelled to seek outside assistance (e.g. due to lack of support from within Cambodia), as has been proclaimed in some newspaper articles written about the Cham in Cambodia. However, the majority of Cham local leaders recognized the enormous benefits of this foreign aid. They also feel that the most assistance to their communities comes from outside countries and other Muslims, and the least assistance to their communities comes from the Cambodian Government. However, most leaders acknowledged that the money from other countries is focused on religious activities such as building mosques or developing Islamic schools and paying Islamic teachers. However, both national and local Cham leaders were clear to point out that the Cambodian government and non-government organizations provide them with development assistance. In discussing the different kinds of assistance the Cham communities receive, there was no indication that outside assistance is sought because of feelings of antipathy from Cambodian society, nor were there any extreme feelings of vulnerability noted. Cham communities were grateful for assistance from Muslim majority countries and non-Muslim majority countries (primarily the U.S.). While it was beyond the scope of this study to include direct measures to assess radicalization, evidence from indirect measures that examined interpersonal relations and perceptions of exclusion, did not point to feelings of alienation (a critical factor in creating terrorists), or extremism among the Cham communities interviewed.

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