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4th National Seminar for Food Security and Nutrition
Theme: Child and Maternal Nutrition

21-22 May 2012
Phnom Penh

Seminar Report

**By the Council for Agricultural and Rural Development (CARD) of
the Office of the Council of Ministers**

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1. Background

Improving Food Security and Nutrition Security (FSN) is an important development objective of the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) and essential for achieving the Cambodian Millennium Development Goals (CMDG). Recognizing such importance, the RGC has paid special attention on improving food security and nutrition and placed it as a development priority in national policies, strategies and plans. However, since FSN is a complex cross-cutting issue, there is a need for joint efforts of government and development partners (DP) in achieving ultimate goals set in these policies and strategies and the RGC entrusted the Council for Agricultural and Rural Development (CARD) with the overall coordination function for the cross-cutting issue of FSN since 1999.

A series of high level forums have been held under the auspices of **Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen**, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, to discuss across sectors the achievements, challenges and solutions to improve food security and nutrition. 1st, 2nd and 3rd National Seminar on Food Security and Nutrition were organized in 1999, 2003 and 2009 respectively. The 2009 National Seminar was held under the theme of Social Safety Nets. Against the background of stagnating progress in improving child and maternal malnutrition, the RGC decided in early 2012 to organize the 4th National Seminar on Food Security and Nutrition under the theme “**Child and Maternal Nutrition**”¹.

The 4th National Seminar on Food Security and Nutrition under the theme “**Child and Maternal Nutrition**” was organized for two days in Phnom Penh on **21-22 May 2012** by the Council for Agricultural and Rural Development (CARD) in collaboration with other Government agencies (MoH, MoP, SNEC, MAFF) and with support of development partners (USAID, UNICEF, WHO, WFP, and CARITAS). The National Seminar was opened by **Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo HUN SEN**, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia and closed by **H.E. Dr. Yim Chhay Ly**, Deputy Prime Minister and Chairman of CARD.

A wide range of 506 participants including national and sub-national ministries and agencies of the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC), National Assembly, Senate, diplomatic corps, development partners (UN organizations and donor agencies), civil society (NGOs, research institutions) and private sector representatives as well as international guests were involved during the two day discussions with the aim to:

1. present and discuss current trends and challenges on child and maternal nutrition based on recent data and study results,
2. present and discuss strategies, plans and approaches to improve child and maternal nutrition in Cambodia with regards to their effectiveness and potential for scaling up,
3. explore ways to reinforce complementarities between sectors and stakeholders and to strengthen coordination at national and sub-national levels, and
4. identify gaps in actions and get guidance for a road map to enhance child and maternal nutrition in Cambodia indicating roles and responsibilities of relevant government institutions

2. Proceedings

¹ Background and rational of the National Seminar are outlined in the concept note in Annex 1 of this report

2.1. Session 1: Opening Ceremony

After short welcome remarks of **H.E. Dr. Yim Chhay Ly**, Deputy Prime Minister and Chairman of CARD **Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo HUN SEN**, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia emphasized in his **opening speech** that child and maternal nutrition is crucial for poverty reduction and the welfare of Cambodians and that malnutrition has high social and economic costs as it impacts educational outcome and the productivity of the future generation. He **gave the following key recommendations** for the discussions during the seminar:

- To integrate and coordinate actions across sectors (health, agriculture, water-sanitation-hygiene, social protection, food fortification), to prepare policies on micronutrient fortification and food safety and to scale up existing interventions like micronutrient supplementation, treating chronic malnutrition, and appropriate complementary feeding of children with a focus on the first 1000 day; during pregnancy and the first two years of life;
- To develop a community based program in Cambodia to improve child and maternal nutrition and to link its implementation to subnational structures;
- CARD to continue further effort and work more actively in the role as coordinating body for effectively oversee FSN and to enhance cooperation between RGC institutions, DP and NGOs. To promote community/family-based food production including (vegetable gardening, animal raising and fish farming) to improve women and children nutrition.
- To continue trainings on food security and nutrition for planners and decision makers at national and sub-national level in order to build capacity and raise work efficiency
- To develop a comprehensive and applicable national strategy for FSN and action plans to enhance nutrition and at the same time to scale up existing and develop new programs to be implemented at community level through sub-national administrative structures and to link this crucial task with establishing of social safety nets, improving poor families capacities and increasing family income.

Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo HUN SEN further emphasized linkages between food security and energy security and suggested that this issue should be more considered in international discussions and Cambodia will take initiative in this regard.

