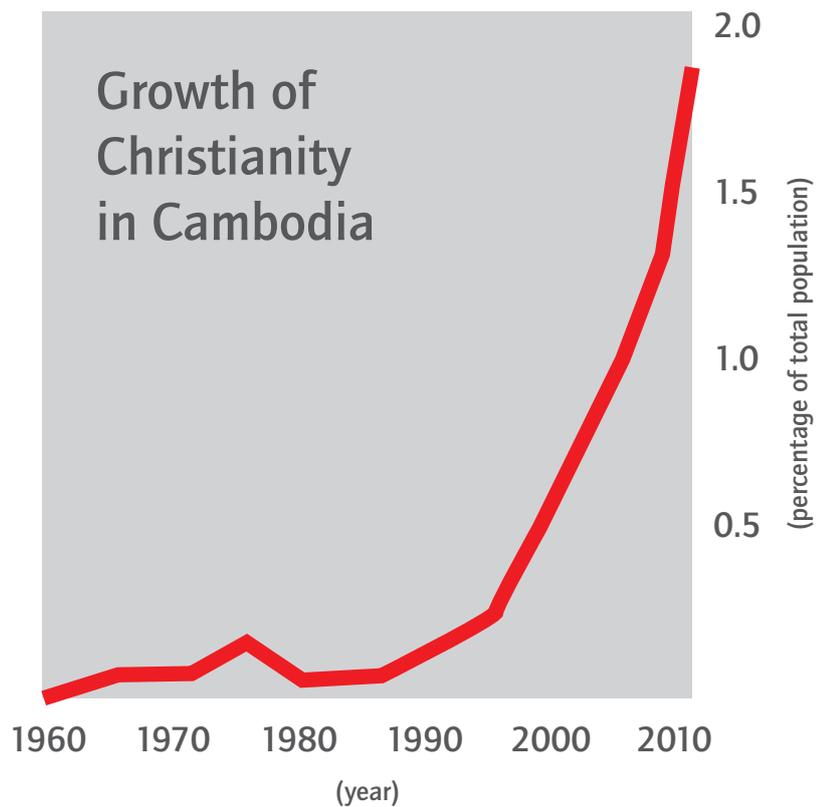


Cambodia Fact Sheet

Cambodia's poorest Christians live on water, but stand firm on the Bible

- Cambodia is a small country in Southeast Asia: area 181,035 km², population approximately 15.1 million.
- It is one of the poorest countries in Asia.
- Years of war and genocide have hindered development: 38% live on less than £1 a day and 25% are undernourished.
- Cambodia suffered severely during the Vietnam War (1970-75), followed by the atrocities of the Khmer Rouge period.
- The term 'killing fields' emerged, as almost all former military personnel, civil servants, doctors, educated people and wealthy families were killed and buried in mass graves across the country.
- The nation was turned into a vast labour camp, where disease, exhaustion and famine claimed hundreds of thousands of lives. Schools were wiped out.
- Around 1.7 million people died during this horrific period of Cambodia's history.
- Today, a quarter of the population cannot read or write.

Source: Operation World 2010



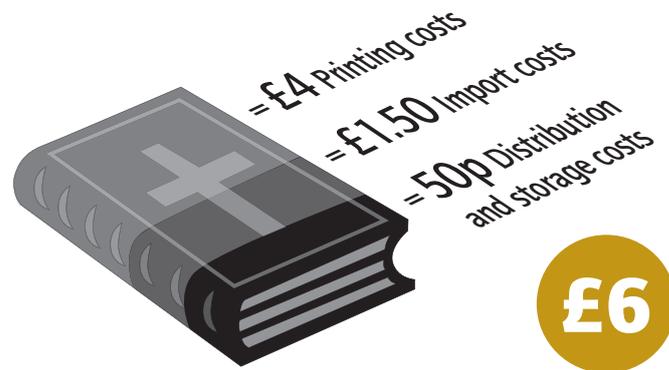
The flag of Cambodia

Cambodia Fact Sheet

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Cost of the Bible in Cambodia



Extraordinary church growth

Cambodia has one of the fastest growing churches in the world – as it emerges from a dark period of history.

In 1975, the extreme Marxist group the Khmer Rouge gained power in Cambodia. Between 1975 and 1979, almost a quarter of the population died from overwork, starvation, disease or were executed.

Hundreds of thousands of Cambodians fled abroad to refugee camps – including 90% of Christians, and all the Christian leaders.

'The church pastors don't want us to hand out Bibles for free. If people have to pay something, they start to get an understanding that church work costs.'

In 1993, democratic elections took place and the government granted permission for the Christian Church to function openly. At this point, there were 10 Protestant churches in the country, all in Phnom Penh, serving a Christian population of around 5,000 people.

At the end of 2002, leaders of churches, denominations and mission agencies estimated that there were more than 2,000 evangelical churches and in excess of 100,000 evangelical Christians in Cambodia. Now, today, there are 250,000 Christians in Cambodia, according to government numbers – which the Church believes are conservative estimates.

Urgent need for Bibles

Every week, people are turning to Christ – but there is a desperate shortage of Bibles and Scripture materials. In rural churches, people often share one Bible between two or three. The impoverished rural population cannot afford the high cost of a Bible – which is £6 due to the cost of printing, import taxes and distribution costs to villages. Most Cambodians are subsistence farmers, living a hand-to-mouth existence off the land. In the cities, the average monthly income is around £65. In the countryside, it's about £20 a month.

Subsidising to make Bibles affordable

Bible Society in Cambodia wants to subsidise the cost of Bibles – so Christians only pay up to £2 for a Bible of their own, rather than the unaffordable £6.

Over the next five years, Bible Society in Cambodia intends to distribute a further 100,000 Bibles, 120,000 New Testaments and one million Scripture portions.

Co-ordinator Arun Sok Nhep says that local churches have welcomed this approach. *'The church pastors don't want us to hand out Bibles for free. If people have to pay something, they start to get an understanding that church work costs.'*

'A church pastor told me that when they stopped giving out Bibles free of charge, the offerings in the Sunday collections increased because they had changed the mindset of the people.'

Alongside this, Bible Society in Cambodia also prints and distributes tens of thousands of free booklets containing Bible passages or stories like *The Prodigal Son*. These are a key way to engage thousands of Cambodians who are interested in learning about Christianity.