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Master's Thesis of International Studies

Women in Diplomacy: The Case of Cambodia

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August 2023

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Women in Diplomacy: The Case of Cambodia

A thesis presented

By

Ouk Suntharoth

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
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Women in Diplomacy: The Case of Cambodia

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**Submitting a master's thesis of
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Abstract

Women in Diplomacy: The Case of Cambodia

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Diplomacy has always been regarded as the male-dominant type of profession. The issue of women under-representation in this field is still prevalent in many parts of the world. In Cambodia, likewise, the lower number of women in diplomacy still persists. In comparison with some fellow member states in the same region, the total number of women in diplomacy, particularly the number of female staffs in Foreign Service in Cambodia is relatively lower.

This thesis; therefore, aims to identify the main factors that contribute to the phenomenon above under the context of Cambodia; the potential factors include the institutional factor, the cultural factor, and the individual factor. In order to achieve the research purpose, the author conducted interview with five individuals who used to do internship at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation; among which two of them are the current officials at the Ministry and the other three are pursuing career path in the private sector.

Consequently, it is found that there is the intertwined connection between the three factors in which the cultural factor plays a substantial role in influencing

the institutional and the individual factors that leads to the relatively lower number of women in diplomacy in Cambodia. A few recommendations are suggested in order to further improve the situation, including the introduction of gender equality topic in the school curriculum to counter gender socialization, the establishment of daycare nursery, and the expansion of working dependent agreements with the host countries, which ultimately aim at creating a favorable working environment that allow both male and female officials to thrive fully and on equal footing.

Keywords: Women, Diplomacy, Cambodia

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Chapter I: Introduction

“There is no limit to what we, as women, can accomplish”

- Michelle Obama, 2012

1. Background

“Diplomacy refers to a practice where national institutions – most notably Ministries of Foreign Affairs – meet with international politics” (Towns & Niklasson 2016). Throughout history, diplomacy has been regarded as the male-dominated occupation. The nature and structure of diplomacy has long been male-centric meaning the knowledge and experience of male, rather than female, were incorporated into this field of expertise (Minarova-Banjac, 2019; Cassidy&Althari, 2017; Towns, 2020). Eleanor Roosevelt and many others; for instance, have pinpointed that international politics is a man’s world. In this sense, the term “manliness” has been prioritized and valued in the conduct of politics, particularly within the sphere of international politics (Tickner, 1992).

Traditionally, women did not hold a direct role in the conduct of diplomacy; their involvement, in the early times, in diplomacy was rather indirect by being the supporters of their spouses working in Foreign Service. Gamarekian (1984), for instance, asserts that the wives to American Foreign Service officers were expected *“to show up at the teas, reception and musicals, to be on tap for visiting delegations, participate in educational and social welfare activities, play innkeeper for United States visitors and entertain graciously”*. Nonetheless, the tide has gradually turned although in a disproportionate picture. The number of female diplomats is growing

steadily and the number of female ambassadors has increased in comparison to any other time in history, particularly in the developed part of the world such as the Nordic countries, whose share of female ambassador appointments account to 22 percent while Asia the share of female ambassador appointments account to only 10 percent as of 2016 (Towns & Niklasson, 2016).

Cambodia, a country located in Southeast Asia, has a population of approximately 16.7 million people, in which 51.1 percent is made up of female population (World Bank, n.d.). In the past, many Cambodian women were expected to hold the subordinate role in the household. However, since the defeat of Khmer Rouge regime in 1979, Cambodian women broke the tie that bind them to the patriarchal norms. At that time, they were called upon to take up the non-traditional gender roles; they were encouraged and trained to fill in various types of occupation ranging from governmental institutions to manufacturing sectors (Kraynanski, 2007). Since then, the involvement of women in the development of the country, particularly in the public sphere, has gradually improved. In fact, as of 2018, women accounted for 31 percent of the total 41,420 civil servants at the national level (Khan, 2019).

Table 1: Percentage of Female Staff at Foreign Ministries in some countries in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

| Countries | Percentage of Female Staff |
|-----------------|----------------------------|
| Cambodia | 34 |
| Vietnam | 44.6 |
| Singapore | 50 |
| The Philippines | 57 |

Source: Compiled from the data of abovementioned countries' foreign ministries

Regardless of the overall improvement of women's participation in public sector, the number of women in diplomatic sphere is still limited. Based on the abovementioned table, it can be seen that in comparison with some other member states of ASEAN, the number of Cambodian female officials working in Foreign Service stands at a lower portion, specifically at only approximately 34 percent as of 2021 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, 2021). Meanwhile, other countries in the same region have a relatively higher number of female staff in Foreign Service. For instance, Vietnam, which shares the same geographical location and similar historical context with Cambodia, has larger share of women in this field of expertise, which amounts to 44.6 percent of the total employees at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam as of 2021 (Nguyen, 2021). Furthermore, in that same year, the share of women in Singapore's Foreign Ministry accounts to 50 percent (MFAsg, 2021). Comparably, the portion of women staff at the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines reaches 57 percent as of 2019 (Department of Foreign Affairs, n.d.).

2. Research Objective and Research Question

The objective of this research paper is to identify the key factors that contribute to the relatively lower number of Cambodian women in diplomacy. In addition, this paper will suggest solutions in order to further expand the pool of female staffs in the Foreign Service of Cambodia.

Research Question:

What are the aspects responsible for the lower number of Cambodian women in diplomacy?

- a. Is it the institutional aspect?
- b. Is it the cultural aspect?
- c. Is it the individual aspect?

3. Significance of the Study

First and foremost, the majority of previous studies concerning gender and diplomacy have placed their focus heavily on the developed part of the world and the findings were oftentimes generalized. Those findings are crucial; however, since each country has distinctive domestic environment and policies, an in-depth study of a country should not be disregarded. Second, there has yet a study that focus specifically on women in diplomacy in the context of Cambodia; hence, this first research paper will open ways and be the foundation for future researchers who share similar interests to further explore and expand the areas of the research, and this study will also add to the existing literatures on gender and diplomacy. Lastly, the findings of this study would be beneficial for policy-makers, especially for those in Cambodia, to draft and implement policies which could further expand the number of women's participation in the field of diplomacy.

4. Research Methodology

4.1. Study Design

This study will be based on the qualitative research method to answer the research question and achieve the objectives of the study. This methodology will be utilized in this study because the qualitative approach allows the targeted respondents with the opportunity to provide comprehensive perspectives on a social phenomenon through an open-ended response in the form of structured interview, which is not available under the quantitative method.

4.2. Measurement Procedure

In order to answer the main research question of the driving forces that lead to the limited numbers of women in Cambodia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, the author will employ three different factors. First of all, institutional aspect will be used to analyze the phenomenon of limited numbers of women in Cambodia's Foreign Ministry by examining the policies implemented, if any, that aim at increasing the pool of female staffs and the comparison before and after the implementation of such policies. Second, cultural aspect will be employed as a means to answer the main research question of this paper by identifying the potential constraints or hinderances imposed by this aspect under the image of "social norms" which could put a halt to women's desire to participate in diplomatic sphere. Third, individual aspect will be used by looking at the issue of work-family balance, which could potentially affect women's decision in pursuing their career in diplomacy. It should be noted that the last two aspects – cultural and individual – will be analyzed by relying heavily on the responses of the interviewees; different types of qualitative data analysis will be employed to

examine and identify the language usage, repeated patterns of responses, or the presence of certain concepts, words, and themes.

4.3. Definitions

Woman, as defined by the Cambridge Dictionary, is “an adult female human being”. This paper will focus on Cambodian adult female human beings who are interested in the diplomatic sphere.

Diplomacy, according to the Lexico Dictionaries, refers to “the profession, activity, or skill of managing international relations, typically by a country’s representatives abroad”. This research paper will focus on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia, as it is the core governmental institution which responsible for the conduct of international affairs.

4.4. Sampling Method

In order to answer the main research question of this paper, the author aims to conduct interviews with a certain targeted group who are students of the Department of International Studies at the Royal University of Phnom Penh, particularly the ones who have finished their internship at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. The rationality behind the researcher’s decision to select students from the Department of International Studies at the Royal University of Phnom Penh who have finished their internship at MAFIC due to the fact that their application for the internship opportunity showcases their interests in the field of diplomacy. Therefore, the information derived from these individuals would be an invaluable source of information for this research paper.

This study will utilize the non-probability sampling technique. Particularly, the snowball sampling method will be applied since the initial concerned

individuals could refer a handful of suitable potential research subjects, who share similar traits, to provide indispensable responses for the research objective.

4.5. Data Collection

Both primary and secondary data will be used to analyze the driving factors that lead to the relatively low number of women in diplomacy in Cambodia. The primary sources will include the interviews conducted with targeted respondents of this research, existing official announcements, speeches, and documents that are published by the government. The secondary data will be collected from reports, newspapers, and articles published by scholars in the related field.

4.6. Data Analysis

The data analysis will be conducted through document-based research, internet-based research, thematic analysis, discourse analysis, and content analysis. The collected data will; therefore, be analyzed through careful summarizing, paraphrasing, and grouping of the texts and responses attained from the interviewees.

4.7. Scope and Limitation

In the institutional aspect, the scope of this study is set at the Cambodia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation to identify and examine the policies adopted which aim at increasing the number of women in this field of expertise from 2016 to 2022 due to the fact that the year 2016 marks the period when reformation within the Ministry commenced. In the cultural and the individual aspects, the study is set at the Department of International Studies at the Royal University of Phnom Penh to examine the perspectives of students, particularly the ones who have finished their internships at the Ministry of Foreign

Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia, from 2016 to 2022, as the first batch of internees at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation has commenced from 2016 onwards.

It is worth-noting that, according to the information attained from both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and the Department of International Studies, the students who went through internship at the Ministry accounts to 102 within the span of four years, starting from 2016 to 2019. Among those, 62 are female students.