2.2. Session 2: Nutrition Situation in Cambodia and International Experiences

During Session 2 of the seminar the nutrition situation in Cambodia as well as international experiences were presented and discussed.

The National Nutrition Program (**NNP**) of **MoH** presented that according to the trend analysis based on Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey (CDHS) 2000-2005 and 2010 data, previous improvements in child and maternal malnutrition have come to a halt since 2005 and child and maternal malnutrition rates are with 39.9 % chronic and 10.9% acute malnutrition at high level which makes it unlikely to reach the respective targets of the CMDG by 2015 unless there are major efforts to scale up evidence-based interventions focusing on pregnant women and small children.

Dr. Frank Wieringa, the international expert from IRD, pointed out in his presentation that child and maternal nutrition is crucial for human and economic development as it impacts health status, educational outcome and labour productivity. With an average cost benefit ratio of 15 US\$ return for 1 US\$ investment, investment in nutrition is highly profitable for a country. IRD concluded that: - there are evidence based solutions available to improve child and maternal nutrition to be introduced/scaled up, - integrated, multi-sectorial interventions following the life cycle approach have shown best results internationally and, - fast progress is possible when nutrition is given high priority specifically through well coordinated and sufficiently funded national action plans laying out clearly responsibilities of involved parties.

The subsequent **Panel Discussion** moderated by H.E. Rath Virak, Secretary General of CARD and involving three Regional UN Directors from FAO, UNICEF and WFP, RGC Officials from Supreme National Economic Council (SNEC) and CARD as well as the NGO umbrella organisation Medicam reiterated again the a) importance of nutrition for human capital development, b) the need for coordinated action across sectors and c) the advantages of community based nutrition programs.

WFP's Regional Director, Kenro Oshidari emphasized that leadership is key to improve nutrition. Multisectoral approaches reaching people at the community level and focusing on the window of opportunity of the first 1000 days are essential to make a difference. H.E. Meij Kalyan from SNEC stated the paradox that Cambodia being one of the few countries achieving high economic growth rates over a period of 15 years but belongs at the same time to the 15 countries with the highest malnutrition rates. He described the vicious cycle of malnutrition (children from malnourished mothers are malnourished, get sick, cannot learn easily are not productive and give later often birth to malnourished children) and concluded that this cycle needs to be broken to achieve not only economic but full social and cultural harmony. H.E. Ngy Chanphal from CARD stated that in order that children get productive during adulthood we have to provide good nutrition in their early days. In the National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS), nutrition is recognised as a key vulnerability to be addressed through appropriate social protection instruments like cash transfers (CT). He further stated that many sector or cross sector strategies address already nutrition as an issue but further integration and multi-sectoral approaches at community level are important. FAO's Regional Director, Hiroyuki Konuma stated that for sustainable nutrition improvement also balanced diet is crucial. Cambodia's rice based diet and a lack of awareness of the population on nutrition issues are contributing to the high malnutrition rates. Therefore, homestead food production (focusing on women), complementary feeding based on local available food and appropriate food preparation and processing are crucial. Prof. Kraisid Tontisirin from Mahidol University in Thailand presented the experiences with community based nutrition programs in Thailand. For the success of these programs it was essential that there was national commitment and that they were well integrated at local level with sufficient community mobilization (Village Health Volunteers as multipliers). Monitoring and evaluation (M+E) based on an agreed indicator framework and research and capacity development have shown to be further requirements to back up successful community based nutrition program. UNICEF's Regional Director, Daniel Toole, expressed that the example from Thailand shows well that change can be made through community based programs. What counts is to train people at community level and supervisors, to motivate them and to provide sufficient (and sustained) funding. Progress must be regularly tracked and these programs have to be fully integrated in decentralisation processes. Finally, the Executive Director from Medicam, Dr. Sin Somuny stated that for community

based programs it is essential that communities have full ownership and leadership and also national commitment and championship is important as we can see from the example in Thailand.

2.3. Session 3: Presentations on Strategies and Plans to reduce Malnutrition

During Session 3 in the afternoon of the first day, **ministries presented their strategies and plans to reduce child and maternal malnutrition in Cambodia** and NGOs informed about their contributions to reach this goal. Problems and existing solutions were presented and recommendations for the way forward were outlined.

Dr. Prak Sophonneary from the National Maternal and Child Health Centre (NMCHC)/**Ministry of Health (MoH)** focused on the needs and challenges to **scale up evidence based nutrition interventions in the health sector**.

