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**FOOD SECURITY IN CAMBODIA
A PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT**

by Vincent Tickner

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◆ Preface

Since 1993, UNRISD work in Cambodia has focused on the difficulties of establishing peace and rebuilding a society that has experienced many years of war, a sudden shift from international isolation to aid dependency, as well as profound economic, political and cultural change. The Institute's earlier work examined the impact of the large international peace-keeping operation on the Cambodian economy and society. Since 1995, research has continued under a new programme on **Vulnerability and Coping Strategies in Cambodia**, which focuses on issues of food security, psycho-social vulnerability and the impact of international assistance on the development process.

This paper by Vincent Tickner provides a preliminary assessment of the food security situation in Cambodia. It is based on research carried out in Cambodia between March and October 1995, consisting mainly of a review of secondary sources and interviews with government and agency officials.

The paper provides useful guidance to both researchers and agency personnel dealing with food security issues. It identifies the nature of contemporary food insecurity in Cambodia, arguing that "access", rather than "availability", is the key problem, and reveals the way in which a diverse range of agro-ecological, institutional, macro-economic, market, security and social-structural conditions affect food security at national and household levels. The author also assesses what different agencies are — or are not — doing to address food insecurity, asserting that although certain government and international agencies identify food security as a priority development issue, they have not put in place policies, programmes or projects that address directly or systematically food security problems. Neither, he argues, have they considered the food security implications of major policy approaches promoting, for example, trade liberalization, sectoral rehabilitation, state restructuring and private sector development. Nor is there much co-ordination of interventions in this field or integration of agency efforts in a comprehensive food policy or strategy.

The dramatic changes in ideology and régime, as well as the current power-sharing arrangements and the influx of international agencies, have resulted in a diverse, and sometimes contradictory, array of policy and programme approaches towards food security. While some favour rapid liberalization, others promote state-led interventions or "targeting" of vulnerable groups. Yet the poor knowledge base concerning the functioning of food markets, livelihood systems and local vulnerability may render such approaches ineffective in dealing with food insecurity.

Many agencies fail to consider the range of strategies and responses that most Cambodians have developed to help them overcome their food insecurities. The paper recommends that external agencies contemplating food support to food insecure populations should consider how those groups themselves respond to food insecurity and with what success or constraints. In this way agency interventions might build on what food insecure households are already doing to overcome their food insecurity. Employment generating and food supply schemes, particularly during lean periods in rural areas, have an important role to play. Some consideration

has been given to employment generation in Cambodia, but this has rarely been preceded by an analysis of the livelihood circumstances of particular groups of households, the constraints they experience in expanding certain types of employment and the nature of rural labour markets.

While in years of normal rainfall Cambodia is only marginally deficient in terms of overall food availability, national food production is periodically threatened by extreme climatic conditions and military conflict. In view of these conditions, the author stresses the need for more permanent preparedness to deal with such situations than is currently the case.

Vincent Tickner is a consultant specializing in food security and agricultural marketing. He has worked in several Asian and African countries, and he lived in Cambodia during much of 1995. UNRISD's work on food security in Cambodia is being undertaken in collaboration with the Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI) and is co-ordinated by K.P. Kannan and K.A.S. Murshid. The UNRISD research programme **Vulnerability and Coping Strategies in Cambodia** is co-ordinated by Peter Utting.

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Dharam Ghai
Director

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◆ Contents

◆ Abbreviations and Acronyms	vi
◆ Administrative Map of Cambodia	ix
<hr/>	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
<hr/>	
2. FOOD SECURITY IN CAMBODIA	2
<hr/>	
◆ 2.1 Historical Background	2
<i>The colonial and “Cold War” eras</i>	2
<i>UNTAC, elections and power-sharing</i>	3
<i>Social structure</i>	4
<i>Foreign aid</i>	6
◆ 2.2 The General State of Food Security	7
<i>The local diet</i>	7
<i>Food production and consumption</i>	8
<i>Food markets and food trade</i>	10
<i>Nutritional status of the population</i>	11
<i>Household food security</i>	12
<i>Income generation and migration</i>	13
<i>Environmental considerations</i>	14
<i>Psycho-social problems</i>	14
<hr/>	
3. CURRENT FACTORS LEADING TO FOOD INSECURITY	15
<hr/>	
◆ 3.1 Agro-Ecological Conditions	15
◆ 3.2 Security	18
◆ 3.3 Land Tenure	19
◆ 3.4 Means of Food Production	21
◆ 3.5 Non-Agricultural Employment	24
◆ 3.6 Weak Asset Bases	25
◆ 3.7 Borrowing and Credit	26
◆ 3.8 Market Sources of Food	28
◆ 3.9 Nutrition, Food Safety and Intra-Household Distribution of Food	32
◆ 3.10 Social Structures and Social Support	33
<hr/>	
4. FOOD POLICY AND PROGRAMMES	36
<hr/>	