The author initially aimed to conduct interview with at least 20 percent of the total numbers of female students interned at the Ministry via online platform. However, due to the issues of time constraint and approachability, the author was able to reach out to five interviewees; two of which are the current officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and the other three are currently working in the private sector. Despite the limited numbers of interviewees, the author is able to find common pattern of responses from interviewees who participated in the interview, which in return contributes significantly to answering the main research question of this paper.

Chapter II: Literature Review

The inclusion of women into the sphere of diplomacy has been acknowledged to bring about further development and enhancement to the conduct of international affairs and the national prestige of countries involved. Existing scholarships have pinpointed the significance and benefits of having the participation of women in this field of expertise. For instance, in “Women in Diplomacy: How is the Problem of Absence of Women in Diplomacy Framed by the UN”, Dharsani & Ericsson (2013) mention that the inclusion of women in diplomacy results in the increased efficiency in problem-solving as well as an increased focus on issues in a sense that the participation of women in diplomacy denotes the complementariness meaning men and women approach problems differently so their approach towards solutions is also distinct from one another. Thus, the combination of both perspectives will result in the best possible outcome. Similarly, Ismailova (2020) also asserts that due to women’s qualities that contributes to the peaceful settlement of conflicts and the formation of friendly relations, women could significantly confer to the diplomatic sphere. In addition, Conley Tyler (2016) also describes the importance of increasing diversity in diplomacy, particularly, the increased of women representation in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia has resulted in positive outcome for the country’s diplomacy to be more effective and properly represents the image of the country.

In spite of the enhancement that women could contribute to the sphere of diplomacy, the issue of under-representation of women in this field still persists. There have been numerous papers aiming at seeking for the root causes which lead

to the lack of women participation in this profession. In “the Changing Role of Women in Diplomacy in the 21st Century”, Ha (2014) attests that the number of women diplomats is still disproportionately lower than their male counterparts. Particularly, in South Korea, the cultural norms and patriarchal values embedded in Confucianism which plays a major role in influencing and perceiving women in the society as nothing more than wives and mothers. Furthermore, the problem of stereotypes on women’s competencies and knowledge is also a hinderance to the participation and empowerment of women in this field. According to Conley Tyler, Blizzard, and Crane (2014), *“The low representation of women in Australian International Affairs is also a consequence of the social construction of gender. Gender constructs are exclusionary norms, expectations, and stereotypes that are deeply embedded in the society”*. Hence, it is usually controversial and challenging when individuals, specifically women, behave in a certain way that is contrary to the expectation of the society. Apart from the societal factor, existing research papers also mention about certain policies within the institution as the barrier for the inclusion of women in diplomacy. Until mid-twentieth century, women were legally excluded from international affairs on the basis of their sex, marital status, and pregnancy. For example, in Australia, women were forbidden from resuming their career in the public service once they are married, under the assumption that the conduct of their job would become ineffective once they shared commitments to family matter (Conley Tyler, 2014). Likewise, in the Republic of Ireland during 1930s to early 1970s, foreign service became more male dominant when women were lawfully prohibited from working in the public sector once they are married (Barrington, 2020). Lastly, other scholars point out on the matter of work-life balance as a challenge for women in diplomacy. In South Korea, women diplomats

face a major problem in balancing work and family; those who are married and have children often lack of support from their husbands to make progress in their career, while many other Korean women diplomats choose to stay single due to the complication of this matter (Ha, 2014). Similarly, Ansah (2019) also claims that single women diplomats often have difficulty in dating, while the married ones face more hardships if their partners are not considerate in sharing the burden of household chores and their packed working schedule. Moreover, difficulty also arises concerning women's postings when their spouses are less willing to leave their jobs behind in order to follow their wives to another country.

These aforementioned research papers have pinpointed that the constraints which contribute to the low number of women in diplomacy in various countries fall under three main categories, which are the institutional factor, the cultural factor, and the individual factor. Furthermore, since significant differences cannot be found between these countries and Cambodia, this research paper will also look at these three main aspects for Cambodia as well in order to investigate and examine the factors behind the relatively small portion of women in diplomacy, particularly in Cambodia's Foreign Affairs.

1. Theoretical Framework

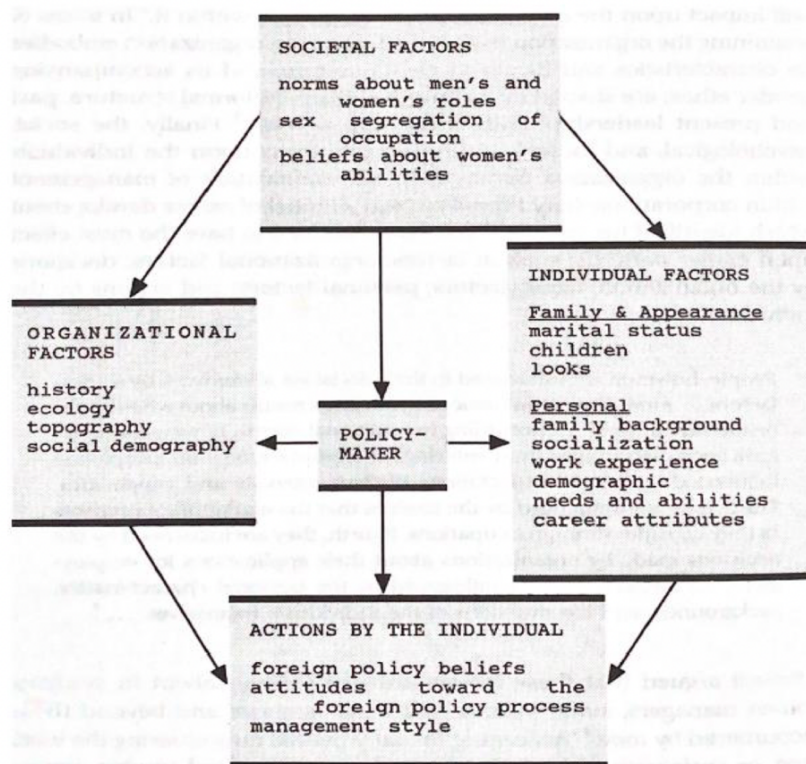
As previously discussed in the above sections, diplomacy has long been considered as the type of profession that is more suitable for men, as it revolves around sensitive matters in both high and low politics which are very crucial to the survival of a country. The rationality behind such segregation of occupation can be found in many theories. For instance, in the Great Man Theory, it advocates for male dominance in leadership due to the fact that it refers to leaders as men who

are born with the characteristic of natural heroic, not made (Nawaz, Khan, and Khan, 2016). Similarly, the Social Role Theory posits that the physical differences between men and women leads to the segregation in employment on the ground of sex (Eagly & Wood, 2012). These theories indeed display gender discrimination in which men are being regarded to be greater than women, rather than considering both men and women as equal beings. Such male-biased perception oftentimes put a strain on women by cornering them to stick with a certain type of job, rather than encouraging them to enter the male-dominated professions. This specific phenomenon is manifested in diplomacy in many countries of today's world where the persistence of gender-stereotyping in employment remarkably affect the ratio of men and women employees in this particular occupation.

It should be noted that feminism has been criticizing international relations for its exclusion and marginalization of women. For instance, Grant (1991, as cited in Byron and Thorburn, 1998) pinpoints that the existing theories in international relation have been known to standardize and normalize masculinity where females are placed in the subordinate position. Such phenomenon can be traced back to the periods during ancient Greece, when there was the existence of sexual division of labor in which women's role, at that time, was limited to only tasks within the private sphere, while matters relating to the public sphere such as politics was the sole responsibility of men in the society. For liberal feminism, in particular, biological differences is not being denied; however, such difference is not being projected as a sufficient justification for the issue of gender inequality. The primary goal of liberal feminism is gender equality in the public sphere, be it equal access to education, ending wage disparity, or ending occupational segregation (Lewis, 2019). Particularly, the Cultural Libertarian Feminism or Cultural Libertarianism

place importance on the constraints that are imposed on individuals from various institutions, including the government, religion, and community. In other words, the patriarchal value manifested in many institutions within the society play a substantial role in the contribution to gender inequality and oppression on women (Baehr, 2020).

Figure 1: McGlen and Sarkee's Framework on Societal, Organizational, and Individual Factors



Source: McGlen, N.E. and Sarkees, M.R. (2018, as cited in Ismayilzada, 2021. Is

International affairs too hard for Azerbaijani women?)

Having the similar standpoint with the Cultural Libertarianism, McGlen and Sarkees (1993, as cited in Ismayilzada, 2021), as illustrated in Figure 1, believe that institution, individual, and societal values are deeply interconnected in a sense that societal value is the main driving force which affect the institutions and the individuals within it. Consequently, the combination of social values (cultural aspect), workplace culture (institutional aspect), and personal matters (individual aspect) ultimately define the status and the position of women in international affairs.

This research paper; therefore, insists on liberal feminism, particularly the Cultural Libertarian Feminism, and the framework explained by McGlen and Sarkees to identify the causes that lead to the relatively smaller proportion of women in diplomacy. To put it another way, societal value (cultural aspect) is presumed to be the main driving force for the lower share of women's participation in the sphere of diplomacy of Cambodia.