In its conclusion it came up with concrete immediate/short term and medium term actions: - Immediate actions include: scaling up and evaluation of the Complementary Feeding Campaign; advocate for the enforcement of the Sub-decree 133 on Marketing of Products for Infant and Young Child Feeding; strengthening training on nutrition counselling, including promotion of weight gain during pregnancy; scaling up management of acute malnutrition and connect scaling up plan with Health Equity Fund (HEF); identification of appropriate structure for community based nutrition programs; , - and for medium term recommendations include introducing biochemical test of anaemia during pregnancy; the development of a plan to scale up iron supplementation for women or reproductive age, including encouraging private sector engagement for social marketing of the supplementation; testing an identified structure for community based programs; and human resource development for nutrition professionals.

Mr. Ngy Chhay from **Ministry of Agricultures, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF)** emphasized in his presentation to **link agriculture and nutrition through food based approaches** aiming at improving children's diet. Enhancing the availability of nutritious food at household level through promotion of smallholder food production systems (integrating vegetable/fruit gardens, livestock development and aquaculture) as well as the promotion of nutrition knowledge in communities to use and prepare locally available nutritious food for young children were pointed out as key recommendations.

Mr. Mam Borath from **Ministry of Planning (MoP)** emphasised in its presentation on **food fortification** that the number of households consuming iodised salt needs to be further increased and quality of the iodized salt improved. Fortification of fish and soy sauce with iron should be scaled up and partnership with private sector and DP enhanced. Overall national guidelines and a policy framework on food fortification have to be developed in Cambodia (based on multiple micronutrient and food consumption survey).

Mr. Mao Saray from **Ministry of Rural Development (MRD)** pointed in its presentation out that international experiences have shown that a considerable part of child malnutrition is linked to limited access to **safe water, sanitation and hygiene**. High prevalence of diarrhea limits the absorption of micro and macro nutrients and promoting safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene is a cost effective strategy which needs to be included in a nutrition action plan and community based nutrition programs in Cambodia. Advocacy and

behavioural change campaigns to improve WASH have to be carried out at national and decentralised level.

Finally the Country Director, Mr. Zaman Talukder from **Helen Keller International (HKI)** listed the **contributions of NGOs to improving child and maternal nutrition** in Cambodia; 37 NGOs are working on 19 nutrition related interventions with an annual budget of around 24 Million US\$. The NGOs emphasized in their joint presentation the need for: a) targeted community based approaches focusing on the 1000 day window of opportunity; b) implementation of strategies to improve dietary diversification ; c) expansion of management of acute malnutrition, d) implementation of behavioural change campaigns, and e) linkages of nutrition to WASH and social protection (SP) interventions, such as HEF and CT. Establishment of a high level platform for intersectoral coordination and high level champions for nutrition were further key recommendations from their side.

2.4. Session 4: Parallel Group Discussions

During Session 4 of the seminar, **six parallel working groups** comprising representatives from ministries, provincial authorities as well as development partner and NGOs discussed challenges, solutions and recommendation to improve child and maternal nutrition focusing for two hours on the following topics:

Group 1: Scaling up evidence based nutrition interventions (chaired by Ministry of Health)

Group 2: Agriculture and food based approaches to improve child and maternal nutrition (chaired by Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries)

Group 3: Enhancing food fortification with micronutrients (chaired by Ministry of Planning)

Group 4: Safe Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, important condition to improve child and maternal nutrition (chaired by Ministry of Rural Development)

Group 5: Contribution of social safety nets to enhance child and maternal nutrition (chaired by CARD)

Group 6: Strengthening coordination mechanisms between relevant sectors and stakeholders and providing an integrated planning framework (chaired by CARD)

2.5. Session 5: Review and reporting on Group Discussion

In the second day, the Session 5 started with the review of the first days discussions by Mr. Peter Kaufmann, Advisor to CARD and the presentation of a short video clip on Child an Maternal Malnutrition prepared by NNP/WHO. Then, the six working groups presented the results of their group work in the plenary. The results were actively discussed and some comments and recommendations were made by the seminar so that the working groups could revise the results of their group work (the results will be listed in chapter 3 of this report).

2.6. Session 6: Recommendations and Ways Forward

After the presentation of the results of the group work, the 3 prioritized recommendations of each working group were further wrapped up by CARD in a **road map for further action** comprising the sector specific recommendations but outlining more in details the

institutional and policy requirements to enhance maternal and child nutrition in Cambodia (presented by group 6)².

