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Economic Development and Local Service Delivery at Sub-National Government Level in Oddar Meanchey Province

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1 Introduction

Oddar Meanchey, like other provinces in Cambodia, has implemented local economic and administrative development in the context of Decentralization and De-concentration (D&D). While this implementation has received attention from the government, local authorities and non-government organizations, the results vary across different sectors and areas within the province. This study, therefore, attempts to review the achievements and evolution of economic and administrative activities at the sub-national level in Oddar Meanchey with a specific focus on Chong Kal district, at the request, and in support of the mission plan of Commission 2 of the Senate. Desk research looking at existing studies and databases is the main source of information. The next section of the paper provides a quick overview of the province's physical situation. Sections 3 and 4 discuss local economic development and service delivery at the sub-national government level, respectively, followed by a summary of the case study of the GIZ development program in section 5. The last section concludes the study.

2 Overview of Oddar Meanchey Province

Oddar Meanchey is about 469km north of Phnom Penh. The province is in one of the most remote parts of the country and has experienced a prolonged war. The total area is 6,158km², bordering Banteay Meanchey to the west, Siem Reap to the South, Preah Vihear to the east and the Cambodian-Thai border to the north. The total population was 231,390 in 2014 with an average annual growth rate of 4.39 percent. [1] The population density was 38 persons/km² which is less than half that of Battambang, reflecting more recent settlement in the area. The province consists of five districts, 24 communes and 224 villages.

Table 1. Key Statistics for Oddar Meanchey Province

Total Areas	6,158km ²
Total Population	231,390
Population Density	30 person/km ²
Number of Districts	5
Number of Communes	24
Number of Villages	224

Source: Cambodia Inter-Censal Population Survey, 2013

3 Local Economic Development

The economy of Oddar Meanchey is mainly based on agriculture, while trading has been increasing and has become another important sector due to the rise in cross-border trade with Thailand during recent years. The province is thus promising for private sector investment and employment. [2] This section discusses the changes in agriculture and industrial activities as well as employment within the province over the last several years.

3.1 Economic Activities by Sector

3.1.1 Agricultural Development

Once peace had been restored, Oddar Meanchey became an open frontier for agricultural production and forest logging. This was evident in the increase in the proportion of migrants in the province, [1] the reduction of forest cover, [3] and the expansion of agricultural land (Table 2).

According to the Cambodia Agriculture Census 2013, total agriculture land in the province was 150,891ha and the average area per holding was 5ha, the highest compared with neighboring provinces. [4] Almost every parcel was owned land. However, statistics show that the province was among the areas with the lowest access to irrigation systems, with irrigation available to less than 5 percent of the agricultural holdings. This highlights the lack of a water system as a formidable challenge in farm production.

Table 2 summarises the cultivated land in the province. The data indicates that rice production remains rain-fed (relying on rainfall for water), with an increase in production areas from about 50,000ha in 2007 to 72,000ha in 2015. As a percentage of the produce of the Tonle Sap regions¹, the province supplied 8 percent of the aromatic rice and 15 percent of the cassava. [4] Other crops, such as sugarcane, corn, sweet potatoes, vegetables and sesame, remain insignificant. However, the data suggests that agriculture in the province has been moving toward commercial farming, with the rapid increase in production of industrial crops such as cassava and rubber.

Agriculture production in Oddar Meanchey in relation to other provinces shows that, of the total national production, it contributed 2.2 percent of wet season rice and almost 20 percent of sugarcane. It also contributed 9 and 6 percent, respectively, of the national corn and cassava production. The scale of agricultural production within the province remains relatively minor and its full potential has not yet been achieved.