Chapter III: Institutional Aspect

1. The Evolution of Governance System in Cambodia

Prior to the French colonization in 1863, the governing system in Cambodia has been known to be the authoritarian system in which the King holds absolute power. Nonetheless, such absolute power was curtailed under the period of colonialism, particularly the French colonization between the period of 1863 to 1953 (Jameson, n.d.). It should be noted that under colonialism, particularly the French colonization, Cambodia was influenced by the many practices instilled in the country by the French authority, including economic, political, and society landscapes. According to Niquet (2018), in the aspect of economy, under the French colonization the Indochina region, which includes Cambodia, Vietnam, and Laos, was able to experience the so-called drastic economic development particularly in the mining and agriculture industries. Moreover, the region was also equipped with public work and infrastructure. More importantly, the colonization also brought about the development in the field of law especially the legal system of its colonies. In “Cambodia’s Border with Engagement from Power Countries”, Sok (2011) mentions that during the period of French colonization, reform program within the domestic affairs of Cambodia was introduced by committing King Norodom to accept “*all administrative, judicial, financial, and commercial reforms that the government of France deem useful in the future*”. Those reforms include the abolishment of slavery, the establishment of private properties, the restructuring of administrative and legal system, just to name a few. It is worth noting that prior to the arrival of the colonialism, there was the lack of proper institutions for social welfare, health, and educational system, which was limited

to lectures provided to boys by monks at the pagoda, contrary to what had existed in the Angkor era. In the aftermath of the French colonization, Cambodia had undergone many events throughout the years including the era of peace and development, the era of genocide and the era of civil war before the country was able to finally restore political stability and peace in the 1990s. Particularly, the period between 1975 and 1979 was regarded as one of Cambodia's darkest period in the country's history due to the fact that during that time the country was under the genocidal regime led by Pol Pot, leader of the Khmer Rouge regime, which destroyed the country's human resources, infrastructure, education system, and many more (Rana and Ardichvili, 2014). Nonetheless, in the 1990s peace was restored so did the country's governing system. Since then, Cambodia has adopted its constitution which specifically divides the power among three main branches of the government, namely the executive headed by the Council of Ministers, the legislative held by the Parliament, and the judiciary vested in the courts; on the ground of administrative authority, all levels are under the national government and act on behalf of the national government (Open Development Cambodia, 2015).

2. The Efforts of the Royal Government of Cambodia

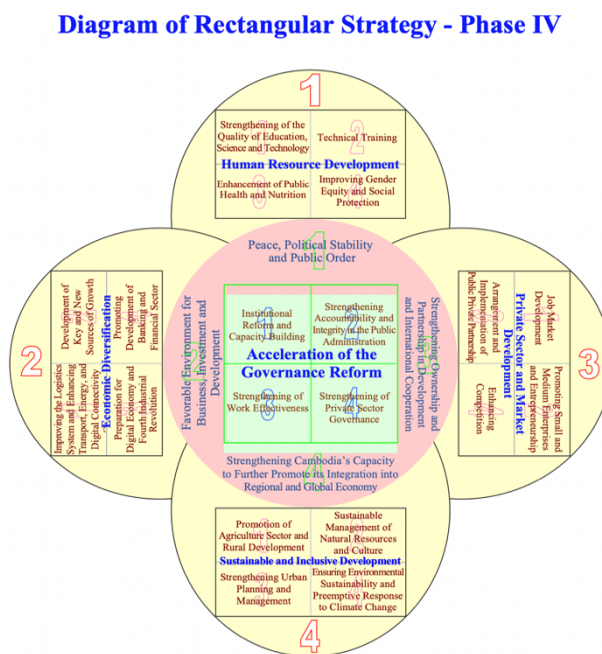
Since the civil war came to an end and peace has been restored all over the country, the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) has put tremendous amount of effort in the improvement of gender equality in various sectors of the society. On the international front, such effort is manifested through the commitment that Cambodia has made in respecting, promoting and protecting women's rights under the fundamental international treaties such as the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), in which the country

provided its signature and ratification on 22 September 1992 and 15 October 1992, respectively. Moreover, in 1995, the RGC signed the Beijing Platform for the Promotion of the Status of Women and has been submitted the progress since then. Cambodia, in addition, also committed to the Sustainable Development Goals, which one of the goals is to achieve gender equality, women's rights, and women's empowerment. Particularly, the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) of Cambodia has immersed this goal into one of the national measures called Neary Ratanak Strategic Plan (Ministry of Women's Affairs, 2014). In "Gender Equality Deep-Dive for Cambodia", United Nations Cambodia (n.d.) mentions that over the past 25 years although the issue of gender inequality still exists in Cambodia, the country has, so far, accomplished profound achievements in enhancing the status of gender equality.

On the national front, in compliance to its commitment in CEDAW, the RGC, in 1992, established the national machinery for the empowerment of women and the achievement of gender equality which includes the Cambodian National Council for Women (CNCW), the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA), Technical Working Group on Gender (TWG-G), and the Gender Mainstreaming Action Groups (GMAGs) in lines with the government agencies and institutions. Such commitment features *"Cambodia as a good example of how high-level commitment and partnerships are instrumental to establish and strengthen the institutional gender equality architecture across government"* (UN Women, 2019). Additionally, numerous national policies that aim at closing the gender gap have also been adopted and implemented inside the country. One of the most essential national measures is called "The Rectangular Strategy for Growth, Employment, Equity, and Efficiency" also known as "The Rectangular Strategy, which was

created in 1998 and has continued until the present day with the total of four phases each of which is in line with the term of the National Assembly of five years (Chap and Chhorn, 2019). Specifically, under the Rectangular Strategy Phase IV in the aspect of gender equality, the ultimate goal of the RGC is to improve the socio-economic status of women and to enhance the role of women in the society (UN Women, 2019).

Figure 2: Rectangular Strategy for Growth, Employment, Equity, and Efficiency – Phase IV



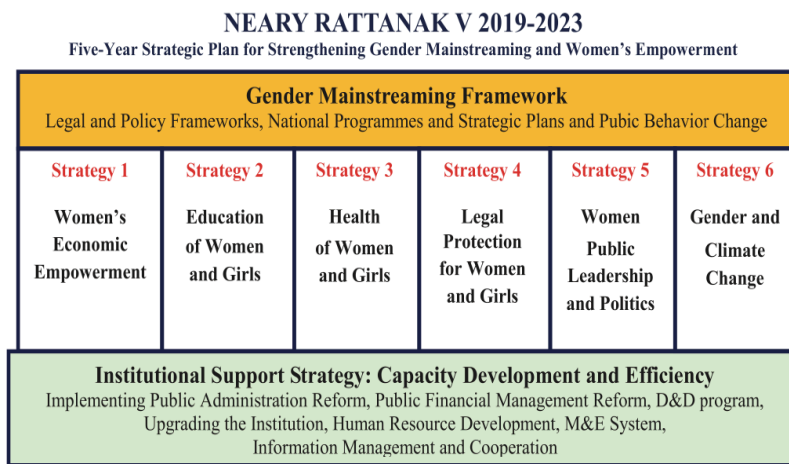
Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, n.d.

Based on the abovementioned figure, it can be seen that, under the Rectangular Strategy Phase IV, the RGC places the focus on four main objectives (rectangles), namely (1) Human Resource Development, (2) Economic

Diversification, (3) Private Sector and Market Development, and (4) Sustainable and Inclusive Development. Each rectangular consists of four sides which ultimately aim to bring about further development to the country. In Rectangular (1), which is considered as the top priority of the strategy, focus on human resource development composed of four sides such as (a) Strengthening of the Quality of Education, Science, and Technology, (b) Technical Training, (c) Enhancement of Public Health and Nutrition, and (d) Improving Gender Equity and Protection. Overall, this strategy denotes the extensive effort of the RGC in bridging the gap between men and women in the country by placing it in the first rectangular of one of the most significant and instrumental policies of the country. In essence, the issue of gender equality has been placed as one of the core objectives for the socio-economic development of Cambodia meaning that to be able to truly and fully achieve development for all, the RGC is strongly committed in narrowing the existing gender gap and enhance the role of women - who are the backbone of the economy and society.

Another prominent national measure adopted by the RGC in tackling the issue of gender inequality in the country is known as “Neary Rattanak Strategic Plan”. Neary Rattanak Strategic Plan has been specifically developed by the country’s national machinery for promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women – the Ministry of Women’s Affairs. This five-year plan was first established back in 1999 and still continues until today at its fifth phase (United Nations, 2000). Neary Rattanak V, in particular, is formulated based on the study and assessment of Neary Rattanak IV, the findings of Cambodia Gender Assessment in 2019, and the principles and recommendations of CEDAW.

Figure 3: Strategic Framework of Neary Rattanak 2019-2023



Source: Ministry of Women's Affairs, 2021

The core objective and cross-cutting strategy of Neary Rattanak V (2019-2013) is gender mainstreaming in the formulation, implementation, and monitoring the implementation of various policies, plans, and sectors at all levels of the country. This document consists of six key strategies, including Women's Economic Empowerment, Education of Women and Girls, Health of Women and Girls, Legal Protection for Women and Girls, Women Public Leadership and Politics, and Gender and Climate Change, which rest upon the Institutional Support Strategy on Capacity Development and Efficiency for support (Ministry of Women's Affairs, 2021).

All in all, it is evident that the importance of gender equality has been acknowledged; thus, it has become one of the core focus of the RGC due to the fact that the commitment given to the international documents regarding gender issues has been translated into fundamental national measures, such as the Rectangular Policy and the Neary Rattanak Strategic Plan, with the purpose to

empower women and involve them in all aspects of lives including economic, education, politics, and many more. In other words, the government has attached great importance and put political will in the promotion of gender equality and participation of women in all sectors aiming to achieve sustainable development socially, economically, and politically. In fact, during the 2020 International Women's Day event held in Phnom Penh, Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo HUN SEN, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, mentioned that *"The Kingdom's women have played a significant role in the nation's labor force and have been a driving factor in the country's continuing economic growth...The government has made a great effort to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women. Cambodia has made significant progress in reducing gender inequality, dropping from 112th in 2016 to 89th in 2020, according to the 2020 World Economic Forum"* (Chhut, 2020).

3. Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia

Correspondingly to the Foreign Ministries of other countries, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MFAIC) of Cambodia is an important state agent whose role has been regarded as very instrumental and essential in the conduct of diplomacy, international affairs, and holds the significant role as the state's gatekeeper and messenger, just to name a few. In "What is Foreign Ministry?", Hocking (n.d.) mentions about some of the generic roles of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which include:

- *"A node in a communication system through which information is gathered, analyzed, and disseminated."*

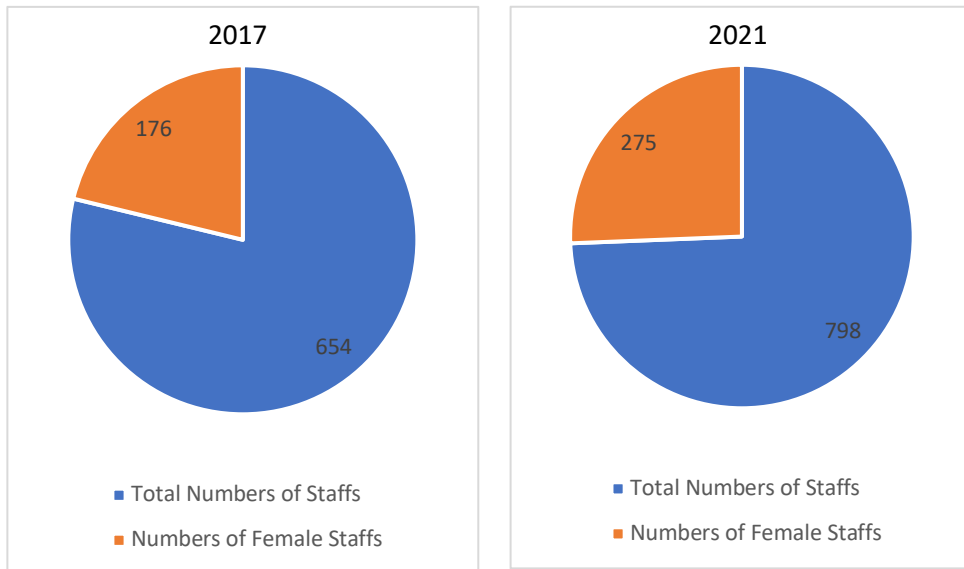
- *A policy advice function, provide expertise to politicians, other parts of the bureaucracy and to non-governmental actors with interest in international policy.*
- *A memory bank, gathering and storing information...*
- *A policy transfer function through which the channels of diplomatic communication are used to exchange information and ideas on a range of issues between countries on diverse issues... ”.*

The abovementioned functions and responsibilities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs demonstrates the intensity and complexity of the workloads which fall upon staffs in Foreign Service, who are normally referred to as “diplomats”. As previously mentioned in this research paper, the profession that lie in the field of foreign service / diplomacy was traditionally considered as an occupation that is exclusively suitable for men as it involves the matters of both high and low politics; meanwhile, women’s role in this sphere was usually in the shadow meaning their involvement was rather indirect by playing the supportive role as the partner to their diplomat husbands. As time passes, such perception has been transformed; there is now the direct involvement of women in this particular field of expertise – diplomacy. Nonetheless the proportion women in this realm are still disproportionate when comparing with their counterparts.

It should be noted that such trend also applied in the context of Cambodia, in which there is the imbalance numbers between men and women officials in diplomacy. Speaking from one’s own observation and experience as the former internee and current official at the MFAIC, (interviewee 1) specifies that “I do not have an accurate number but I would say that I’ve seen a lot women in diplomacy in different countries; however, I don’t see much in Cambodia. From what I have

seen so far even in my own department there are more men than women ... we do not have many female workers who are working in the Ministry, especially in high-ranking positions. Even our ambassadors, the majority of them are men. So, comparing to other countries, we should try to improve the pool of women in diplomacy”. Correspondingly, (interviewee 5) also mentions that “I have no idea about staffs at other Ministries of Foreign Affairs of other countries in ASEAN. But for our (Cambodian) staffs, I just know that we do not have that many female staffs; we have lesser female staffs than males ... the percentage of 30 (female) to 70 percent (male) is represented relatively much weaker”. By the same token, speaking from their internship experience, the other interviewees share the same points of view that there is the imbalance share of female and male officials at MFAIC. “Inside MFAIC, there is a good number of females working there but I agree that there are so many male workers especially for the senior roles...” (interviewee 2). “During my internship there, I noticed there were more men than women working at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, especially in the high-ranking position, so there was still a gap” (interviewee 3).

Figure 4: Number of Staffs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia in 2017 and 2021



Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, 2022

Based on the figure 4 above, it can be clearly seen that in the context of Cambodia although the proportion of male and female staffs at MFAIC is not balanced yet, there is; however, the upward trend of the numbers of female staff which was increased from 176 (27 percent) to 275 (34 percent) in 2017 and 2021, respectively. In other words, in the span of five years, the number of female staffs at MFAIC has increased by 99 people which is equivalent to 7 percent. This improvement happened due to the practices and policies that have been implemented specifically at MFAIC, which are in aligned with the fundamental national policies such as the Rectangular Strategy IV and the Neary Rattanak V Strategic Plan, especially under mandate of His Excellency PRAK Sokhonn, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Kingdom of Cambodia. Such positive consequence owes its achievement to

one instrumental and crucial document at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, which is known as “The Policies and Strategies on Gender Mainstreaming in Foreign Affairs Phase I” (2018-2020). In alignment with the Rectangular Strategy and the Neary Rattanak Strategic Plan, the core objectives of “The Policies and Strategies on Gender Mainstreaming in Foreign Affairs Phase I” is to further deepen gender sensitivity and gender mainstreaming, empower women, and strengthen the competencies and capabilities of women, particularly for those who are working in the sphere of foreign affairs. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (2017), under this document, the Ministry put out seven policies, as follow:

- Policy 1: Promotion on the understanding of the importance of gender.
- Policy 2: Increase the numbers of female officials in the high-ranking positions at the Ministry and increase quota of female diplomats for diplomatic missions abroad.
- Policy 3: Provide opportunities and encourage female officials to partake in training courses to further expand their knowledge both in the domestic and international settings.
- Policy 4: Enhance and expand in-depth cooperation between the Ministry’s Gender Working Group and other institutions.
- Policy 5: Ensure gender equity in all units and departments.
- Policy 6: Support and Promote gender-related activities in foreign affairs sector.

- Policy 7: The Gender Working Group at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation is responsible for the advisory and initiating role aims at improving gender mainstreaming in foreign affairs sector.

In addition to these policies, under the same document, the Ministry also put out five main strategies, namely:

- Strategy 1: Enhance the understanding about gender to the Gender Working Group, and leaders in the ministry.
- Strategy 2: Increase numbers of female officials in Foreign Affairs.
- Strategy 3: Strengthen the capacities of female civil servants by increasing their participation in various training courses both inside and outside the country.
- Strategy 4: Provide opportunities and motivation to female diplomats to take on decision-making roles.
- Strategy 5: Conduct evaluation and assessment on the practice and the progress of gender mainstreaming within units, departments, and Cambodian embassies/consulates abroad.

**Table 2: Numbers of Civil Servants in Foreign Affairs Sector
from 2017 to 2021**

| | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Total Staffs | 654 | 682 | 735 | 776 | 798 |
| Female Staffs | 176 | 228 | 245 | 271 | 275 |
| Percentage | 27 | 33 | 33 | 34 | 34 |

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, 2021

As illustrated in table 2 above, it can be seen that prior to the implementation of the gender mainstreaming policy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, specifically “The Policies and Strategies on Gender Mainstreaming in Foreign Affairs Phase I”, in 2017, the share of female staffs in the foreign affairs sector of Cambodia only accounted to 27 percent of the total 654 officials. However, in the aftermath of the implementation of the abovementioned document which was influenced by the Rectangular Strategy and the Neary Rattanak Policy, the number of female officials has gradually been accelerated from 33 percent to 34 percent in 2018 and 2021, respectively. The expansion of numbers of the female officials in foreign affairs in the past 5 years between the period of 2017 and 2021 showcases, to a certain extent, the effectiveness of the “The Policies and Strategies on Gender Mainstreaming in Foreign Affairs Phase I” in which one of the fundamental strategies of this document is to increase the number of female staffs in Foreign Affairs – Strategy 2.

4. Analysis

Throughout history, Cambodia has gone through various stages of development whether in the context of the country's economy, politics, or society. In particular, the governing system of the country has also been evolved as the time passes, from the period when the absolute power was in the hand of the King to the period when the power is shared among the three branches of the government – the executive, the legislative, and the judiciary – as the result of modernization influenced by the colonization era back in the 19th and 20th century. More importantly, as the dark era, the civil war, and the domestic instability of the country came to an end, Cambodia was able to restore peace and stability in the 1990s. Contemporarily, although the country is no longer dealing with traditional security issues, many other types of problems have emerged. One of which is the issue of gender inequality between men and women within the society. For the working setting, in particular, according to (interview 4) mentions that “In regards to gender inequality, I think there are still a lot of inequalities in Cambodia especially I think it happens in every sector - NGOs, public or private sectors...”. Similarly, (interviewee 2) points out that “Generally, in a bigger picture regarding gender equality in Cambodia, women still need some sort of opportunities but I also agree that we have improved and have empowered female in workforce or in the society way better than, let's say, ten years ago...”. In the aspect of educational opportunities, (interviewee 1) states that “Based on my perspective, I would say that the overall status of gender equality is getting better than before but, in some cases, some people, not in the capital, but mostly in the countryside tend to be biased towards men. Usually, they try to bar women on entering school so if there are children especially women, they try to keep them at home because they think it

is not suitable for them to go to school; the place that they should belong to is usually in the kitchen since they have to keep track of everything in the house”. Therefore, it is apparent that gender disparities between men and women occur in almost every aspect of lives ranging from educational to economic opportunities. The Royal Government of Cambodia, in response, has placed more attention on the matters related to gender inequality as manifested through their efforts in ratification of many international gender-related treaties such as CEDAW and Beijing Declaration as well as the implementation of core national policies such as the Rectangular Strategy and the Neary Rattanak Policy aiming at narrowing the gender gap and empowering women – who are regarded as the backbone of the country’s economy and development.

Corresponding with many other aspects of the society, the existence of gender disparities can also be found in the diplomatic sphere; especially for Cambodia, as evident through the imbalance proportion of female staffs in relative to their male counterparts at the Foreign Ministry. As a response and effort in solving this particular issue, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, in parallel with the Rectangular Strategy and the Neary Rattanak Policy, has established and implemented “The Policies and Strategies on Gender Mainstreaming in Foreign Affairs Phase I”. Under this document, the Ministry has placed paramount importance on gender equality in the agenda of the Ministry and has taken measures to further improve the disproportionate share of women in this field of expertise. As mentioned earlier, prior to the adoption and implementation of this document, the share of female staffs at the Ministry accounted to only 27 percent. However, in the aftermath of the implementation of this document, the share of women in diplomacy has steadily increased up to 34 percent as of 2021.