◆ 4.1 Government Policy and Programmes	37
◆ 4.2 International Donors and Large International Organizations	41
◆ 4.3 Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)	43
<hr/>	
5. PRIORITIES FOR AND TENSIONS OVER FOOD SECURITY IN CAMBODIA	46
<hr/>	
◆ 5.1 Food Availability	47
◆ 5.2 Food Accessibility	49
<i>Temporary or seasonal food insecurity</i>	49
<i>Chronic food insecurity</i>	50
◆ 5.3 Individual Food and Nutritional Needs	54
◆ 5.4 Macro-Economic, Socio-Economic and Environmental Impacts on Food Security	54
◆ 5.5 Organizational Responses to Food Insecurity	57
<i>Governmental organization and food security</i>	58
<i>Large international aid and development agencies and food security</i>	59
<i>Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and food security</i>	60
<hr/>	
6. CONCLUSIONS	61
<hr/>	
7. APPENDICES	63
<hr/>	
◆ 7.1 Appendix 1: Relevant Government Policies and Programmes	63
◆ 7.2 Appendix 2: Programmes and Approaches of Selected International Agencies	67
◆ 7.3 Appendix 3: Figure and Tables	75
◆ Bibliography	79

◆ Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACLEDA	Association of Cambodian Local Economic Development Agencies
ACCT	Agence de Cooperation Culturelle et Technique
ACR	Australian Catholic Relief
ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADOR	Agricultural Development Options Review
AGM	Annual General Meeting
AICF	Action internationale contre la faim
AIDAB	Australian International Development Assistance Bureau
AusAID	Australian International Development Agency (ex-AIDAB)
BLDP	Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party
CARD	Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development
CARE	Care International
CARERE	Cambodia Resettlement and Reintegration Programme (UNDP)
CBSA	Community Based Social Action
CCC	Cooperation Committee for Cambodia
CCDP	Cambodia-Canada Development Program
CCRD	Credit Committee for Rural Development
CDC	Cambodian Development Council
CDCs	Community Development Councils
CDRI	Cambodia Development Resource Institute
CIAP	Cambodia-IRRI-Australia Project
CICP	Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace
CIRP	Cambodia-IRRI-Rice Project
CMAC	Cambodian Mine Action Center
CNHE	National Centre for Hygiene and Epidemiology
COCMA	Compagnie Centrale des Matériels Agricoles (under MAFF)
CPI	Consumer Price Index
CPP	Cambodia People's Party
CRC	Cambodian Red Cross
CRDB	Cambodian Rehabilitation and Development Board
CWS	Church World Service
DK	Democratic Kampuchea
DPS	Department of Planning and Statistics (MAFF)
ECU	European currency unit
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EIU	Economist Intelligence Unit
EU	European Union (former European Community)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FFPP	Family Food Production Programme (UNICEF)
FSIS	Food Security Information System
FSU	Food Security Unit
FUNCINPEC	Front Uni National pour un Cambodge Independant, Neutre, Pacifique et Cooperatif

GIEWS	Global Information and Early Warning System (FAO)
GRET	Groupe de Recherche et d'Echanges Technologiques
GTZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (Germany)
HEKS	Hilfswerk der Evangelischen Kirchen der Schweiz (Switzerland)
HKI	Helen Keller International
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank)
ICORC	International Committee for the Rehabilitation of Cambodia
IDP	Internally displaced person
IDRC	International Development Research Center (Canada)
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOs	International organizations
IPM	Integrated pest management
IRRI	International Rice Research Institute
ITSH	Internal transport, storage and handling
IWDA	International Women's Development Agency
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
KAMPAGREXPORT	Kampuchea Agricultural Marketing and Export
KAMPRIMEX	Kampuchea Rice and Maize Marketing
KoC	Kingdom of Cambodia
LWF/WS	Lutheran World Federation/ World Service
LWS	Lutheran World Service
MAFF	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
MCC	Mennonite Central Committee
MoC	Ministry of Commerce
MoE	Ministry of the Environment
MoEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
MoH	Ministry of Health
MIME	Ministry of Industry, Mines and Energy
MoP	Ministry of Planning
MPWT	Ministry of Public Works and Transport
MRD	Ministry of Rural Development

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