Table 2- Cultivated Land and Production in Oddar Meanchey Province

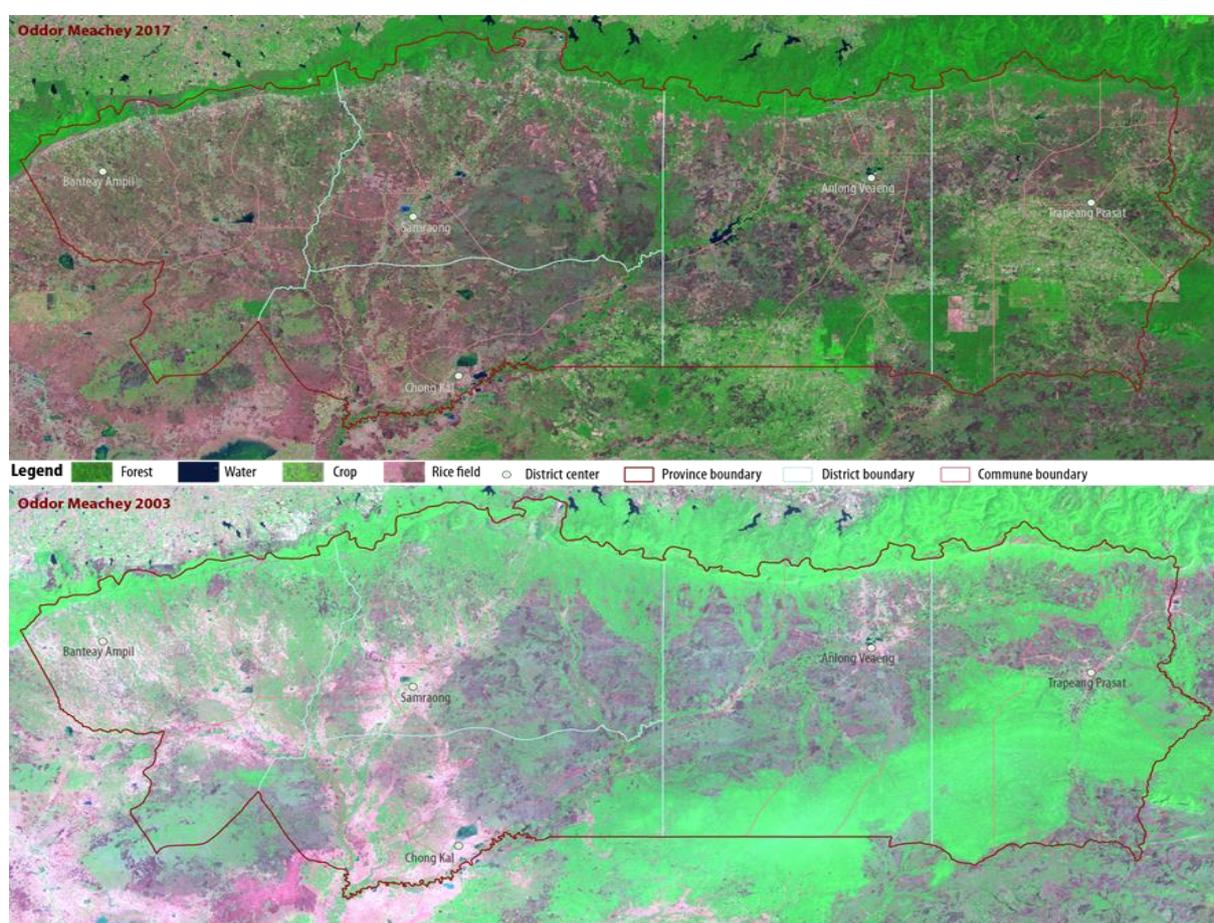
Crops	Cultivated Area (ha)			Production (ton) 2015	% in total production 2015
	2007	2013	2015		
Dry Season Rice	N/A	N/A	150	525	0.02%
Wet Season Rice	49,370	64,705	72,000	158,400	2.20%
Sugarcane	61	312	44	1,050	17%
Corn	230	198	111	555	9%
Cassava	131	25,125	35,643	754,440	6%
Sweet Potato	58	26	23	106	0.36%
Beans	573	3,847	6,354	8,152	6.36%
Vegetables	142	186	125	317	0.14%
Sesame	91	70	55	20	0.11%
Rubber	N/A	3,427	11,884	N/A	N/A

¹ The Tonle Sap region consists of seven provinces: Oddar Meanchey, Banteay Meanchey, Battambang, Kampong Chhnang, Kampong Thom, Pursat and Siem Reap

Sources: Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Annual Report 2007, 2011 and 2015

With the increase in cultivated land, the demand for accelerated economic development led to a reduction of forest cover (Figure 1)², due mainly to the allocation of land for Economic Land Concessions, and the expansion of agricultural land by increasing the number of smallholders and migrants. [3] Forest covered approximately 68.8 percent of the province in 2011, but there are no updated statistics for more recent years. Thirteen community forests have been established across the province as a means to reduce forest clearance and to empower local communities to protect their own forest resources. [3]