Specifically, strategy 2 of this document precisely illustrates that one of the core objectives of the Ministry is to increase the number of female staffs in Foreign Affairs. In order to achieve this goal, the ministry gives priority to female applicants during its annual recruitment. Coming from the current officials at MFAIC, (interviewee 1) mentions that “... when they (MFAIC) recruit officials for the ministry, women are prioritized and encouraged to apply. Personally, for me, this short phrase on the announcement captured my attention especially when I applied for the job at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs”. Meanwhile, (interviewee 5) asserts that “At MFAIC, internally, they would give the priority to female applicants; they encourage women to apply and they also prioritize female candidates more than male. If the competitors are just one male and one female, they would choose the female one. That one I know for sure; if it is qualification-based and there is not too much of a difference, they would go for the female applicant”. Therefore, it can be seen that the disproportionate numbers between male and female staffs is acknowledged as an issue and measures have been taken to improve the situation, particularly the introduction the practice of prioritizing female applicants during the recruitment process has become the means to expand the pool of women in diplomacy in Cambodia. This solution has resulted positively as manifested through the increased numbers of female staff at the Foreign Ministry from 27 percent to 34 percent in 2017 and 2021, respectively. In the institutional aspect; therefore, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, in particular, has put out measure to deal with the problem of imbalance portion of female and male staffs under the form of internal policy implementation, in which the document is called “Policies and Strategies on Gender Mainstreaming in Foreign Affairs Phase I”, that ultimately aims to increase the share of female

officials up to 40 percent by 2040. In this case, it can be seen that problem is being acknowledged and measures are being taken in order to tackle the issue of disproportionate sex-ratio at the Foreign Ministry. The solution has offered fruitful result although there is still limitation meaning that even though the situation has been improved internally; however, when comparing with other countries within the same region, there is still plenty of rooms for improvement. In essence, the institutional aspect cannot be assumed to be holding the core accountability for the relatively lower numbers of women in diplomacy, specifically at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia.

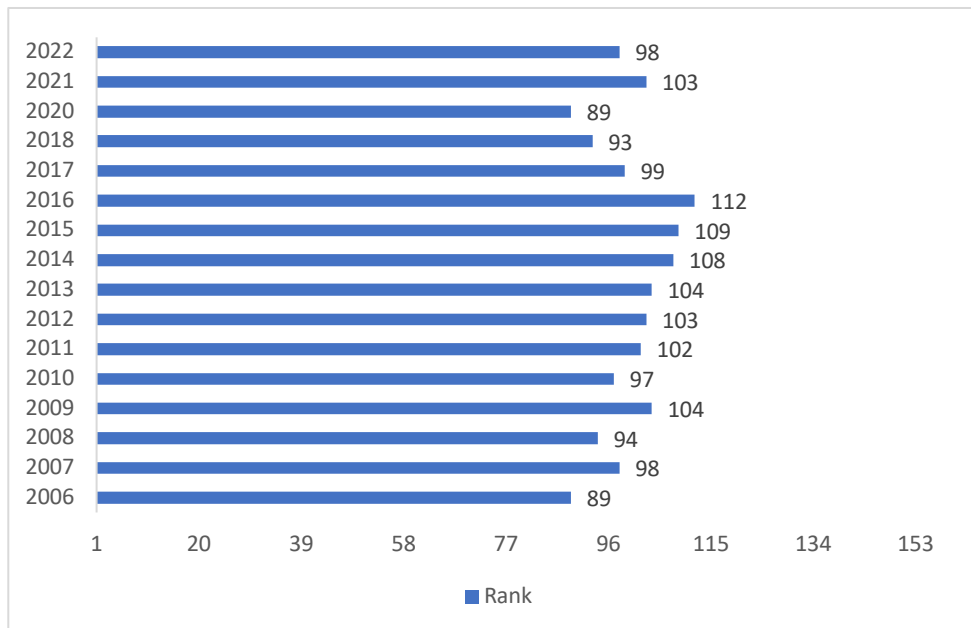
Chapter IV: Cultural Aspect

1. The Role of Women in Cambodian Society

Cambodia has gone through various stages of development whether within the political, economic, or social context. Such development also brings about the transformation on the role of women in the society. As Chandler (n.d.) points out that the early history of Cambodia, especially during the Angkor Era from the ninth century to the fifteenth century, is known to be the heyday of the country which is denoted by the peace, growth, and prosperity during that time. Women during the Angkor Era had held crucial roles in the political landscape of Cambodia as revolutionary heroines, influential consorts of the Kings, and agents of peace, and so on (Frieson, 2001). Fast forward to the contemporary era, the prominent period of radical change, particularly in economic and political aspects of Cambodia, was the second half of the twentieth century in which the country had gone through various stages of events including the struggle to gain independence from France in 1953 to the emergence of the Kingdom of Cambodia in 1953-1970, and to the birth of the Khmer Rouge Regime in 1975-1979 (Asia Pacific Curriculum, n.d.). The aforementioned transformative events have also brought about change in gender matter in the country. After gaining independence from France, Cambodia, under the reign of (former) King Sihanouk, adopted the French models and systems in education, medical, administration, and legal systems. It should be noted that during that period, very few women had access to higher education or key positions in the government; while they were reserved for men (McGrew, Frieson, and Chan, 2004). Subsequently, after the rise and fall of Khmer Rouge regime, the issues of gender disparities worsen due to the fact that key institutions in the country were

partially destructed which resulted in the elevation of the inequalities between men and women within Cambodian society (IWDA, n.d.). Nevertheless, in comparison to 25 years ago, the government of Cambodia today has made numerous and significant improvements in regards to the empowerment of women with the purpose to further enhance the role of women in the society as manifested through the equal access to education between girls and boys, the expanded pool of female employees in the political and economic activities, and so on. However, despite the many efforts, gender inequality still remains a persistent matter in Cambodian society which particularly poses hinderances to the full and equal participation of women in the spheres of culture, economy, and politics of the country (The Phnom Penh Post, 2022).

Figure 5: Cambodia's Ranking in the Global Gender Index (2006-2022)



Source: Data derived from the Global Gender Gap Index Reports

As illustrated in Figure 5 above, it can be seen that the ranking of Cambodia's performance on narrowing the gender gap between men and women in the society has been fluctuating between 89 to 112 since the establishment of the Global Gender Gap Index report in 2006 until 2022. It is worth mentioning that the rating under the Global Gender Gap Index is based on progress of gender gap among four fundamental dimensions namely Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment of more than 150 countries over the past 16 years (World Economic Forum, 2021). Therefore, the overall rankings that Cambodia held throughout these years showcases the persistency of gender-based issues within Cambodian society despite the many efforts taken by the government so far in tackling this matter; women and men in the country still receive different opportunity and treatment in their daily lives.

2. Cultural Norms in Cambodia:

Cambodia is known to be one of the oldest countries which means there is also the existence of social values, cultural norms, and traditions among the people within society throughout history. Norms and beliefs still play a role in constraining woman from doing or pursuing certain things while providing more value and power to their counterparts – men. Moreover, there is still the reinforcement of the expectations on the ideal Cambodian woman in households, workplaces, and communities (Ven and Pham, n.d.). Similarly, in “Attitudes: Gender Relations and Attitudes - Cambodia Assessment”, Ministry of Women's Affairs (2014) points out that despite the many improvements regarding the status of women within Cambodian society, traditional norms still pose hinderances on women to reach

their full potential in many aspects of lives ranging from educational opportunities to economic opportunities. Particularly, within the sphere of public decision-making, social perception and political structure still prevent women from having equal footing as men. The numbers of women in this field are still under-represented due to the persistence of traditional belief that underestimate the capabilities and potential of women, which results in the limited participation of women in public decision-making. In the same vein, in the “Gender Equality Deep Dive for Cambodia”, the United Nations (n.d.) pinpoints that “*Social norms and beliefs that restrict what women can do and be, and give higher value and power to men, are still pervasive*”. Furthermore, the existence and the consequence of gender norms in Cambodia can be seen through the vastly imbalance share of unpaid domestic work between men and women, in which 90 percent is done by women, and the issue of underrepresentation of women in decision-making positions.

Sharing similar point of view with the aforementioned documentations regarding cultural norms in Cambodian society, specifically in education-related issues, (interviewee 2) mentions that “Cultural norms still persist in Cambodia. We are a country in the developing process and there are majority of people from the old generation who are not well-educated and still have the perception on particular things that women should not pursue; for example, higher education. Today, we can see a good numbers of men and women graduated from bachelor degree but it is still a concern when it comes to master degree in which the family usually say to the daughter that do not study too much, you might not be able to have a husband”. Correspondingly, in the aspect of family matters (interviewee 5) also exerts that “Cultural norms still exist in Cambodian society. I think maybe it’s not openly

practiced here but in some families that there is the issue of housewife and househusband. If you are a housewife, it's fine. However, if you are a househusband, the family wouldn't like it; when the husband is at home and not going out to work, it is not generally accepted for our culture...and also in taking care of the baby; for example, most of the time it's the wife who would scarify or decide to quit the job to take care of the baby but not the husband. So, it is something that is commonly heard in our society, not the vice versa". When it comes to the participation of women in economic opportunities, (interviewee 1) believes that "the existence of cultural norms is still an issue because not many people want women to pursue career outside since they think that women should belong to the household. So, when we (women) try to pursue career outside, we will know more about the outside world, we get access to information and we tend to be independent. And that would be difficult for them to change our perspectives because we can think outside the box, we have more experiences, we have more knowledge about the outside world, we tend to be rebellious".

