



**Launching New Publications:  
CDRI WORKING PAPER SERIES ON COVID-19**

**On 07 June 2023**

**08:30 am – noon**

At Hyatt Regency Phnom Penh

**CONCEPT NOTE**

**BACKGROUND**

Since early 2020, the world witnessed a global health crisis caused by COVID-19, disrupting economic activities, human interactions and global and regional value chains, and even leading to strict cross-border travel restrictions and a series of city and country lockdowns around the globe. Like many other countries, Cambodia registered its negative GDP growth of -3.1% for the first time after having enjoyed the momentum of high growth over 20 years. However, the Cambodian government managed to contain the pandemic with stringent health measures and economic interventions, including financial and fiscal policies, and vaccination campaigns and coverage, making Cambodia recover its economic growth by 3% in 2021 from the severe decline in 2020 (MEF 2022). According to ADB's 2023 Asian Development Outlook report, the Cambodian economy grew by an estimated 5.2% in 2022 due to its solid export and tourism recovery.

Cambodia is now on the path of economic recovery with projected GDP rates of 5.5% in 2023 and 6.0% in 2024. However, as a small, export-dependent economy, Cambodia is susceptible to external environmental conditions and world economic shocks (UNDP in Cambodia 2022). Particularly, the prolonged COVID-19 pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine war, the China-US trade war, widespread economic sanctions and other chronic conflicts around the globe, still affect the Cambodian economy negatively in terms of supply chain disruptions, oil price explosion, rising inflation, higher interest rates, and reduced investment inflows. In this regard, the country's economic growth will remain sluggish and uncertain in the following years if regional and global economic instability and uncertainty prevail. Thus, Cambodia needs to build and strengthen its solid economic foundation through local business promotion, private sector development and local production to diversify the country's economy beyond the garment, tourism, construction and agriculture sectors. Towards that end, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are purportedly the key to the country's economic development as they are dominant in business and important for employment and income generation, poverty reduction and GDP growth (Chhim and Lay 2021).

In contribution to the policy discussion of COVID-19 impacts on Cambodian socio-economic development and provision of insightful input into policy and initiative consideration for Cambodia's post-pandemic economic recovery pathway, Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI) has initiated several COVID-related research projects between 2020-2023. These include, for instance, i) "The Study on Tourism MSME and 'New Normal' Economic Revival: The Role of Digital Technologies", ii) "The Impact of COVID-19 on Inclusive Development and Governance: Rapid and

Post-Pandemic Assessment in the CLMV countries”, and iii) “A Survey on Impacts of COVID-19 Crisis on Cambodian Households”.

With core support from Swedish International Development Agency (Sida), CDRI collaborated with the Ministry of Economy and Finance to design and implement the original research on “Strengthening Cambodia’s Post-Pandemic Recovery and Competitiveness Pathways” in 2021. As part of this project, CDRI conducted a national representative survey with 361 business enterprises and in-depth qualitative interviews with 30 key informants to investigate critical factors – internal and external key drivers – that promote or hinder firm growth while also looking at firms’ behaviour and strategies in responding to crises like COVID-19.

The results from this original research provide in-depth and new insight into the current and future situations of the country’s socio-economic development in relation to the COVID-19 and crisis context while aiming to provide evidence-informed policy and initiative consideration for policymakers, practitioners and relevant stakeholders in planning and designing social and economic policies and interventions responsive to socio-economic issues and needs. The findings from these papers have been shared with policymakers and are now published in CDRI Working Paper (WP) Series on COVID-19. These WP Series are titled as follows:

- WP 01: Firm Performance in Cambodia: Key Drivers and Strategies from Survey Data;
- WP 02: The Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Cambodia’s Trade, Global Value Chains and Export Competitiveness;
- WP 03: Macroeconomic and Sectoral Effects: Long-term Constraint and Transition to the New Normal;
- WP 04: Response to Facilitate Post-COVID-19 Economic Recovery; and
- WP 05: Gender Analysis of the Reopening: Evidence from Cambodia

Against this backdrop, CDRI is pleased to publicly release this research at the launching event of the Working Paper Series on COVID-19 on Wednesday 07 June 2023 at Hyatt Regency Phnom Penh.

## **OBJECTIVES**

The main objectives of the event are to facilitate engagement between CDRI researchers and Cambodia’s policymakers in the government and private sector on the findings from the research on COVID-19 Series, and to discuss emerging followed-up research needs and partnerships.

## **PARTICIPANTS**

A total of 100 participants are invited to this event. They are representatives from government ministries and institutions, international and local organisations, academia, civil society, development partners and private sectors.

## **TENTATIVE AGENDA**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Programme</b>
08:00-08:30 am	Arrival of participants and registration
08:30-08:35 am	<b>Welcoming remark</b> Dr Eng Netra, Executive Director, CDRI

08:35-08:50 am	<p><b>Opening remark</b> Mrs Camilla Ottoson, Head of the Section Office, Head of Development Cooperation, Sida</p>
08:50-09:40 am	<p><b>Presentation of key findings from the WP Series</b></p> <p><b>Presenters:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Macroeconomic and Sectoral Effects: Long-term Constraint and Transition to the New Normal, Ms Preychea Priyalen, Economist, Ministry of Economy and Finance</li> <li>● The Impacts of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Cambodia's Trade, Global Value Chains and Export Competitiveness, Dr Hing Vutha, Senior Research Fellow, CDRI</li> <li>● Firm Performance in Cambodia: Key Driver and Strategies from Survey Data, Mr Veung Naron, Research Associate, CDRI</li> </ul> <p>20-min Question &amp; Answer</p>
09:40-10:00 am	<p><b>Coffee break</b></p>
10:00-11:30 am	<p><b>Panel Discussion on policy contributions and emerging research agenda</b></p> <p><b>Moderator:</b> Dr Hing Vutha, Senior Research Fellow, CDRI</p> <p><b>Panellists:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● HE Dr Phan Phalla, Secretary of State, Ministry of Economy and Finance</li> <li>● HE Oknha Keo Mom, President, Cambodia Women Entrepreneurs Association</li> <li>● Mrs Mar Amara, Senior Executive Vice President &amp; Group Chief Finance Officer, ACLEDA Bank</li> <li>● Mr Asad Yaqub, Resident representative, International Finance Corporation</li> <li>● Mr. Kenneth Tang, President, Australian Chamber of Commerce Cambodia</li> </ul>
11:30-11:40 am	<p><b>Concluding remark</b> HE Dr Phan Phalla, Secretary of State, Ministry of Economy and Finance</p>
	<p><b>Lunch</b></p>