Figure 1 : Change in forest cover and cultivated land in Oddar Meanchey



Source: Generated from USGS Data by PIC team

3.1.2 Industrial Establishments

Table 3 shows that there were 5,491 industrial establishments in Oddar Meanchey in 2014 (an increase from 4,912 in 2011), accounting for 1.1 percent of the total number of establishments in the country, and ranking Oddar Meanchey 19th among all of the provinces. [5] The total number of people engaged shared a similar pattern in that 14,837 people were engaged

² Annual reduction of forest cover in the province was 2.1 percent between 2002 to 2006

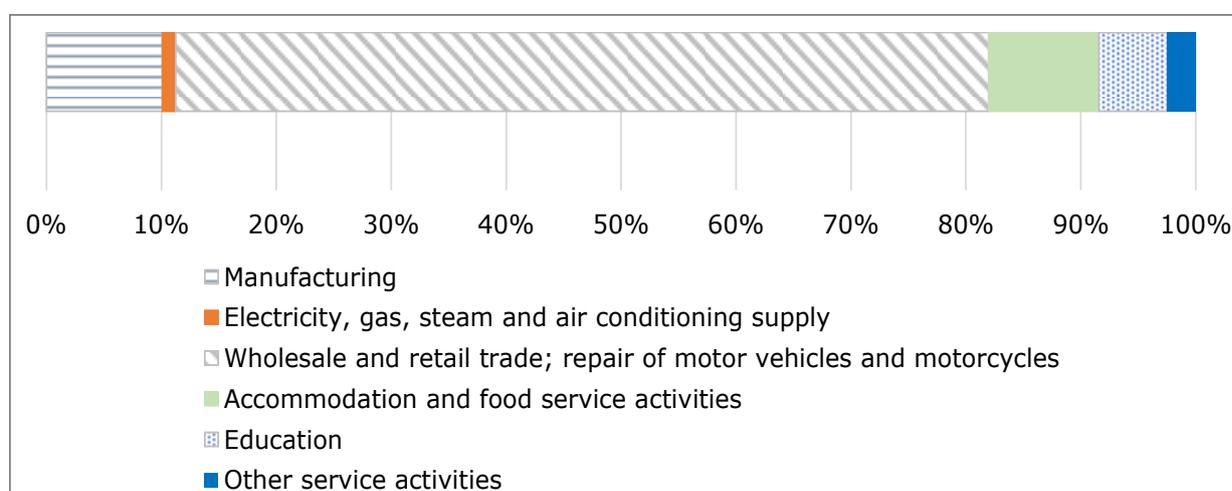
in industrial establishments, accounting for 0.8 percent of the total number of people engaged throughout Cambodia as a whole. This figure suggests that the province's share of people engaged in industrial establishments, which may contribute directly to the production of goods and services, is considerably lower compared with that of its population (1.5 percent). In addition, the number of people engaged per establishment was 2.7 on average, which is lower than that of its neighboring provinces, except Preah Vihear. Moreover, the Economic Survey of 2014 indicated that the total annual sales in Oddar Meanchey amounted to USD134 million, accounting for 0.6 percent of the annual sales throughout the Kingdom. This might suggest that the province's population, consisting of about 1.5 percent of the national population, produced economic establishment outputs of only 0.6 percent of the national economy covered in the Economic Survey. [5]

The majority of the establishments in the province concentrated on a few main industries. As indicated in Figure 2, the wholesale-retail trade and repair occupies 70 percent of the province's industrial establishments, followed mainly by (1) manufacturing (particularly manufacturing of clothing and food products) and (2) accommodation and food services at 10 percent each. Other manufacturing and services remain minimal.