Overall, the information attained from the documents and interviews above illustrates the undeniable fact that, in Cambodia, cultural norms and traditional social perceptions still pose paramount significance in the confinement on the potential and the capabilities of girls and women to follow their dreams and to partake in the economic opportunities. In the sphere of diplomacy, cultural norms and perceptions of the society still play a prominent role that could potentially influence certain behaviors or decisions of both the women who are already in this field of expertise and the women who are interested in this field of expertise. As the matter of fact (interviewee 5) states that "I think, in diplomacy, more or less, we can say that cultural norms do forbid women from reaching their full potential.

As a woman, we tend to think about others' perspective on us ... There is a kind of mindset among Cambodian old people who tend to think that girls cannot really compete with guys just because they are girls...They (female staffs in foreign service) do not want to cause any problem so they try to tame themselves. By limiting who you are just because of the general views on male and female..., it also affects your work capability". Meanwhile, the norms and beliefs that politics is dangerous; thus, unfit for women affect the decision of women who are interested in this profession, which involves heavily with both high and low politics, in a way that (interviewee 2) put into words as "Diplomacy relates to politics so some families in the society still have the concern when their daughters involve in some sort of politics which is more risky than other job opportunities/careers ...cultural norms somehow play a role in hindering women to pursue their career in this field". Similarly, (Interviewee 3) also mentions that "We still have the idea that women should not talk a lot about politics". Such perception projects the influence that could potentially affect the decision of women, whether or not, to pursue diplomacy as their career path.

3. The Code for Women (*Chbab Srey*):

Although, contemporarily, Cambodia has undergone the process of globalization and modernization, the long living cultural perceptions towards the many aspects of the lives of people are still embedded in the mindset of the general publics. In "We don't forget the old rice pot when we get the new one: Discourses on Ideals and Practices of Women in Contemporary Cambodia", Brickell (2011) emphasizes that those cultural perceptions are instilled in the forms of proverbs and didactic verse and are being referred to as "codes", which are designed for people

under various categories such as women, men, children, and so on. It is further added that these codes demonstrate the position of an individual and the expected behaviors on them from / within the society. As mentioned, among the many codes that were instilled in Cambodian society, there is also the establishment of “Code for Women” which can also be referred to as *Chbab Srey* in Khmer language. *Chbab Srey* refers to the poem which had been passed down from one generation to another from the 14th to the 19th centuries in verbal form before it was codified into the written form. It specifically narrates a mother’s advice to her recently married daughter on how to behave towards her husband such as to walk and talk softly, maintain peace within the home, obey and respect her husband and so on. Throughout the many decades, especially during the Khmer Rouge regime in which the traditional, cultural values and norms as well as education system were in a complete destruction, the poem was able to survive and later on was even included within the educational system of the country (Anderson and Grace, 2018, as cited in Chandler, 2007). In “From Schoolgirls to “Virtuous” Khmer Women: Interrogating Chbab Srey and Gender in Cambodian Education Policy”, Anderson and Grace (2018), emphasize that “*the persistence of Chbab Srey in Khmer Culture, despite the Khmer Rouge’s attempts to wipe out Khmer culture through mass genocide and banning Khmer cultural expression...are indications of the poem’s importance in Cambodian society*”. Nonetheless, despite its longevity throughout history, in 2007, the Ministry of Women’s Affairs requested the government to extract the poem from the school curriculum. The request resulted in the elimination of some parts of the poem meaning the shorter version were still being taught at school from grade 7 to 9 as of 2015 (Wilwohl, 2015). Moreover, regardless of being officially pulled out from school’s curriculum, the poem’s

influence still runs deep, for many women, within Cambodian culture which showcases the fact the *Chbab Srey* is still an influential and power force in the country. As the matter of fact, in connection with the gender issue and cultural norms in Cambodian society, (interviewee 1) mentions that “...other problem would be women have to be careful with our gestures, our personality, our character because everyone keeps an eye on us”. Similarly, speaking from her own experience, (interviewee 5) states that “...If it’s within family, from my case, my mom still raises the topic like “you are a girl, don’t go out too late, don’t hang out every day, or don’t go everywhere by yourself a lot because you are a girl. And she mentioned that the neighbors would judge you because you don’t really stay at home...Even when I go out with my fiancé, my mom still tells me that “don’t go out a lot” or don’t stay out too late at night”.

4. Analysis

In the context of Cambodian society, the role of women has been substantially transformed throughout history as reflected in the involvement and the participation of women in the labor force, in which according to World Bank (2022) women in Cambodia represents 48.4 percent in the share of the country’s total labor force participation rate. This figure denotes the transformative role of women from being the household managers to being an essential human resource for the development of the country. However, regardless of their importance to the growth of the country, women are still being treated differently from their counterparts when it comes to having the attainment to full agency in various life decisions. Traditional gender norms continue to be a powerful force in the perpetuation of gender disparities between men and women in many aspects of life

as well as in a wider society (The Phnom Penh Post, 2019). The Code for Women, also known as *Chbab Srey*, continues to be deeply embedded in the mindset of many people in Cambodia although the full version of the poem has already been pulled out of the official school curriculum. Certain expectations on women from the family and the society, more or less, still have influence on the behavior and the decision of women. Such problem can be traced throughout many stages of lives of women. For instance, one of those stages is the tertiary education in which norms and beliefs of the society leads to the issue of occupational segregation among women and men in their later stage in live. “I think occupational segregation is an issue in our country. I think it’s mostly the perception from the older generations like from our parents’ or grandparents’... For example, such problem happened to my cousin when she graduated from high school two years ago, our family was like “oh you should go for financial sector and this and that; they just directed her to those kinds of sectors rather than encourage her to do other so-called “men” occupation...” (interviewee 5).

In the case of diplomacy, a sphere of expertise that immensely involves with politics and had long been perceived as the male-centric field of profession, the involvement of women is still limited due to various cultural norms, especially the perception that politics is too dangerous for women. Consequently, it becomes the hinderance for women to participate in diplomacy or foreign affairs. In other words, it can be ruled out that in the context of Cambodia, in particular, the imbalance proportion between men and women in diplomacy is precipitated by the cultural aspect including the perceptions on the place or position that women and men should belong to, the norms and beliefs on different capabilities and competencies between men and women, and the existence of the conception on

“men” and “women” types of occupation. According to the information derived from the interviewees, similar pattern in responses can be found in respect to the relationship between cultural norms and women in diplomacy. As previously mentioned, one of the interviewees is strongly convinced that cultural norms are influential, still, in barring women from reaching their full potential in their occupation – diplomacy – as they oftentimes choose to tame their behaviors and their capabilities in order to avoid problems that are triggered by the perceptions on different competency between men and women at the workplace. Moreover, the issue of occupational segregation is still present in the Cambodian society as family still has influence in the choice of tertiary education and career option for women. In addition to this, the other interviewees share the same point of view that there is the perception, in Cambodian society, which regards politics as an out of touch or dangerous facet; thus, women should not talk or get involved in this particular domain. Such perception resulted negatively as it affects the decision of women to pursue diplomacy as their career path. In this connection, during a speech at the “Advancing and Monitoring Workshop on Women’s Political Participation in ASEAN” on 30 April 2014, Her Excellency Ing Kantha Phavi, Minister of Women’s Affairs of Cambodia, precisely mentions that “... *Cambodia has made good progress over the past 15 years – with a steady increase in the numbers of women participating in the political arena and in public decision making ... Nevertheless, we have faced challenges in achieving our MDG targets for women’s representation ... Such obstacles are in most cases deeply rooted in traditional social norms and cannot be directly addressed only by my Ministry...*” (UN Women, 2014). In parallel to this statement, during the Opening Session of the International Conference on “Strengthening Women’s Role in Building and

Sustaining Peace: from Commitments to Results” on 07 December 2020, His Excellency Prak Sokhonn, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia, addresses that “*Women and girls have the powers to transform and nurture positive development. They can help build fair, inclusive, prosperous and peaceful societies. Nonetheless, stereotypes about their potentials and relevance continue to exist...*” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, 2021). The abovementioned statements from prominent public figures and responses from interviewees denote the acknowledgment that cultural norms and traditional perception remain a major obstacle for women to participate in the many aspects of the society, one of which is their involvement in the sphere of diplomacy. Therefore, it can be seen that, in the context of Cambodia, cultural aspect is a powerful force in boxing women from breaking through the glass ceiling phenomenon when it comes to the participation and the involvement of women in diplomacy.

Chapter V: Individual Aspect

1. Women and the issue of “Double Burden”

On the one hand, while Cambodia is experiencing socio-economic development, which brings about new opportunities and influences, its society, on the other hand, is struggling to regain a sense of national identity by returning to the traditional values and social ideals after many years of conflict and political unrest. As a hierarchically ordered society, the attitudes toward gender roles in Cambodian society usually impose considerable significance and hold expectation on women's role as the managers of household and men's role as the breadwinners of the family. Such perceptions on the gender identity of women are closely interconnected with culture and tradition; therefore, it is not an easy to change (Gorman, Dorina, and Kheng, 1999). To put it simply, the intertwined cultural and social norms contribute significantly to the issues of gender stereotyping and misconception towards the value of women in Cambodian society. According to the International Labor Organization (2018), women, in the Asia-Pacific region, disproportionately bear the burden of unpaid care work by spending 4.1 times more time in unpaid care work in relative to men. Particularly, in Cambodia, the imbalance of the share of unpaid care work between men and women is especially severe. As husbands, Cambodian men perform only one-tenth of the household and families' caring per day, which equates to only 18 minutes a day, while Cambodian women take up to 188 minutes of housework per day (Heng, 2022). As previously mentioned in this research paper, there is the increased numbers of women in Cambodia who have opted to enter the labor force, specifically in the formal economy of the country. In 2021, Cambodian women made up to 48.4 percent of

the total labor force of the country (World Bank, 2022). However, despite their increased participation in the labor market, Cambodian women still have to deal with the unequal share of responsibility in the household, which is normally referred to as the unpaid domestic care work, due to the deeply rooted traditional gender role of female in Cambodian society. To put it another way, the full-time working Cambodian women normally face a second shift at home. In this connection, (interviewee 4) mentions “I believe women bear more responsibilities than men. Before getting married, I could have said no but after getting married I cannot say so...For working women, they have to do all; it’s not like they can stop doing household chores or looking after their children. Somehow even if they do not want to, it is an obligation for them. Some women even sacrificed themselves or their careers for their family; while there are very little number of men who would do the same”. Likewise, (interviewee 2) points out that “It is a challenge for women to have a perfect work-life balance once they have a family... In some scenarios, women who are workaholics are not interested in building up a family because of how it could affect their career progress...”. Similarly, (interviewee 5) said “I think women do bear more responsibilities than men because in our society and culture, women have to take care of the children and the whole household even if she’s also a working mom or a working wife; while the working husband tend to relax more than the wives after work. So, women do bear more responsibilities...”. Correspondingly, (interviewee 1) pin points “... in most cases, women still bear more responsibilities. For example, my female colleagues who have the duty to work and when they finish their work they have to go home and take care of the children and household”. Speaking from one’s own experience, (interviewee 3) states “... Women have more tasks, more responsibilities in the family than

men...For instance, in a family where both husband and wife are both employed and have to travel for work-related, I believe that women will decide not to go. In my family, as an example, my husband always goes to the province so I always think that I will need to manage my time and my work. Due to this reason, I changed my job from working at Cambodia's Airport to the bank sector because I need to have the weekends for my family as my husband sometimes go to the province".