In the second **Panel Discussion** moderated by H.E. Ngy Chanphal (CARD) and involving H.E. Mei Kalyan (SNEC), H.E. Rath Virak (CARD), Prof. Tung Rathavy (MOH), H.E. Sokan Rythikum (MAFF), H.E. Nuth Chansikha (MoP) and Mr. Mao Saray (MRD), the roadmap to enhance child and maternal nutrition in Cambodia was **discussed and endorsed** by the panellists to be submitted to the RGC to develop a គម្រោង, an official endorsement which is a regulatory framework of RGC, on the outcome of the seminar to guide the implementation of the recommendations. H.E Mei Kalyan from SNEC added his overall recommendations that Cambodia should enter to be a member of the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) initiative and clearly set the targets, make the word 'Nutrition' to be widely understood by general public, develop proposals/plannings that reflect critical thinking and be practical in prioritization of the issues and way forwards. H.E. Ngy Chanphal (CARD) provided a wrap up of the outcome of session 6.

2.7. Session 7: Closing Ceremony of the National Seminar

In the closing ceremony (**SESSION 7**) of the seminar, **H.E. Dr. Tao Seng Huor**, Senior Minister and 1st Vice-Chairman of CARD gave a brief report on the National Seminar, reemphasizing the recommendations given by **Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo HUN SEN**, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia and recalled the topics discussed during the two days.

To close the seminar, **H.E. Dr. Yim Chay Ly**, Deputy Prime Minister and chairman of CARD, gave his closing address, stating the linkages between food and nutrition insecurity and poverty and reiterated the commitment of the RGC to improve FSN and to ensure the full right to food. After the high level national seminar, promotion of the participation of sub-national level in eradicating child and maternal malnutrition, the establishment of effective coordination mechanisms and FSN related knowledge and information management are to be considered.

3. Results

Participants followed the **recommendations raised by Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen** which were discussed and endorsed by the Seminar. Having in mind that previous improvements in child and maternal malnutrition are stagnating in Cambodia and high malnutrition impairs the development of human capital, labor productivity and future social and economic development the following key recommendations were outlined and are listed along the themes of the 6 working groups as the main results of the 4th NSFSN³.

Health sector based nutrition interventions:

- to develop, test and upscale a community based nutrition program for Cambodia with all relevant sectors and partners;
- to develop human capacities for nutrition (master degree in Science in Nutrition, nutrition modules to be integrated in curricula of health and other sectors);

² the conclusions in this road map will be listed in chapter 3 of this report.

³ The detailed documentation of the group work results is compiled in Annex 2 of this report

- to secure financing of the scaling up of the complementary feeding campaign and CARD to coordinate dialogue between MoH, Ministry of Information (Mol) and private sector for free/low cost broadcasting);
- to establish an oversight board and identify advocate/champion for the enforcement of the Sub-decree 133 on Marketing of Products for Infant and Young Child Feeding;
- to develop scale up plan and ensure regular supply for multi-micronutrients for children 6-23 months;
- to intensify training and coaching on nutrition counselling including promotion of weight gains during pregnancy;
- to improve early ANC and compliance to iron/Folic Acid (IFA) supplementation;
- to provide biochemical equipment to health centers for identification of anaemia during pregnancy and postpartum.
- to develop plan to scale up management of acute malnutrition and connect scaling up plan with Health Equity Fund (HEF)
- to develop a plan to scale up iron supplementation for women of reproductive age by targeting high risk groups and engaging private sector for social marketing of the supplements

Food based approaches to nutrition:

- to raise awareness on nutritional values of local agricultural products to the community and mainstream nutrition in agriculture extension;
- to promote integrated farming systems (home/school gardens, small animal production, rice fish farming) at household level, community and school (school gardening) with wide diversity of crops;
- to develop food preparation and processing/preservation and recipes using local food for pregnant and lactating mothers and young children.
- To reinforce implementation of laws and regulations and laws to promote agricultural production and nutrition for better health and environment
- To strengthen food quality by linking the work with the Ministry of Commerce

Food Fortification with micronutrients:

- to develop national policies, technical guidelines and relevant regulations for food fortification with micronutrients and enhance implementation of legislation and existing regulations to be effective;
- to expand food fortification to other appropriate vehicles and ensure the quality, safety and appropriate quantity required;
- to establish national standard on fortification levels/dose for each micronutrient
- to carry out additional analysis on food consumption and micronutrient deficiencies
- to promote the use of fortified food through awareness raising on the importance of food fortification with micronutrients in local areas and nationwide
- to improve the quality control and quality assurance of the fortified product (iodized salt and iron fortified fish sauce and soy sauce) for both local and imported products.