Table 3: Number of establishments, persons engaged, and annual sales³

	Number of Establishments			Number of Persons Engaged			Annual Sales	
	Total Numbers	Share of Province	Rank	# of Persons	Share of Province	Average Persons per Establishment	Total Sales (million USD)	Share of Province
Cambodia	513,759	100		1,874,670	100	3.6	22,612	100
Oddar Meanchey	5,471	1.1	19	14,837	0.8	2.7	134	0.6

Figure 2: Share of Establishments by main industry (CSIC/ISIC division)



³ Source: Table 3 and Figure 2: 2014 Cambodia Inter-Censual Economic Survey

Potential Sectors for Investment

Given its abundant natural resources, the province has the potential to develop its economic activities in some sectors. The Council for the Development of Cambodia reported that opportunities in the province could be seen in the mining of raw materials, agro-food manufacturing, Tapioca processing, wood processing, and animal feed processing. [2] The increase in local and border-trade activities with neighboring provinces and Thailand offered an opportunity for investment and export of such products. In addition, the province is endowed with natural, historical, and cultural resorts and tourist sites which have development potential in the tourism sector. Some existing sites include the Anlong Veng historical sites, Tamon Temple and Ta Krabei Temple (on the top of Dang Rek Mountain), Promkil Temple and Tep Bridge (in Chong Kal District), Khnar Char Temple, and Da Champei Waterfall. [2] However, some of these areas have lagged behind due to the lack of support and participation from the local communities and authorities.

3.2 Employment by Sector

The total population figures were between 40,000 and just over 60,000 in four districts - Anlong Veang, Banteay Ampil, Samraong and Trapeang Prasat - while there were fewer in Chong Kal (26,082 or 10.8 percent of the province's total population). [6] The database shows that the total number of people with a primary occupation in the whole province was 124,446 of whom 20 to 25 percent were from each of Trapeang Prasat, Samraong and Banteay Ampil (Table 4). In Chong Kal, however, only about 11 percent of people had a primary occupation. Eighty to ninety percent of employed people in Banteay Ampil, Chong Kal and Trapeang Prasat are engaged in agriculture activities including farming, fishery, livestock and non-timber forest products (NTFPs). The number of people working in handicrafts and manufacturing varies between 0.1 to 2.4 percent, highlighting the insignificance of this subsector in contributing to the province's job creation. Employment in services included the categories of trader, repairer, transporter, government official, and wage laborer. Only two districts are found to have a significant share of employment in services—Anlong Veng (20.4 percent), located along the Cambodia-Thailand border, and Samraong (28.5 percent), the provincial capital.

The pattern of employment by sector in the province appears to have been relatively unchanged from 2011 to 2016 (Figures 3 and 4). Agriculture remains the main source of employment although its share of the employment total dropped slightly from 84 percent in 2011 to 82 percent in 2016. This drop was offset by a slight increase in the share of the service sector. Other sub-sectors show almost no change in their shares. All of these highlight a modest growth in other non-farm sectors as well as non-farm establishments.

Table 4: Share of employment by district in 2016

Districts	Population		Share of Employment in Primary Occupation	Share of Employment in Primary Occupation by Sector				
	Total Number in People	Percentage Share		Total Agriculture			Handicraft and Manufacturing	Total Service
				Farming	Fishery-Livestock	NTPF		
Anlong Veang	47,410	19.6	18.5	76.0	1.0	0.2	2.4	20.4
Banteay Ampil	50,584	20.9	22.6	91.6	0.4	0.3	0.1	7.5
Chong Kal	26,082	10.8	11.0	93.7	0.1	0.0	0.1	6.1
Samraong	63,002	26.0	23.9	70.0	0.5	0.1	0.9	28.5
Trapeang Prasat	54,908	22.7	24.0	86.3	0.4	0.0	0.4	12.9

