



អង្គការសហប្រជាជាតិ
United Nations in Cambodia

FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

Common Advocacy Points 2011

“Everyone has the right to a healthy and nutritious, hunger-free life”

What does food security and nutrition mean?

Food security is about ensuring that all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food, and to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. Food security is determined by availability (agricultural production and marketing), access (income and transfer incomes) and use and utilisation (nutrition behaviour, health status and its determinants). Stability of availability, access and utilisation are further important aspects.

The lack of food security and proper nutrition can lead to malnutrition. Malnutrition is not just about not having enough to eat, but can occur when a diet lacks nutrients (undernutrition), or includes too many nutrients (over nutrition).

The critical window of opportunity is the ‘1,000 days’ between pregnancy and age two, when nutrition can have a measurable lasting impact on growth, brain development, incidence of disability and susceptibility to disease or infection. Long-term effects impact health but can also limit educational achievement and decrease economic opportunities for families and communities.

While poverty is a major cause of undernutrition, inappropriate feeding/eating practices also contribute. Infectious diseases and parasites are the other main causes of undernutrition, as they can deprive the body of important nutrients. Undernutrition is not always visible. Even when it is not readily apparent, an insufficient diet will prevent an individual from thriving, both physically and mentally.

Messaging goal:

- CMDG1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.
- CMDG4: Reduce child mortality.
- CMDG5: Improve maternal health.

Advocacy objective:

To achieve greater food security and improve rates of nutrition among the poor and vulnerable in Cambodia through advocacy, raising awareness among policymakers and supporting nationally-owned food security solutions.

Target audience:

Prime Minister; Line Ministries; Council for Agricultural and Rural Development; relevant Technical Working Groups; the UN and other development partners.



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Why does food security and nutrition matter?

Without food security and proper nutrition, individuals are unable to enjoy their rights and take advantage of opportunities. Research presented at the 2004 Copenhagen Consensus showed that of various development initiatives, those that address micronutrient deficiencies (including addressing child stunting) had the highest rate of economic return.

Poor nutrition is the largest single contributing factor to child mortality, more than HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria combined. It is the underlying cause of more than one-third of deaths of children under 5 as stated in the leading medical journal *The Lancet* in 2008. Without the right nutrition in the first two years of life, a child’s physical and mental development is compromised irreversibly¹.

Undernutrition reduces human potential with high economic and social costs. Individuals lose more than 10 per cent of lifetime earnings, and many countries lose at least 2-3 per cent of their GDP to undernutrition. Although Cambodia is a food-producing country (3.1 million surplus tonnes of paddy rice produced in 2009-10), achieving greater food security remains a priority.

Quick facts:

- 39.5 per cent of children below the age of five years are chronically malnourished (stunted), 28.8 per cent are underweight and 8.9 per cent are acutely malnourished (wasted)ⁱⁱ.
- Wasting among urban poor is 16 per cent, exceeding the emergency threshold of 15 per centⁱⁱⁱ.
- The prevalence of wasting in nine provinces was 10 per cent or higher^{iv}.
- CMDG Targets 2.1.5 (proportion of the population below the food poverty line) and 2.1.6 (prevalence of stunted children under five) are unlikely to be met.
- Anaemia is a major public health problem in Cambodia. Forty-seven per cent of women of reproductive age, and 67 per cent of children aged 6-59 months are anaemic^v.
- 18 per cent of the population are below the food poverty line (21 per cent of the rural population).
- Rural households spend approximately 60-70 per cent of their income on food^{vi}.
- The main causes of food insecurity are insufficient access to sufficient and diverse types of food (through either a household's own food production or through markets), infectious disease and/or inappropriate feeding practices.
- Poor households and vulnerable groups with low capacity to cope with frequent natural and economic shocks (such as floods, droughts, and price fluctuations) are particularly vulnerable to food insecurity.
- During the lean season (July-November) food insecurity is subject to considerable increase.
- As food prices around the world continue to increase further burdens are placed on the vulnerable who spend a larger portion of their income on food.

Achievements:

- The proportion of undernourished people in the total population steadily declined from 1995 to 2005.
- Coverage of iodized salt has improved in recent years. The proportion of households consuming adequate iodized salt increased from 14 per cent in 2000 to 73 per cent in 2005^{vii}.
- Exclusive breastfeeding increased from 11 per cent in 2000 to 66 per cent in 2008^{viii}.
- The Government launched a National Nutrition Strategy in May 2010.
- The Government is set to approve the National Social Protection Strategy in 2011.

How can food security and nutrition be improved in Cambodia?

- Food-insecure households increase food availability from their own agriculture and livestock production and from common property forests and fisheries.
- Food insecure households increase their food access by increasing household income.
- Food-insecure households improve the use and utilisation of food by adopting appropriate feeding practices.
- Reduce micronutrient deficiencies by increasing coverage of micronutrient supplementation for children and women, and expanding food fortification activities.
- Improve social safety nets and enhance capacities of food-insecure households to cope with risks and shocks increasing the stability of food supply.
- Enhance the institutional and policy environment for achieving improved food security and nutrition in Cambodia.

Key messages

1. Agriculture

“Working together to improve agriculture for smallholder farmers”

2. Nutrition

“Good nutrition saves lives, improves human potential and economic development”

“Investment in nutrition has one of the highest rates of economic return among development initiatives”

“Nutrition is especially important during the critical window between pregnancy and age two, which can have a measurable and lasting impact on growth, brain development, incidence of disability and susceptibility to disease or infection”

3. Social protection

“Social protection for all Cambodians will lead to greater food security, nutrition and poverty reduction”



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i. *The Lancet 2008*

ii. 2008 Cambodia Anthropometrics Survey

iii. 2008 Cambodia Anthropometrics Survey

iv. 2008 Cambodia Anthropometrics Survey

v. Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey 2005

vi. Cambodian Socio-Economic Survey 2007

vii. Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey 2005

viii. 2008 Cambodia Anthropometrics Survey.