



MDG Joint Programme for Children, Food Security and Nutrition

Background

Cambodia is among the 36 countries in the world with the highest burden of maternal and child under-nutrition. Although there have been improvements in the nutritional status of women and children over the last decade, progress has been slow and under-nutrition remains a very important contributing factor for persistently high maternal and child mortality rates in the country. Addressing the nutrition of children and their mothers is therefore an investment in the future workforce of Cambodia.

Child and Maternal Nutrition

The Cambodia Demographics and Health Survey (CDHS) 2005 found 44 percent of children below the age of five years were chronically malnourished, 28 percent were underweight and 8 percent were acutely malnourished. Further, 62 percent of under-five children were anaemic. The survey also found that 47 percent of women of reproductive age and 57 percent of pregnant women are anaemic.

Since 2005, no substantial improvement in child and maternal nutritional status has occurred. The issue is serious as the nutritional status of young children is intimately linked to their physical development and academic performance.



Despite Cambodia having been largely food-sufficient in the recent past, food security remains a concern for many households. As a result, households have adopted harmful coping strategies such as cutting back food consumption, replacing micronutrient rich foods with staples, selling agricultural assets, and resorting to borrowing, increasing their debt burden. This will have long-term consequences for nutrition, health, child development and food security.

Approach of the Joint Programme (JP)

In order to address the threat to the health of women and children caused by under-nutrition and food insecurity recognized by the Royal Government of Cambodia and the United Nations (UN) country team, a UN Joint Programme (JP), funded by the Government of Spain under the Millennium Development Goal Fund, leverages the expertise of key government partners, UN agencies and other crucial stakeholders.

Based on internationally recognized evidence and lessons learned in Cambodia, the JP promotes an integrated strategy to support the development of a Behaviour Change Campaign, the provision of comprehensive nutrition and food security interventions in two food-insecure provinces (Kampong Speu and Svey Rieng), the strengthening of relevant national policies, and the development of a food security and nutrition monitoring system.

Partnership

Key UN agencies leading the JP are the World Health Organization (WHO), UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the International Labour Organization (ILO), UN Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), World Food Programme (WFP), and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). National counterparts play a crucial role in the implementation of the programme. These include the Council for Agricultural and Rural Development (CARD), Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MLVT), Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MOEYS), and the Ministry of Health (MOH).

FAO Contribution to the Joint Programme

The Joint Programme (JP) has three overall outcomes that all of the partners are working collaboratively to achieve. Each agency or ministry, however, plays a unique role and is responsible for activities specific to its expertise. FAO focuses its efforts on capacity building - from the national to the local level - on food-based nutrition and food security concepts and practices.

Outcome 1: Improvement of the nutritional status of children aged 0-24 months and pregnant and lactating women.

FAO's activities

- Produce and disseminate educational and communication materials summarized in a *Nutrition Handbook for the Family* at the Farmer Field Schools trainings.
- Distribute equipment to Farmer Field Schools, supporting 2 000 families to improve kitchen gardening and small-scale livestock production.
- Train 280 Village Health Support Group members, care-givers, and community members in food-based nutrition, kitchen gardening, small-scale livestock production and other easy-to-implement practices for better diets.

Outcome 2: Implementation of existing nutrition, food security, and agricultural policies strengthened, and new policies on nutrition developed

FAO's activities

- Conduct five (5) three-day trainings for 100 provincial, district and commune staff on food security and nutrition concepts.

Outcome 3: Integrated food security and nutrition monitoring system developed

FAO's activities

- Conduct on-the-job training to strengthen the capacity of national statistical systems to produce timely and high-quality food and agriculture statistics.

Joint Programme Key Achievements

Since the beginning of JP activities in January 2010 and through this consultative and collaborative process, the Joint Programme is making a sustainable contribution to reducing under-nutrition among small children and pregnant women and improving food security.

Some key successes include:

- 70 farmer field schools set-up and over 2 100 farmers trained in food production, nutrition, and complementary feeding practices.
- Management of acute malnutrition implemented in five health centers.
- Multiple micronutrients - including weekly iron folic acid supplements supplied to over 100 000 women - distributed in both provinces.
- Five national maternal and child nutrition policies reviewed and developed.
- Food security and nutrition monitoring system established and Food Security and Nutrition Data Analysis Team formed. The Food Security and Nutrition Bulletin is now produced quarterly under the leadership of the Council for Agricultural and Rural Development (CARD).