Figure 3: Share of Primary Occupation Employment by Sector in 2011

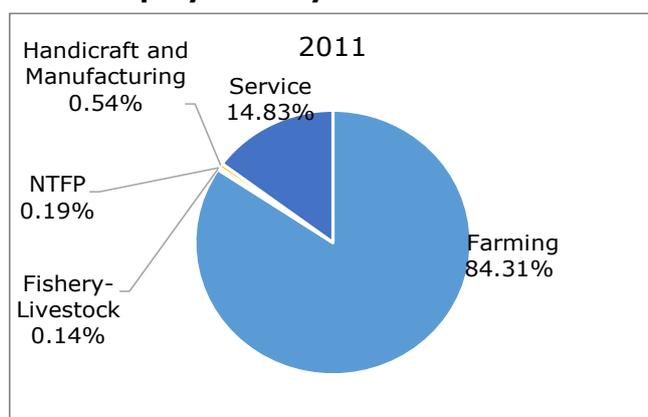
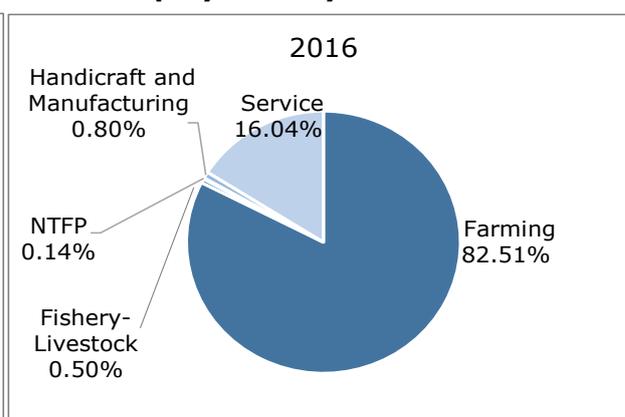


Figure 4: Share of Primary Occupation Employment by Sector in 2016



Source: Table 4, Figures 3 and 4: Commune Database 2011, 2016

3.3 Poverty Rate and Challenges in Poverty Reduction

Figure 5 presents the poverty rates in Oddar Meanchey from 2010 to 2015, and Figure 6 the poverty rates of the five districts in the 2015. The province seems to have achieved sustainable progress in reducing poverty as the rate fell gradually from 35 percent in 2010 to 27.5 percent in 2015, with an average annual decline of 1.5 percent⁴. [7] This progress is consistent with

Figure 5: Poverty rate, Oddar Meanchey, 2010-2015

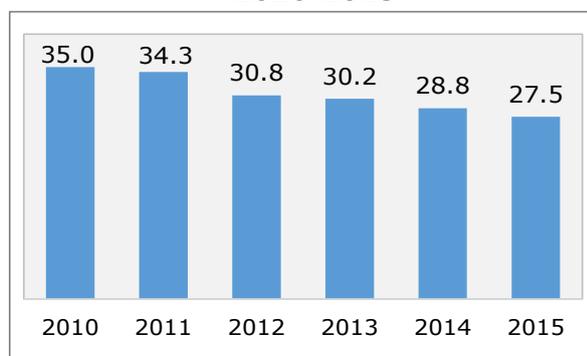
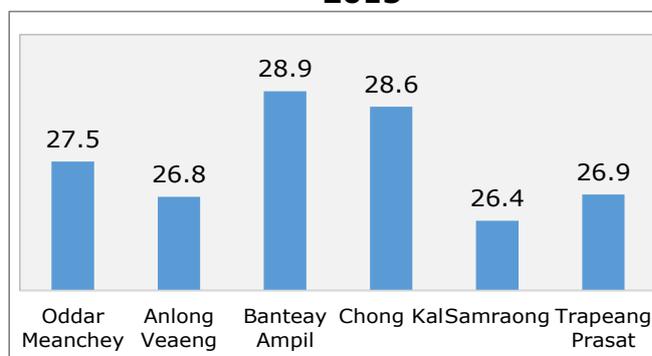


Figure 6: Poverty rate by District, 2015



-Source: Ministry of Planning, 2016

⁴ The poverty rate was calculated using a number of indicators available in the Commune Database to reflect expenditure. For details please see Ministry of Planning (2015) [7]

the poverty reduction rate at the national level, and the target continues to be a reduction of 1 percentage point per year. [7, 8] This remarkable gain in poverty alleviation in the rural areas is due, partly, to the effects of agricultural prices, higher income from non-agricultural employment, and government policies, particularly the increase in government spending on infrastructure and rural development. [8, 9] These policies are in line with the Rectangular Strategy Phase III and the National Strategic Development Plan, both for the period 2014-2018, as the main policy framework for poverty reduction.