It is indeed evident that, in the context of Cambodia, the issue of imbalance share of unpaid care work among men and women still persists within the society. Double burden of women is still a pervasive issue in Cambodia which, in return, poses significant barriers to the well-being and the capability of women to fully carry out their duty at the workplace.

2. Women in Diplomacy

As previously mentioned throughout this research paper, the nature of diplomacy had long been regarded as male-centric meaning that it is a sphere of profession that is best fitted for men. However, such perception has been gradually transformed as manifested through the entry of women as well as the increased share of women in this field of occupation although it is still limited in some parts of the world. The breakthrough of some women into diplomacy does not guarantee the full equality or disparity between men and women involving in this field; women still face numerous challenges within their line of work. In "Challenges Facing Women in Overseas Diplomatic Positions", Linse C. (2004) finds that women, particularly in the context of the United States' diplomatic missions abroad, still face some of the challenges similar to other women who have broken the glass ceiling phenomenon and entered the traditionally male-dominated occupations; one

of the main challenges revolves around family matter including the dilemma between career and family, the difficulty in balancing career and family, and the issue of dual career couples, just to name a few. Similarly, according to Minarova-Banjac (2019), although marriage ban policy has been lifted today, the issue for married women diplomat still persists under the image of having to take the responsibility in taking care of the family, children, and household while having to also contribute to their profession.

In the context of Cambodia, where social norms and perceptions towards women are deeply rooted, the challenge for women in this realm of expertise becomes even more prominent. As mentioned in the previous chapter that women in Cambodia are expected to be the household carer even in the case that they also participate in the economic activities outside their house. They; therefore, oftentimes have to face with the issue of double burden. Meanwhile, the nature of work in diplomacy is not flexible and, especially, requires a lot of travelling abroad, family matter for Cambodian women in this field of expertise become more significant. According to interviewee 5, “The issue of doubled burden does pose a significant problem on women in Foreign Service because like us, junior officials, discuss among ourselves that when we are allowed to go posting abroad, we might already have a family, we might already have a baby so that would be so hard, it will be a big dilemma for the female official to decide whether she should pursue her own life goal or she should take care of her family first. I believe that is going to be something that weight down the decision to pursue her career more than her family because that happened from what we’ve heard from our senior female officials who decided to just stay in the capital to take care of the family and let the guys go out...”. In parallel to the aforementioned viewpoint, (interviewee 4) also

mentions that “double burden is still an issue for women in foreign service... if they chose their family, they have to sacrifice job and vice versa. Women have high responsibility and they have to make decision between work and family; while men do not have to face such problem”. Meanwhile, (interviewee 2) believes that “To some extent, double burden is a challenge for women, particularly, in the case of the on-and-off missions which they cannot take their family with them. Women tend to be prone to emotional attachment to the kids and the family ... It requires a lot of support from the family; otherwise, they would request to not travel”. Speaking from observation, (interviewee 1) said that “The issue of double burden affects women in foreign service. As of now, I do not have that experience yet but from what I have seen from my colleagues, sometimes, they get tired from taking care of their child, sometimes they are not happy because of their issues at home so it also affects their career because coming to work without any commitment or the feeling of fulfillment, they could not contribute much to the tasks assigned”.

Overall, women in diplomacy still have to deal with various challenges despite their entry into the previously male-dominated occupation. It turns out that family matter still poses significant challenge for women in this occupation, especially on those who are living within a society where traditional norms and beliefs on gender role is still pervasive. Cambodia - a country that the long-standing norms is still influential - women population especially those who involved in the nonflexible line of job like diplomacy or foreign affairs, the intensity of the challenges pose on them is often multiplied in a sense that they have to deal with the dilemma between family and career.

3. Analysis

First of all, this chapter illustrates that the traditional gender identity between men and women in Cambodia continues to exist. Due to the fact that women are expected to be the ones responsible for taking care of their household, family, and children, they usually have to bear more responsibilities comparing to their counterparts. Such issue appears to be more severe for working women or working mothers who have to take on their second shift at home after completing their duties at work. It can be seen that, in the context of Cambodia, regardless of the increased proportion of female within the labor market of the country, the issue of double burden still poses significant challenge to them. This issue is consequential in a sense that it wears off the energy of those women by the end of the day, particularly for those who decided to work and take care of the family simultaneously; meanwhile, for others it would become a dilemma between career and family. Oftentimes this specific issue does not fall upon men since their role is expected to be the breadwinner of the family rather than the caregiver.

Secondly, it showcases that in the field of diplomacy – an occupation with little to no flexibility and involves frequent outbound traveling – the issue of double burden becomes even more significant. Women, who work in this sphere, at the end of the day have to make the decision to prioritize either their family or their career. Speaking from the standpoint as the current officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, (interviewee 5) admits that “... the issue of double responsibilities does affect the ability of women (in foreign affairs) to carry out their duty.” Simultaneously, from a standpoint of former internee at MFAIC (interviewee 3) said that “.... because of the huge responsibilities women have to bear at home along with the nature of career in diplomacy, it is hard for

women to go into this sphere of expertise”. Similarly (interviewee 4) states that “There are some conditions that hinder women to pursue this career; for example, travelling in which in Cambodia, the elders still have the perception that women cannot travel far away due to safety reason. Overall, women have the ability to work in diplomacy but some situations / circumstances pressure them not to be able to work in the field like men”.

It can be seen that in the individual factor, which centers around family and career of women in diplomacy or foreign affairs, the influence or effect of cultural norms on the traditional gender role between men and women can still be found due to the existence and the persistence of the pre-determined perception of the society on the role of both sexes inside and outside the household. Consequently, there is the emergence of the disproportionate share of workloads when it comes to unpaid domestic care work, in which women are expected to be the ones who are accountable for the tasks. As previously mentioned, such issue becomes even more severe in the line of work concerning diplomacy. As pointed out by the interviewees anchored by similar points of view; those who are the current officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and those who are employed in the private sector believe that family matter, particularly the issue of double burden, is considered to be a significant factor. In essence, for the women who have already broke through the glass ceiling and enter the diplomacy profession, family matter especially the double burden issue could water down their full potential in the conduct of their work / duty. Meanwhile, for women who are interested in this field of expertise, the issue of double burden could influence their decision to not pursue diplomacy as their profession. Therefore, it is apparent that, in the line of work relating to diplomacy, the issue of double burden becomes even

more problematic due to the influence of cultural and social norms on the gender role between men and women as well as the nature of the job itself which requires frequent traveling abroad and fixed working hours. Thus, women, most of the time, have to face the dilemma of prioritizing between family and career; while such dilemma does not normally fall upon their counterparts – men.

Chapter VI: Discussion and Conclusion

The involvement and the participation of women in the sphere of diplomacy was not traditionally regarded as conventional since the nature of diplomacy had always been described as male-centric or male-dominant, in which men were deemed to be the qualified individuals for the profession. However, nowadays, there is an increase of women involving in diplomacy, especially at the Foreign Ministry which is an important state institution where diplomacy is immensely put into practice, whether in domestic, regional, or international domains. Despite the improvement, the pool of female officials at this specific state's establishment is still limited in relative to their male counterparts. Likewise, there is no exception for Cambodia; women's involvement in this field of expertise is still delimited. On top of that, it is noteworthy that there are limited studies which focus exclusively on the context of Cambodia when it comes to the involvement of women in diplomacy. In regards to diplomacy, most of the existing literatures focus on the developed countries. In the case of Cambodia, most scholars put their focus on women participation in domestic politics instead. Thus, as the first research paper that focus on Cambodian women participation in diplomacy, particularly the factors behind their limited number, three core aspects are studied: institution, culture, and individual.

This study analyzes institutional aspect through the measures taken by the MFAIC in expanding the proportion of women in diplomacy by looking at the policies adopted and implemented at the institution as well as the numbers of female officials prior and post the implementation of the policy. It is found that after the reformation was introduced in 2016, the issue of women participation also

came into the spotlight at MFAIC which can be manifested through the implementation of “The Policies and Strategies on Gender Mainstreaming in Foreign Affairs Phase I” (2018-2020). Prior to the period that this document came into practice, in 2017, female officials at MFAIC represented only 27 percent of the total staffs. Gradually, in 2021, the share of female officials’ representation increased to 34 percent. Even though this figure is still limited when comparing the sex-ratios between male and female staffs at the MFAIC and when comparing with some other countries in ASEAN, it; however, demonstrates the improved situation at MFAIC, particularly the gradual growing numbers of female officials. Moreover, this document also set the vision to elevate the share of female officials up to 40 percent by 2040.

