

# Post–Conflict Land Administration as Facilitator of the Post–Conflict State Building; Case Cambodia

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## SUMMARY

Challenges that land administration faced during the conflict and in the post-conflict period deserve deeper exploration, specifically the role that land administration had in the overall process of post-conflict state building in the case of Cambodia. Cambodian history witnesses many conflicts in the past, the Khmer Rouge regime (1975-1979) is considered to be the one of the most homicidal and authoritarian regimes in the present history. There are estimations that two million people died in horrifying circumstances and destruction of all existing state infrastructure and state archives occurred in this period. During the Khmer Rouge era, money and salaries have been abolished, schools and factories were closed, monasteries and churches forbidden. Citizens of Phnom Penh were deported in the rural areas but also residents from other cities and rural population were systematically dislocated from their properties. These events had big effect on the Land Administration in the country. All land-related documents, including the land register, maps and geodetic networks were systematically destroyed as well as most of professionals and educated people eliminated during the tragic 1975-79 period. During the Khmer Rouge regime the private ownership was abolished and remained unrecognized also during the following 10 yearlong Vietnamese government. After the Vietnamese occupation ended the private land ownership was re-introduced. Unfortunately there were technical, financial, organisational and legal constrains to implement the old fashion and paper based land registration. This resulted with only 10 % of registered privately-possessed parcels in the period until 1998. In mid and late 90's the Kingdom of Cambodia identified land sector as very weak point of its performance. At that time and until nowadays Cambodia is considered as agricultural country where land plays one of the mayor roles for everyday life of 80% of its population. Since then a lot of efforts capacities and resources are dedicated on development of this fundamental state function. Development of land and land related issues like land policy, land administration and management etc. were and still are supported by development partners, the Governments of Germany and Finland. Characteristics of war-torn societies are: weak institutions, economic and social problems and low security. These characteristics were also present in post-conflict Cambodia. Developments that were evident in the land sector helped tackling at least two of these characteristics; they contributed towards strengthening the institutions and to the economic and social development. All this suggests that land administration could be seen as a facilitator of the overall process of post-conflict state-building.