Nutrition and safe water, sanitation and hygiene

- to include safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) aspects in all Child and Maternal Nutrition programs;
- to focus on educational activities and implement BCC campaigns by linking WASH to maternal and child nutrition;

- to integrate national investment plan and strategic plan on WASH with national maternal and child nutrition program
- to strengthen water supply and sanitation community based management at village level on operation and maintenance of existing facilities

Nutrition and Social Protection:

- to address role of social protection (and cash transfers) in improving nutrition through organizing a high level regional event;
- to design and start implementation of a cash transfer program focusing on pregnant mothers with small children (in this context: to clarify roles and accountabilities of supply side in the provision of nutrition related interventions by local government and to develop a RGC platform on CT involving MoP, CARD, NCDD and MEF as well as DPs and NGOs);
- to coordinate SP programs with the national nutrition platform and to cover nutrition related health services by health equity funds (HEF);
- to link public works programs (PWP) to improving water, sanitation and hygiene.

Strengthening coordination mechanisms between relevant sectors and stakeholders and providing an integrated planning framework

- To give authority to the coordination mechanism for FSN and strengthen capacities (financial and human resources);
- To jointly develop a programmatic program based approach (PBA) coordinated by the TWG-FSN;
- To develop an integrated community-based nutrition program (coordinated by CARD and implemented by sub-national authorities)

These results were **wrapped up by CARD in a road map for further action** comprising the sector specific recommendation (see above) but outlining the institutional and policy requirements to enhance maternal and child nutrition more in detail:

1. Reinforce cross-sectoral coordination and collaboration between RGC, DP and NGO
 - a. Strengthen CARDs authority and the councils capacities to effectively oversee FSN and to develop applicable national strategies
 - b. CARD to organize trainings of planners and decision makers at both national and sub-national level on food security and nutrition
 - c. DPs to use the existing TWG-FSN as the RGC/DP coordination structure for improving FSN
 - d. To strengthen sub national coordination for food security and nutrition through existing structures
2. Analyze and discuss further in-depth determinants of malnutrition (characteristics of HH with malnourished children) to design interventions
3. Develop a joint planning and investment framework (nutrition action/ investment plan) to scale up evidence based nutrition interventions and ensure its financing through RGC and DP through a program based approach

4. Agree on key indicators and establish a multisectoral M&E system to track progress in child and maternal nutrition
5. Develop a national and integrated community based nutrition program coordinated by CARD and implemented through local Government

4. Conclusions

The 4th National Seminar has reconfirmed the RGC commitment to improve FSN with a specific focus on child and maternal nutrition through a well-coordinated and integrated approach involving relevant ministries, DPs, civil society organizations and private sector.

CARD as a coordinating body has to strengthen inter-sectoral coordination, and capacities for addressing child and maternal nutrition need to be strengthened at both national and sub-national levels. The TWG-FSN has to be more effectively used to develop a harmonized program based approach to improving child and maternal nutrition.

Scaling up of successful nutrition interventions in Cambodia and moving towards community- based nutrition programs implemented through local government are key to achieve the objectives for child and maternal nutrition as laid out in the CMDG, NSDP, NNS and SFFSN.

In this regard, development partners have a key role in providing technical support, make global commitments and achieve their committed oversea development aid on nutrition.

Against the background of the 4th National Seminar, **the following concrete actions** are crucial and need to be taken as priority in the near future in order not to lose the momentum of this forum:

1. CARD to coordinate the development of a comprehensive and applicable National FSN strategy,
2. CARD in cooperation with MoH, MoP, MAFF, MRD to develop a Nutrition Action and Investment Plan for Cambodia,
3. The NSCFF to develop a national plan for food fortification with micronutrients (as part of the overall nutrition action plan),
4. To develop (as part of the overall nutrition action plan) and test/pilot structure of an integrated community-based nutrition program implemented through local government in cooperation with relevant sector ministries and coordinated by CARD⁴,
5. Through TWG-FSN, to develop a program-based approach including the up- scaling of evidence-based nutrition interventions in the health sector, food fortification and integrated community-based programs, and
6. To enhance advocacy for child and maternal nutrition to increase funding for priority actions from RGC and DP sources and to enforce implementation of existing nutrition relevant regulations.

⁴ Linkages and joint implementation arrangements for the community based cash transfer program (focusing pregnant mothers and children under 5) needs to be developed

ANNEXES:

Concept Note for 4th NSFSN with Agenda

Results of 6 Working Groups

Road Map towards improving Child and Maternal Nutrition

List of Institutions/Organisations participating in the 4th NSFSN

Official RGC Report on the Results of the Seminar