Despite the remarkable progress, many challenges remain, one of which is the growing inequality, including income disparity, between urban and remote areas. For instance, as shown in Figure 6, a huge disparity in the poverty rate is evident at the district level. While Samraong, the capital of Oddar Meanchey, experienced the lowest poverty rate—of about 26 percent—among the five districts, Banteay Ampil and Chong Kal District encountered a rate of almost 29 percent, relatively high compared with the provincial level. Previous studies suggest that the vast majority of families who escaped poverty were only able to do so by a small margin, thus many of them are near-poor. [9]

4 Service Delivery by Sub-National Government

In addition to achieving progress in economic development, the province has tried to ensure development at the local level with the implementation of decentralization and de-concentration (D&D) reform through the commune/sangkat council elections. The councils have proved resourceful in implementing their functions, particularly in delivering local public services and enhancing rural infrastructure and local safety. The following sub-section discusses these achievements in Oddar Meanchey.

4.1 Projects Invested by Communes/Sangkats in 2009 – 2016

The Five-Year Commune Development Plans (CDPs) were developed by commune councils across the province. These plans are required to cover five main areas: (1) economic; (2) social; (3) natural resources and the environment; (4) administration and security; and (5) gender. However, the review of the CDPs from 2010 to 2016 revealed that more than 98 percent of the projects involved rural transport while less than one percent were focused on education and irrigation (Table 5)⁵.

Table 5: Projects Supported by Commune/Sangkat investment in Oddor Meanchey 2010-2016

Type of Projects	Frequency	Percent
Rural Transport	356	98.34
Education	3	0.83
Irrigation	3	0.83

⁵ There was no investment in health and community sanitation. Similar trends were also found in Chong Kal district where investment focused almost exclusively on rural roads

Source 1: Commune Database, 2010-2016 (MoP)

4.2 Commune/Sangkat Safety

Assessment of service delivery includes the ability of sub-national administrations to maintain security and public order. [10] The effectiveness of the implementation of commune/sangkat safety policy in the province and in Chong Kal district is supported by reviewing trends in key commune safety indicators.

4.2.1 Robbery, Theft and Other Criminal and Civil Cases

Figure 7 presents the number of cases involving murder, robbery and kidnap in the province and exclusively in Chong Kal district. There was a significant drop in the number of these cases in the province as a whole from 22 in 2013 to eight in 2016. This downward trend was also found in Chong Kal district where no cases at all were reported in 2016. This huge drop could be attributed to the fact that local authorities had implemented the commune/sangkat safety policy. It is noticeable that the highest number of murders, robberies and kidnapping cases in the province and Chong Kal District was in 2013. There is no research document explaining this figure; however, this might reflect that the district has the highest population compared with others in the province.

Figures 8 and 9 present the number of theft and other criminal and civil cases reported for 2011 to 2016 for the province and Chong Kal district. For the whole province, the number of cases of theft appears constant despite a slight drop compared with 2011. The number of other criminal cases dropped by almost half after peaking in 2013. In contrast, other civil cases increased from around 400 to 536. For Chong Kal, the number of

