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CAMBODIA COUNTRY STRATEGIC PLAN (2019–2023)



World Food
Programme

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WFP's Contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals



Executive summary

Cambodia has achieved sustained economic growth over the past two decades, attaining lower middle-income country status in 2016. Despite substantial progress, socio-economic and gender inequalities persist, hampering access to nutritious diet. Food security and nutrition face challenges caused by shocks, a rapidly changing food environment and inefficiencies in the food system.

This five-year country strategic plan is based on the Government's 2017 mid-term and strategic review of the National Strategy for Food Security and Nutrition 2014–2018 and the priorities articulated for the National Strategic Development Plan 2014–2018 and the National Social Protection Policy Framework 2016–2025. The country strategic plan is aligned with the United Nations development assistance framework for 2019–2023. It contributes to Sustainable Development Goals 2 and 17 and to WFP Strategic Results 1, 4, 5 and 8 through five strategic outcomes:

- » Vulnerable communities in Cambodia have access to nutritious, safe, diverse, convenient, affordable and preferred foods by 2025.
- » Poor and vulnerable communities in Cambodia are more resilient to shocks and stresses in the food system by 2023.
- » National and subnational institutions have strengthened capacities to mitigate risks and lead coordinated shock preparedness and response efforts by 2025.
- » National and subnational institutions in Cambodia have strengthened capacities to develop, coordinate and implement well-informed, effective and equitable actions for achieving food security and nutrition targets by 2030.
- » Development and humanitarian partners in Cambodia have access to common supply chain services throughout the year.

WFP will continue its shift from activity implementation to strengthening national capacities and building scalable programme models. It will focus on working with the Government to enhance the latter's capacity in social service provision and to strengthen subnational food systems and capacities to reduce the risks posed by shocks. It will also use innovative technologies and analytical tools to enhance information flows and facilitate decision making and seek to promote inclusion, equity and equality, considering dynamics associated with gender, age and disability, across all its activities. WFP will work in close collaboration with the Government, other United Nations agencies, civil society and non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and the private sector to achieve these outcomes.

1. Country analysis

1.1 Country context

1. Cambodia attained lower-middle-income country status in 2016, following rapid growth in gross domestic product (GDP) over the past two decades.¹ Annual economic growth of 7 percent has been driven largely by agriculture (predominantly rice) and the garment, construction and tourism industries. However, rising wages and a shortfall of skills are eroding the country's competitiveness in manufacturing.²
2. Income poverty levels fell from 47.8 percent in 2007 to 13.5 percent in 2014, although 28 percent of the population are "near poor" and one third are multi-dimensionally poor.³ More than 30 percent of "ID-Poor" households⁴ are headed by women.⁵
3. Cambodia ranks 146th of 189 countries on the Human Development Index, demonstrating persistent, often gender-related, inequality.⁶ Women have limited access to resources and receive lower wages than men;⁷ they are underrepresented in the formal workforce (77 percent versus 89 percent for men)⁸ and perform a significant amount of unpaid care work.⁹
4. Eleven percent of women and 9 percent of men in Cambodia¹⁰ live with disabilities; as a result, they are more likely to be poor, have low educational attainment and experience discrimination and exclusion. Women living with disabilities also face considerable domestic violence and limited access to services.^{11,12} The Government has enacted several laws and strategies to improve the lives of persons with disabilities.

1.2 Progress towards SDG 2

5. Cambodia has made great strides towards Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2 but needs to do more to achieve zero hunger by 2030. The Government's mid-term and strategic review (MTSR)¹³ of the National Strategy for Food Security and Nutrition (NSFSN) for 2014–2018¹⁴ resulted in recommendations for the NSFSN for 2019–2023 and for strategies to achieve the SDG targets.
6. Access to adequate food all year round (SDG Target 2.1). Despite having substantially reduced hunger, Cambodia is classified as a country with "serious hunger".¹⁵ The prevalence of undernourishment is 15.3¹⁶ percent based on national food balance sheets and 31¹⁷ percent based on household expenditure data. Inadequate dietary diversity among 12 percent of households affects somewhat more poor and rural households and households headed by women (12.8 percent) than households headed by men (11.2 percent).¹⁸ Some 21 percent of Cambodian households may not be able to afford a nutritious diet.¹⁹

