

COVID-19

SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT ASSESSMENT

July 2021



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COVID-19

SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT ASSESSMENT

This report summarizes the most important information captured by this high-frequency phone survey conducted between August 2020 and March 2021

Study led by UNICEF and the World Food Programme,
in collaboration with UNAIDS, UNFPA and UNWomen





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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The COVID-19 pandemic presents unprecedented challenges for all societies around the world. Non-Pharmaceutical interventions have been implemented by national governments with the purpose of preventing overwhelming the health systems by limiting infection incidence levels. Nevertheless, these measures have affected the livelihood and wellbeing of millions of people around the globe, putting the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic under the spotlight.

Cambodia has shown great success in isolating COVID-19 cases and even reducing the incidence level to zero for several months in a row. Nevertheless, the strategy in place has drastically affected many industries that were key sources of employment for Cambodians. The tourism industry was severely impacted and reduced to a minimum, depending exclusively on internal travel. The garment and construction sectors, which are also large employers, reduced their activities as a response to decreased global demand. In 2020, the economy was estimated to have contracted by 3.1 per cent, following an average growth of 7.0 per cent per annum from 2010-2019. The impacts on employment, and household wage and non-wage incomes were significantly larger than what the macro-economic trends would suggest. The education system has been heavily affected, especially impacting the youngest learners, as universities, schools and pre-schools faced closure for a considerable part of 2020 which extended to 2021.

This study aims to provide evidence on the short-, mid-, and long-term secondary impacts of COVID-19 on society, livelihoods, economic activity, food security, access to essential services and well-being, in addition to exploring household vulnerabilities. This report corresponds to the first phase of the study, which looks at early and medium-term impacts from August 2020 until March 2021.





METHODOLOGY

The study was designed as a high-frequency longitudinal survey, representative at the national level, and included the participation of 2,000 households that were randomly selected, representing districts and villages included in the National Census 2019 and IDPoor database. The first round of data collection was face-to-face, while the following 5 rounds were conducted as phone surveys. Around 1000 households participated in each of the 5 phone-based rounds of data collection.

The vulnerabilities and levels of disaggregation of the data included household characteristics of IDPoor, urban/rural, ecological zone, disability present in the household, size of household, gender of the head of household and the education level of the head of household. The study population included 13% IDPoor 1 and 18% IDPoor 2 households, 64% being from urban areas, 16% having at least one member with disability, 27% being female-headed households and 17% having at least one child under 2 years of age.

The survey captured information on 12 thematic areas, which are summarized throughout the 6 modules of this report and include:

1

Basic household characteristics

2

Knowledge, attitudes, and practices on COVID-19 protective behaviors

3

Employment and income situation, as well as social transfers

4

Health services for pregnant women and children under 5 years

5

Education

6

Access to essential services

7

General wellbeing and community safety

8

Child discipline

9

Children's activities

10

Care responsibilities for girls and boys

11

Food-based and livelihoods-based coping strategies

12

Food security and nutrition for households, women and children



KEY FINDINGS

>> COVID-19 impact on income and employment:



More than 50% of respondents encountered changes in employment and income at each round of data collection.



The changes in employment and income were perceived as temporary reduction in income, working hours and/or demand for services and goods.



To cope with negative changes in employment, the respondents changed their main occupational area, preferring self-employment or the agriculture and livestock sector.



The strong fiscal support by the government was beneficial to the management of the COVID-19 situation and enabled the beginning of a noticeable recovery.

>> Resilience to COVID-19 shock in Cambodia:



The study revealed dramatic income reduction among those who lost income during the COVID-19 pandemic: more than 90% of them estimating a 50% and above decrease in household income.



To manage such impact, three-quarters of these households changed their main occupation to agriculture, livestock or self-employment.



Selling of goods/assets and borrowing money were used as further strategies to hamper the degree of impact. Urban households were more likely to sell assets or goods to manage the decrease in household income, while rural households were more likely to borrow money.

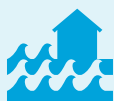


The most resilient households to negative household income changes were the non-IDPoor households, households with 6 or more members and those who had no member in the household that suffered from a disability.



The Southeast Plain area of Cambodia seemed to be the most resilient to household's negative financial changes, compared to the other regions. In contrast, the Coastal area appeared to be the most vulnerable.

>> Household food security and nutrition:



The period between August 2020 and February 2021 revealed a gradual deterioration of household food security. The October 2020 floods were found to be associated with the lowest point in food security.



The indicators for household food consumption and diet diversity do not show dramatic impacts, even though a slight decline is seen in November-December 2020.



A substantial proportion of households (>50%) are using food related coping strategies to overcome the limitations in food availability. The most used methods were to rely on less preferred foods, reduce portion size and number of meals.



More than 50% of household engaged in livelihood coping strategies at any given time during the study, while in October 2020 this increased to 81%. In order to address resource constraints for buying food, households were more likely to spend savings, reduce essential non-food expenditures, and borrow food or money for food.



Protecting the most vulnerable groups from the unintended consequences of non-pharmaceutical interventions, including lockdowns, is required to maintain their access to nutritious food and avoid a further deterioration of their nutritional status and depletion of their assets.

>> Multidimensional impact of COVID-19 on children:



Access to health services and medicine did not show signs of disruption.

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