Figure 7: Murder, robbery and kidnap cases, 2011-2016

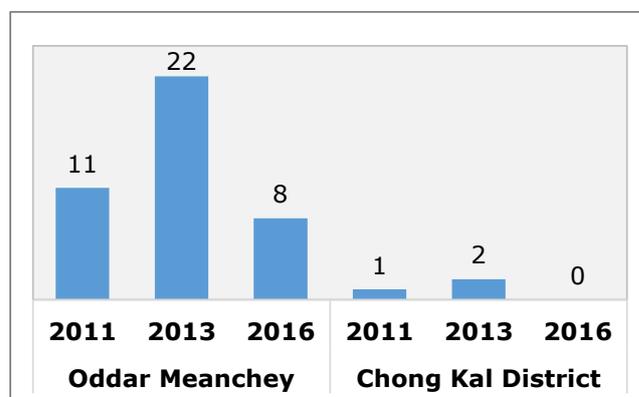


Figure 8: Theft and other criminal and civil cases in the province

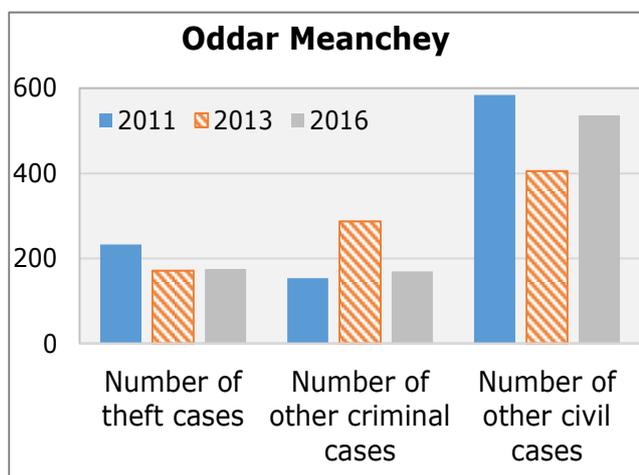
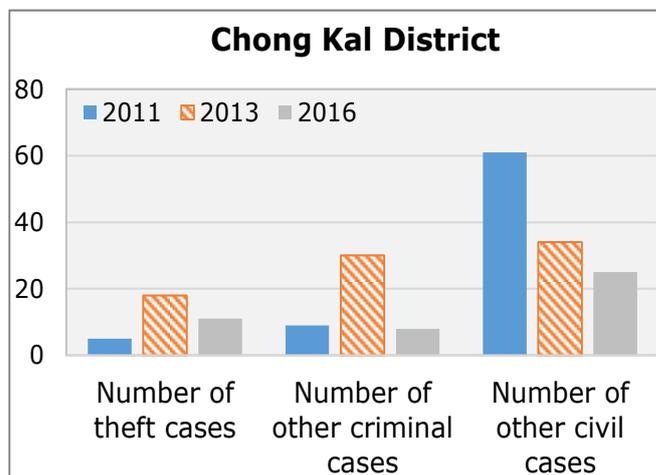


Figure 9: Theft and other criminal and civil cases in Chong Kal district



Sources: Figure 7, 8 and 9: Commune Database 2011, 2013 and 2016 (Ministry of Planning)

all reported cases has dropped since 2013. The most significant reduction was in the number of other criminal cases. This highlights an improvement in security in the district as well as the effectiveness of the local authority in providing security services within their areas of responsibility.

4.2.2 Other Local Safety Criteria

At the provincial level, the number of households whose family member(s) use drugs has increased almost fivefold since 2013, indicating a worrisome trend. This issue needs more intervention from the authorities. Only three cases were reported for Chong Kal. Reports from the province and Chong Kal indicate a reduction in the number of families who experienced violence at home as well as the number of victims of domestic violence. There has been no significant reduction in the number of traffic accidents in the province as a whole, and in Chong Kal district in particular. The number of land conflicts reported in the province was 432 in 2016, a 40 percent increase compared with that in 2013. However, the number of cases for 2016 were 28 for Chong Kal, showing no change since 2013 (Table 6).

Table 6: Other Local Safety Criteria, 2011 – 2016

Description	Oddar Meanchey			Chong Kal District		
	2011	2013	2016	2011	2013	2016
# of families whose family member(s) using drugs	135	182	915	0	0	3
# families having problems with violence in home	593	613	536	67	74	53
# of domestic violence filed with the local authorities	287	161	363	26	14	33
# total victims of domestic violence (injured)	303	647	298	5	44	15
# of female victims of domestic violence (injured)	199	238	192	4	22	12
# total deaths due to traffic accidents in the current year	35	37	36	2	3	1
# land conflict case in the past year	320	310	432	31	28	28

Sources: Commune Database 2011, 2013 and 2016 (MoP)

5 A Case Study of the GIZ Development Program

The regional economic development program of GIZ has been implemented since 2014. Covering three provinces – Oddor Meanchey, Banteay Meanchey and Siem Reap – the program aims to promote the use of new and sustainable business services in order to create employment opportunities, and to increase income generation and poverty reduction among the rural poor. [11] In Oddor Meanchey, the program focuses on the establishment of community markets, entrepreneur training, ecotourism, and animal raising. As a comprehensive project evaluation has yet to be undertaken, the extent of the project’s impact on rural livelihoods has not been revealed. However, initial observation of the project results indicates that, by June 2017, the project had benefited 50,000 participants from about 18,500 households.