7. End all forms of malnutrition (SDG Target 2.2). Thirty-two percent of children under 5 years of age are stunted, while 10 percent are wasted. Girls and boys from across the lower wealth quintiles are equally affected.²⁰ Dietary deficiencies in zinc, iodine and B-vitamins widely affect women of reproductive age and children.²¹ Undernutrition is estimated to cost Cambodia approximately 1.7 percent of its annual GDP²² and is a major contributor to mortality and decreased health and productivity. In addition, overweight and obesity are increasing; 18 percent of women of reproductive age are overweight or obese (mostly older women) while 14 percent are underweight (mostly younger women).²³
8. Double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers (SDG Target 2.3). Seventy-nine percent of the Cambodian population is rural. Agriculture employs 39 percent of working men and 44 percent of working women. Most farmers (56 percent) are smallholders with less than one hectare of land; 88 percent of agricultural land is owned by households headed by men.²⁴
9. Rice dominates production, representing 72 percent of national agricultural planting activities. Despite growth in agricultural production, yields remain low and vulnerable to climate-related shocks. Following the 2015/2016 El Niño event, 13 percent of households acquired additional debt, increasing the percentage of indebted households to nearly 50 percent.²⁵
10. Promote sustainable food systems (SDG Target 2.4). Cambodia is ranked the eighth most vulnerable country to disasters.²⁶ Floods and droughts frequently threaten the food system and will increase in frequency and intensity in the future. Approximately 1.7 million Cambodians are exposed to floods; changes in climate will expand the floodplains. The degradation of natural resources exacerbates the increased risk posed by climate change.²⁷ It is estimated that climate change could cause Cambodia's GDP to be 2.5 percent lower in 2030 than forecast.²⁸ A 2016–2017 resilience analysis found that households headed by women were more susceptible to the food security impacts of El Niño shocks.²⁹

Macroeconomic environment

11. Migration and rapid urbanization alter in-country dynamics. One quarter of the population has migrated; a third of the migrants, mostly men working in construction, emigrated mainly to Thailand. Around 57 percent of migrants, particularly women seeking employment in the garment industry, moved from rural to urban areas, mostly in Phnom Penh.³⁰
12. Primary school enrolment has improved to 97.8 percent (girls' enrolment is slightly higher than boys), although secondary enrolment is low at 59.2 percent (higher for girls than boys).³¹ In grade six, 39 percent of pupils have below basic literacy.³² Coverage of social protection schemes is improving through the National Social Protection Policy Framework 2016–2025 (NSPPF).³³

Key cross-sector linkages

13. The successful achievement of SDG 2 in Cambodia is closely linked to progress on the other SDGs. Poverty (SDG 1) and economic vulnerability hinder the affordability of nutritious food. Poor health is both a cause and a consequence of malnutrition (SDG 3). Improved food security and nutrition will assist in educational attainment while equitable access to quality education will enhance human capital, economic opportunity and access to nutritious food (SDG 4). Gender inequalities exacerbate food insecurity and malnutrition (SDG 5), while climate change poses a major threat (SDG 13).

1.3 Hunger gaps and challenges

14. The MTSR identified inequities in access to nutritious diets that deny to some the benefits of economic progress and stressed the importance of strengthening the food system to ensure that all Cambodians have access to food for healthy, productive lives. It recognizes nutrition as an accelerator for the development of human capital and achievement of the SDGs.
15. The diets of key nutritionally vulnerable groups, including pre-primary- and primary-school-age children and adolescent girls, remain suboptimal. This is in part due to limited affordability resulting from economic constraints, inefficiencies along the value chain and the limited availability of affordable, convenient³⁴ and nutritious foods.³⁵
16. The MTSR highlighted the need to strengthen the food system's ability to withstand shocks, adapt to climate change and better connect smallholder farmers to markets and to the information they need to be competitive. Women smallholders and entrepreneurs are often at a further disadvantage given their care responsibilities and limited access to productive inputs, key assets, services and decision-making roles. Food quality and safety are affected by limited capacity to monitor and enforce standards.

1.4 Country priorities

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