

# The Kingdom of Cambodia

## Operation World Prayer Guide<sup>†</sup>

### BACKGROUND

#### Geography

Area 181,035 sq.km. (69,899 sq. miles ... approximately the size of Oklahoma)  
Fertile, forest-covered state of south-west Indo-China on the Mekong River.

#### Population

Year	Population	Annual Growth	Density
2000	11,167,719	2.27%	62 per sq. km.
2010	13,250,035	1.67%	73 per sq. km.
2025	16,526,449	1.23%	91 per sq. km.

#### Peoples

**Mon-Khmer** 86.5%. 16 peoples.

Khmer 83.3%

Tribal 3.2%. Largest: Kui 212,000; Stieng 31,000; Mnong 30,000; Jarai 28,000;

Tampuan 15,000; Brao 10,000; Chong 8,000; Kravet 6,000; Somray 3,000.

**Malay** 3.8%. Cham 41,000; Malay 10,000.

**Other** 9.7%. Vietnamese 620,000; Chinese 350,000; Lao 70,000; Thai 28,000.

**Literacy** 65%. **Official Language** Khmer. **All Languages** 17. **Languages with Scriptures** 2 entire Bible, 1 New Testament, 1 portions of the Bible, and 2 works in progress.

#### Economy

Rich agricultural potential. The last 25 years of war, genocide and the power-lust and greed of subsequent governments have impoverished most of the population. The major economic activities are receiving international aid (the largest per capita receiver nation in the world) and sin (pornography, prostitution, drugs and illegal logging). **UN Human Development Index** 0.514; 137th/174. **Public debt** 66% of GNP. **Income/Person** \$300 (1% of USA)

#### Politics

A constitutional monarchy. Powerful kingdoms from 1st to 14th centuries. Thereafter for 500 years a pawn in regional and global conflicts with Thai, Vietnamese, French, Japanese and US invasions or occupations. A tragic victim of the Vietnam War (1970-75) which opened the way for the extreme Marxist Khmer Rouge take-over in 1975, followed by one of the most savage slaughters in the 20th century. Almost all former military personnel, civil servants, educated or wealthy people and their families were killed, and the nation turned into a vast labor camp. The Vietnamese army ousted the Khmer Rouge in 1978, but civil war between four contending armies raged with superpower support until 1991. International efforts to bring democracy with elections in 1993 and 1998 were hugely expensive and manipulated by the leader Hun Sen to entrench his personal powerbase, and crush opposition. Nevertheless, since 1998 there has been no further warfare. A member of ASEAN since 1998, the restored monarchy may not survive into a second decade.

#### Religion

Buddhism has been the national religion since the 15th century. The Khmer Rouge sought to eradicate all religion; 90% of Buddhist monks and most Christians perished. Since 1978 there have been periods of more tolerance, but only since 1990 have Christians been allowed to worship openly. There is increasing freedom of religion for Cambodians.

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<sup>†</sup> <sup>\*\*</sup>Used with permission. Johnstone, Patrick, et al. Operation World. Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster USA Publishing, 2001. To order a copy call 1-800-MISSION or go to [www.operationworld.org](http://www.operationworld.org).

## RELIGIOUS DATA

<b>Religions</b>	<b>Population %</b>	<b>Adherents</b>	<b>Annual Growth</b>
Buddhist	82.57	9,221,186	+2.2%
Chinese	4.69	523,766	+5.6%
Traditional ethnic	4.35	485,796	+5.6%
Muslim	3.90	435,541	+4.5%
Non-Religious/other	2.92	326,000	-7.0%
Christian	1.19	132,896	+4.7%
Hindu	0.26	29,036	+14.2%
Baha'i	0.12	13,401	+6.1%

<b>Christians</b>	<b># Denominations</b>	<b>Affiliation %</b>	<b>Adherents</b>	<b>Annual Growth</b>
Protestant	13	0.20	23,000	+9.7%
Independent	8	0.78	87,000	+5.9%
Catholic	1	0.20	22,000	+1.6%
Marginal (i.e. cults)	2	0.01	1,000	+7.5%

<b>Trans-bloc Groupings</b>	<b>Population %</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Annual Growth</b>
Evangelical	0.5%	56,000	+11.9%
Charismatic	0.7%	75,000	+3.7%
Pentecostal	0.0%	1,000	+10.6%

<b>Churches</b>	<b>MegaBloc</b>	<b>Congregations</b>	<b>Members</b>	<b>Affiliates</b>
New Apostolic	Independent	200	25,000	50,000
National Churches	Independent	120	9,600	24,000
Catholic	Catholic	16	11,000	22,000
Cambodia for Christ	Independent	68	5,000	13,000
7th-day Adventist	Protestant	25	2,500	5,000
Christian Chs/ Chs of Christ	Protestant	19	3,000	4,500
Christian Alliance	Protestant	29	1,165	4,431
Assemblies of God	Protestant	3	719	1,200
Other denominations [14]		60	4,554	8,770
<b>Total Christians [22]</b>		<b>540</b>	<b>62,538</b>	<b>133,000</b>

### **Missionaries from Cambodia:**

81 in 6 agencies: 78 in Cambodia

### **Missionaries to Cambodia**

402 in 55 agencies from 25 countries: USA 155, Philippines 53, Australia 34, UK 33, New Zealand 21.

## CHALLENGES FOR PRAYER

1. **The terrible genocide of 1975-79 in which nearly 2 million were killed has left deep physical and emotional scars.** There are over 30,000 who have lost limbs to landmines, and almost the entire population needs deep healing from the trauma of their losses and suffering. Pray for:
  - a) **Justice** to be done regarding those who perpetrated the crimes. The Khmer Rouge have so far shown little remorse.
  - b) **Those seeking to remove mines** and restore the country to a decent living standard. Many Christian NGOs are involved.
  - c) **Those caring for the maimed, the orphans, widows, and now AIDS victims.**
  - d) **A government that seeks the good of all**, and is worthy of the trust of the people. Violence, manipulation, graft and selfishness hitherto have been the rule.
  