In addition to the study on the institutional factor, the cultural factor is also examined to identify the root causes that lead to the limited number of Cambodian women in diplomacy. Through the study on the cultural aspect, it is found that cultural / traditional norms and social perceptions are still influential and pervasive in Cambodian society which, as a result, affect men and women in the society differently. Based on the interviews conducted with the former internees at MFAIC in which some of them are the current officials at the Ministry, while others are pursuing different career paths, similar patten in responses among the interviewees are found when it comes to the issue of cultural aspect. From analyzing the information of the interviewees, their standpoints and experiences showcase the common pattern of the following cultural norms that are hindering their career path in diplomacy. One of those cultural norms is the perception that politics is dangerous and unfit for women. Another is the point of view that men and women have different capabilities and competencies in carrying out their duty.

Turning to the individual aspect, women involving in diplomacy oftentimes face the dilemma between family and career. As demonstrated in the responses given by the interviewees, a commonality in response is found in a sense that there is still the persistence of traditional gender roles among men and women. In essence, it is agreed by the interviewees that women, especially the working women / mothers, do bear more responsibilities than their male counterparts. Such problem becomes even more prominent in the case of profession in the sphere of diplomacy where the nature of the work is not flexible and requires a lot of traveling abroad, be it in the form of short term or long term. The interviewees, especially the ones who are currently working in Foreign Service, admit that women in diplomacy do face the problem of balancing between work and family. Meanwhile, the ones who are not the current officials at MFAIC, also share similar points of view that the issue of double burden poses a challenge for women in the diplomatic sphere to trade-off between opting for diplomacy as their career path and taking care of their families.

In conclusion, in alignment with the Cultural Libertarian Feminism or Cultural Libertarianism and the Framework on Societal, Organizational, and Individual Factors by McGlen and Sarkee which were mentioned in Chapter 2 of this research paper, the findings of this paper point out that all three aspects – institutional, cultural, and individual – more or less are accountable for the limited share of women in the sphere of diplomacy. However, the main driving factor is the cultural aspect which affects the individual one in a sense that women, who are already in this realm of profession, have to face the dilemma of family and career; meaning they either cannot fully carry out their duty in their job or fully committed to taking care of their families due to the deeply-rooted perceptions on gender role

and the nature of diplomacy as a career. Meanwhile, women who are not involved in this sphere can see the dilemma mentioned above as a hinderance or influence to take this career path; instead, they choose the occupation that mostly based inside the country and provide more opportunities to take care of the households and families. Additionally, cultural aspect affects the institutional one in a way that although efforts have been made to enhance the participation of women in diplomacy; however, there is still the shortfall of gender-sensitivity in the policy-making process. All in all, based on the information attained from the interviews and the publications, it is suggested that the institutional, cultural, and individual aspects function in an intertwined manner, in which the cultural aspect is the core factor that push for the relatively lower numbers of women in diplomacy in the case of Cambodia.

Chapter VII: Recommendations

In accordance to the abovementioned findings, necessary solutions need to be introduced in order to tackle the issue of relatively lower numbers of women in diplomacy, particularly female officials at MFAIC. As previously mentioned, cultural norms project a pre-determined traditional gender role on Cambodian women as the core individuals responsible for the unpaid care and domestic work which affects the decision of women to pursue career in diplomacy or to reach their full potential in this particular field. As a response to this prominent obstacle, relevant authorities should implement measures to counter gender socialization. One of the solutions could be the introduction of gender equality topic into the school curriculum which would be beneficial for children to realize the importance of this matter and able to act on one's own account regardless of their gender, norms or perceptions constructed by the society. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, the nature of career in diplomacy is not flexible and requires frequent outbound traveling. In the former scenario, it would be helpful if the daycare nursery would be available at the Foreign Ministry for female officials who are working mothers, which could help ease their emotional and physical burdens as well as allowing them to fully contribute to their duty. In the latter scenario, in dealing with outbound traveling especially the postings abroad, the Ministry could support female officials by supporting their postings by focusing on the means for their spouses to be able to seek employment more easily while residing abroad; one of the means could be the expansion of working dependent agreements with the host countries. These are some of the suggestions that could create a more favorable working environment for women in diplomatic sphere, which could potentially

attract more female candidates into this profession. Overall, the representation of women in foreign service / diplomacy denotes the gender equality status of a country on the international stage; hence, it is crucial to take necessary measures to tackle the issue of gender imbalance in this realm of expertise and to create a working environment where both men and women can thrive fully and on equal footing regardless of their gender.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

- **Personal Information:**

1. Have you graduated? If you have, when was it?
2. What is your marital status?
3. What is your current occupation?
4. When was your internship at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MFAIC)?
5. Why did you apply for internship at MFAIC?
6. How would you describe your internship experience at MFAIC?
7. Why did / didn't you pursue diplomacy as your profession?

- **Gender Equality in Cambodia:**

1. What do you think of the status of gender equality in Cambodia? Can you describe some real-life gender issues in the context of Cambodia?
2. Among the described gender issues, what do you think is the most prominent one in Cambodia?
3. How would you explain the term "occupational segregation"? Do you think it is an issue in Cambodia?
4. What do you think the measures taken by the government in eliminating the issues of gender inequality? Can you name some of those measures (policies)?

- **Diplomacy as a career:**

1. Do you perceive diplomacy as a gender sensitive career? Why or why not?

2. From your internship or working experience, is there anything in design of diplomatic environment that could potentially affect women and men differently? What are they?
 3. What do you think of sex-ratio of staffs at Cambodia's MFAIC, in comparison to other countries in ASEAN?
 4. Specifically, do you know how many staffs are serving at MFAIC?
 5. If you do, can you say the estimate number of female staffs at MFAIC?
 6. Do you think the numbers of female staffs at MFAIC is represented relatively much weaker than the male ones?
 7. Do you perceive the unequal sex ratio in diplomacy as a serious problem? Why or why not?
 8. If you do, what would be the reasons behind the small numbers of female staffs relative to the male at MFIAC?
- **Perceptions on potential factors:**
 1. Do you know any policies implemented by the government in increasing women's participation in the public sphere including the field of diplomacy? If you do, can you name some of them?
 2. What do you think of the effectiveness and the efficacy of such policies?
 3. Are you aware of certain existing policies that have been implemented at MFAIC that aims at increasing the number of female staffs? If you do, can you describe some of them? Do you think these efforts are sufficient?
 4. In addition to the existing policies adopted at MFAIC, what would be the alternative policies you would introduce in balancing the sex ratio between male and female staffs at MFAIC?

5. How would you describe Cambodian society when it comes gender equality between men and women?
 6. Do you think cultural norms still persist in Cambodian society? If you do, can you describe some of them?
 7. In regards to diplomacy, do you think cultural norms play a role in hindering women to pursue or reach their full potential? Why or why not?
 8. Do you think women have to bear more responsibilities than men when it comes to work-family life? If so, can you elaborate your perception on this matter?
 9. Do you think the issue of doubled responsibilities become more significant for women in Foreign Service? Why or why not?
 10. When it comes to Foreign Service, do you think the responsibilities doubled for women? Can you raise example(s) concerning this topic?
 11. Do you think the doubled responsibilities of women in Foreign Service affect their ability to carry out their duties in relative to men?
- **Optional Questions:** (designed for the respondents who are working at MFAIC)
 1. If you were to consider Foreign Service abroad, what would be the factors that could affect your decision?
 2. Would you give advice to younger women to join Foreign Service? Why or why not?

Appendix B: List of Interviews

- Date of the interview:
 - 02 August 2022
 - Interviewee 1
 - Former internee at ASEAN Department, MFAIC.
 - Currently, an official MFAIC.
 - Interviewee 2
 - Former internee at Europe Department, MFAIC.
 - Currently, the Project Executive specializing in Communication at the IDEA Consultancy.
 - 07 August 2022:
 - Interviewee 3
 - Former internee at MFAIC.
 - Currently, an employee at Woori Bank Cambodia
 - Interviewee 4
 - Former internee at ASEAN Department, MFAIC.
 - Currently, an employee at a Private Bank in Cambodia.
 - 25 August 2022:
 - Interviewee 5
 - Former internee at Europe Department, MFAIC.
 - Currently, an official at MFAIC.

Abstract in Korean

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이름: Ouk Suntharoth

국제 협력

국제대학원대학교

서울대학교

외교는 항상 남성 중심의 직업으로 여겨져 왔습니다. 이 분야에서 여성의 과소 대표 문제는 여전히 세계 여러 지역에서 널리 퍼져 있습니다. 마찬가지로 캄보디아에서도 외교에 종사하는 여성의 수가 여전히 적습니다. 같은 지역의 다른 회원국들과 비교할 때 캄보디아의 외교에 종사하는 여성의 총 수, 특히 외교관의 여성 직원 수는 상대적으로 적습니다.

이 논문; 따라서 캄보디아의 맥락에서 위의 현상에 기여하는 주요 요인을 식별하는 것을 목표로 합니다. 잠재적인 요인에는 제도적 요인, 문화적 요인 및 개인적 요인이 있습니다. 연구 목적을 달성하기 위해 저자는 외교부 인턴 출신 5 명과 인터뷰를 진행하였다. 이 중 2 명은 현직 부처 공무원이고 나머지 3 명은 민간 분야에서 경력을 쌓고 있다.

결과적으로 캄보디아의 여성외교인력이 상대적으로 적은 제도적 요인과 개인적 요인에 영향을 미치는 문화적 요인이 크게 작용하는 세 가지 요인이 서로 얽혀 있음을 알 수 있다. 학교 교육과정에 양성평등 주제를 도입하여 성사회화에 대응하고, 탁아소를 설립하고, 주재국과 근로의존적

협약을 확대하는 등 상황을 더욱 개선하기 위해 몇 가지 권고사항을 제시합니다. 남성과 여성 공무원 모두가 완전하고 평등한 입장에서 번창할 수 있는 유리한 근무 환경을 조성하는 데 있습니다.

키워드: 여성, 외교, 캄보디아

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