There is some evidence of increased income among project beneficiaries through the improvement of artisanal activities and vegetable production. [11]

6 Conclusion

Oddar Meanchey province has made substantial progress in both local economic and administrative development. Agricultural production has continued to increase with a gradual shift to industrial crops such as cassava and rubber. However, despite the progress, the province's economy still depends highly on employment in agricultural activities (more than 80 percent) while the shares in manufacturing and services are not substantial because relatively few people are engaged in industrial establishments. Moreover, even with a remarkable improvement in poverty reduction at the provincial level, there is a noticeable disparity across districts, in which the poverty rates in Chong Kal and Banteay Ampil districts remain relatively high. Since the province has a high potential in natural and cultural resources, along with the increased cross-border trade, the investment in the agro-industry and tourism sectors could be encouraged through investment incentives and other support. The increase in private sector establishments could not only diversify the province's economy but also enlarge employment in new sectors, thereby improving the distribution of household income.

For local services, the province as a whole, as well as Chong Kal district in particular, has experienced improved local safety, reflected in the decline in the number of robbery and theft cases, together with a reduction in domestic violence. This improvement indicates the effectiveness of local authority action. However, the numbers of land conflicts and drug cases have fluctuated and even increased during the last few years, which requires intervention and cooperation from the authority at both the commune/sangkat and the provincial levels. In addition, the projects invested in to fulfil Commune Development Plans have concentrated heavily on rural roads while ignoring health, sanitation and agriculture infrastructure. This may be explained by limited human resources and planning capacity, as well as the lack of technical staff needed for these projects. Ongoing capacity building could be provided through training and skills enhancement, especially relating to development planning and budgeting, so that local authorities can consider diversifying their development plans and investment funds to encompass other sectors.

In helping to improve the livelihoods of the local people, GIZ has implemented the Regional Economic Development Program, focusing on the establishment of community markets, entrepreneur training, ecotourism, and animal raising. The project has benefited at least 50,000 participants through an increase in income in artisanal activities and vegetable production.

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Appendix:

		Number of Establishments			Number of Persons Engaged			Annual Sales	
		Total #	Share by Province	Rank	# People	Share by Province	Average Number of People per Establishment	Total Sales (million USD)	Share by Province
Cambodia		513,759	100		1,874,670	100	3.65	22,612	100
Provinces									
01	Banteay Meanchey	22,269	4.3	9	69,488	3.7	3.12	620	2.7
02	Battambang	32,519	6.3	6	96,017	5.1	2.95	845	3.7
03	Kampong Cham	54,231	10.6	2	166,452	8.9	3.07	1,766	7.8
04	Kampong Chhnang	22,827	4.4	8	83,115	4.4	3.64	354	1.6
05	Kampong Speu	22,258	4.3	10	94,989	5.1	4.27	432	1.9
06	Kampong Thom	21,006	4.1	11	48,595	2.6	2.31	226	1
07	Kampot	16,461	3.2	12	38,568	2.1	2.34	240	1.1
08	Kandal	38,679	7.5	3	145,232	7.7	3.75	1,193	5.3
09	Koh Kong	5,452	1.1	20	19,151	1.0	3.51	119	0.5
10	Kratie	12,157	2.4	15	32,009	1.7	2.63	268	1.2
11	Mondulkiri	2,594	0.5	23	6,334	0.3	2.44	53	0.2
12	Phnom Penh	97,200	18.9	1	552,469	29.5	5.68	11,590	51.3
13	Preah Vihear	6,136	1.2	17	14,178	0.8	2.31	115	0.5
14	Prey Veng	29,521	5.7	7	85,211	4.5	2.89	245	1.1
15	Pursat	14,270	2.8	13	34,767	1.9	2.44	227	1
16	Ratanakiri	6,095	1.2	18	17,113	0.9	2.81	227	1
17	Siem Reap	37,622	7.3	4	152,053	8.1	4.04	2,469	10.9
18	Preah Sihanouk	10,879	2.1	16	35,927	1.9	3.30	326	1.4
19	Stung Treng	4,608	0.9	21	12,392	0.7	2.69	76	0.3
20	Svay Rieng	14,173	2.8	14	57,734	3.1	4.07	588	2.6
21	Takeo	32,780	6.4	5	83,705	4.5	2.55	404	1.8
22	Oddar Meanchey	5,471	1.1	19	14,837	0.8	2.71	134	0.6
23	Kep	1,607	0.3	24	4,156	0.2	2.59	22	0.1
24	Pailin	2,945	0.6	22	10,177	0.5	3.46	74	0.3