2. **The spiritual darkness of Cambodia** must be lifted by prayer. That darkness is shown by the ubiquitous spirit shrines, the strong opposition of Buddhism to any ideological rival and the moral collapse. The sex industry thrives, but a third of all prostitutes (an estimated 50,000) are children. Cambodia has the highest rate of child abandonment in SE Asia. HIV is spreading rapidly with 180,000 known to be infected in 1999 and 3,500 children born with HIV each year. Pray for the light of the gospel to so shine that the structures of society as well as individuals may be decisively changed.
  
3. **The Cambodian Church** has survived against all odds. Beginning in 1923, CMA missionaries labored for 47 years before the breakthrough began. There were only 700 believers in evangelical churches in 1970, but by 1975 this had grown to 9-12,000. Only 2,000 survived the slaughter – many fled to Thai refugee camps where a great harvest was reaped for the Kingdom. During the 1990s churches spread to all 19 provinces. Pray for:
  - a) **Freedom from government manipulation and interference**, and wisdom in how to relate to authorities.
  - b) **Freedom and deep deliverance** from past sin, hatred, suffering and abuse through faith in the precious blood of Jesus.
  - c) **Children and young people** to be effectively disciplined in the churches. Few are equipped for this, yet over half the population is under 21.
  - d) **Many Christian families to be raised up** who can live for Christ as examples of his power to save and change.
  - e) **A vision for the lost** and to take the gospel to every person.
  
4. **Mature leadership** for the churches is the greatest challenge. The loss of so many educated people in the Khmer Rouge slaughter, and the dysfunctional society pushed many new Christians quickly into leadership before they were ready. Pray for:
  - a) **The Bible schools** – The Phnom Penh Bible School and the Cambodia for Christ (CFC) Ministry Training College are two key institutions.
  - b) **Existing pastors** – In 1999 there were 755 registered as such with the government, 200 with CFC. Pray for purity, power in the Spirit, and discernment in their ministry, and for their dependence in God rather than on foreign aid.
  - c) **Unity.** Only four bodies are recognized by the government with which all denominations must register – Cambodian Christian Evangelical Alliance, Evangelical Fellowship of Cambodia, Cambodian Christian Federation and the Cambodian Baptist Convention. These are increasingly working together. Pray for this to be effective and a positive impact on the country. The Cambodian Church has had many problems with divisiveness.

5. **Christian ministry to physical needs** is a major concern.
- a) **Refugees poured out of Cambodia** between 1973 and 1985. About 700,000 fled to Thailand, where many came to Christ in refugee camps. Many agencies have had a remarkable ministry there (SAO, YWAM, WVI, SBC, Christian Outreach, OMF, CMA and others). Some 350,000 moved on to the USA, France, Canada and other lands, where there are now dozens of Cambodian Christian fellowships. The remaining 350,000 had returned home by 1993 to rebuild their lives. They need much help.
  - b) **The social needs are enormous.** The murder of most of those with skills or an education makes expatriate input essential. Rehabilitation, orphanages, reconstruction, health care, projects for agriculture, fisheries, water management and education are all ministries where Christians have significant input. Pray for:
    - i) *The 30 or more Christian NGOs* (World Concern, Christian Outreach, World Relief, Food for the Hungry, Harvest International Services, SAO, OMF, CMA, WVI, AoG, YWAM, Mennonites and Servants to Asia's Urban Poor).
    - ii) *Effective cooperation* among Christian agencies.
    - iii) *More long-term expatriate workers* who learn the language and identify with the culture. Humanitarian ministries can fail in this and encourage only short-term involvement. Missionary visas are now being granted to such agencies as OMF, AoG, WVI and CMA.
    - iv) *Spiritual and physical health* of new workers and fruitfulness in ministry.
    - v) *This land to open fully* and remain open for all needed expatriate workers – especially pioneers, church planters and Bible teachers.
6. **The less reached.** There is a window of opportunity for the land that must be prayerfully kept open.  
Pray for:
- a) **The Buddhist majority.** Though reviving, Buddhism has lost some of its monopolistic grip on the people.
  - b) **The Cham** are almost entirely Muslim. Probably 60% are deeply involved in spirit worship. They have increased rapidly in numbers. Few are Christian and there are no churches among them.
  - c) **The tribal peoples.** Only among the Mnong have significant numbers come to Christ. There are small, but growing churches among the Tampuan, Krung, Kravet and Jarai. Pray for an adequate survey of the need, and calling of pioneers to reach them.
7. **Christian media ministries.** Pray specifically for:
- a) **Literature.** CMA missionaries have translated a range of materials, and continue to do so. There is a real need for teaching materials, for false teachings abound. The largest church, the New Apostolic Church, is sectarian. The United Bible Society and others are providing Khmer Bibles and New Testaments. A new Khmer Bible was completed in 1998. Scripture Gift Mission International Scripture portions are widely appreciated.
  - b) **The Jesus film** is being used in Khmer, Chinese and Vietnamese. Its greatest impact was through national television.
  - c) **Christian radio.** Far East Broadcasting Company (FEBC) and Campus Crusade for Christ International have been allowed to broadcast 6 hours a week local radio – a first! Lutheran House has also been given a similar opportunity. FEBC also broadcast from Manila in Khmer (12 hrs/wk) as well as in Jarai and Stieng. Trans World Radio have recently begun weekly broadcasts.
  - d) **Mission Aviation Fellowship** has a plane servicing Christian work.