

# Evaluation Brief

WFP Office of Evaluation: *Measuring Results, Sharing Lessons*



## Cambodia: An evaluation of WFP's Portfolio (2011-2017)

In 2016, the World Bank upgraded Cambodia to lower-middle-income economy status. Despite economic growth, limited employment opportunities and low wages are propelling international migration<sup>1</sup>, increasingly by women. Fourteen percent live below the national poverty line<sup>2</sup>. With incomes increasing, more households can afford sufficient food. However, the 2013 agriculture census found that 80 percent of agricultural households experienced food insecurity and shortages caused by low crop yield. About 32 percent of children under five (CU5) are stunted (2014). Prevalence of undernourishment is 14 percent (2014-2016), and maternal and child anaemia rates are high<sup>3</sup>. Children's access to education has increased in recent years to reach 97 percent in primary education net enrolment rate<sup>4</sup>. The upgrade to lower-middle-income status led to decreased development aid and will likely lead to reductions in official development assistance<sup>5</sup>. Cambodia is highly vulnerable to natural shocks.

### WFP Portfolio in Cambodia

The portfolio covers operations under corporate WFP Strategic Plans 2008-2013 and 2014-2017. WFP's interventions consisted of a Country Programme (CP), two emergency operations (EMOP), a trust fund activity to develop a Humanitarian Response Forum, and bilateral research on rice fortification. The CP supported school meals – including cash/food scholarships, and Home-Grown School Feeding, nutrition, Food Assistance for Assets in a productive assets, and livelihood support (PALS) programme and capacity development.

WFP operations prioritise communities along the Tonle Sap basin in the flood-prone centre of the country. The total budget planned for all portfolio operations (2011-2016) was US\$203.8 million; of this, the majority (US\$191.6) is allocated to the CP. Overall, the CP and EMOP, the two largest operations, received 59 and 53 percent of their total requirements, respectively.

### Objectives and Scope of the Evaluation

The evaluation covered WFP's country portfolio in Cambodia between 2011–2017, assessing the standard questions for Country Portfolio Evaluations: strategic positioning and alignment, the influencing factors and quality of strategic decision-making, and portfolio performance and results; including WFP's application of humanitarian principles and the comparative cost analysis of cash-based transfers (CBTs). Alongside documents and

systems review, fieldwork incorporated visits to project sites and interviews and focus group discussions with more than 400 stakeholders. The evaluation was timed to feed the drafting of the upcoming Cambodia Country Strategic Plan (CSP).

### Key Findings

#### Alignment & Strategic Positioning

Despite the absence of a Country Strategy, the portfolio was highly strategic and supported the Government's priority development sectors. WFP Cambodia is shifting its approach from direct implementation of food assistance to capacity development of national partners and local stakeholders to establish and manage programmes autonomously. The Country Office (CO) has strong partnerships with the Government and participates in key national decision-making fora. Country Office interventions were aligned with corporate guidance, and relevant to international development and humanitarian standards. The portfolio was strategically aligned with United Nations Development Assistance Framework objectives.

#### Factors & quality of strategic decision-making

The CO collaborated closely with the Government to conduct numerous assessments and studies to inform Government policy, planning and goals, as well as the design and implementation of the various components of the country portfolio. Response strategies were developed through stakeholder consultation and are supported by government and civil society stakeholders. However, the new technical roles are challenging the CO's traditional operational model, which focused on direct implementation.

#### Portfolio Performance and Results

Beneficiary targeting was appropriate and reached the most vulnerable. While WFP did not cover the northeast region, also characterized by high poverty and malnutrition, this decision was justified based on funding constraints and a priority to demonstrating results to encourage government ownership and transition. The operations reached 67 percent of planned beneficiaries overall. The EMOP and CP each reached about two-thirds of planned beneficiaries due to resource shortfalls.

**Nutrition.** The nutrition component, discontinued in 2014, reached 92 percent of planned beneficiaries. Direct implementation ended due to underfunding and differing Government priorities. The CO has subsequently made

1 ILO. 2013. Cross-border labour migration in Cambodia: Considerations for the national employment policy.

2 Asian Development Bank. 2017. Basic Statistics 2017.

3 CDRI. 2014. Cambodia: Strategic Review of Food and Nutrition

Security Issues for an Emerging Middle Income Country (2014-2018).

4 Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport. 2015.

5 CRDB/CDC. 2017. Cambodia Development Finance Assessment.

strategic investments in nutrition research, policy development and technical assistance.

**Education.** Targets for education in WFP-assisted schools were nearly met or exceeded. Retention of girls was 97 percent in 2016 and 96 percent for boys. The overall promotion rate, 86 percent, and the promotion rate for girls, 88 percent, exceeded baseline values. The Government is slowly taking ownership of the school meals programme although it has yet to commit significant budgetary support.

**Food Assistance for Assets (PALS).** Assets were created and rehabilitated in 56 communes in 18 districts across six provinces. Assets met government and WFP standards and were generally well-maintained. The Community Asset Score target was exceeded, 87 percent in 2016. The coping strategy index score showed improvement as of 2015. Diet Diversity Score and Food Consumption Score also improved but attribution to WFP activities is unclear. Food assistance for assets has been reduced due to resource constraints.

**M&E.** A review of current systems and functions shows monitoring data to be reliable and accessible. The M&E function was challenged by limited funding and staff turnover, particularly in 2011-2012. This improved with the addition of M&E expertise since 2013.

**Partnerships.** Across all components, outcome indicators show strong achievement in the number of partner organisations engaged and project activities implemented with complementary partners.

**Gender.** The country portfolio has attained targets for gender equality in the proportion of men and women participating in activities under each Strategic Objective. The proportion of households where women have decision-making power increased in the education component and remained constant in the PALS. Gender equality is hindered by strong traditional roles and low public awareness of gender issues.

## Conclusions

Overall, the evaluation found that the country portfolio was well implemented despite a challenging funding and political environment.

## Relevance, Coherence and Appropriateness

The portfolio was well aligned with Cambodia’s current policy framework and development priorities. WFP has developed a strong partnership and collaboration with government stakeholders, which supports the Government’s vision on public administration reform. The CO’s upstream role is appropriate, but the Regional Bureau and Headquarters need to assist CO staff to transition and undertake workforce rationalisation. Synergies through partnerships were appropriate, with positive results and the country portfolio aptly reflects WFP core humanitarian principles.

## Efficiency

WFP’s operations were efficient given the complex operating environment. The CO activities and outputs were generally of high technical quality and had high strategic relevance to the changing country context and WFP’s role in Cambodia. Beneficiary targeting was efficiently conducted with the Ministry of Planning. Despite trade-offs in geographic targeting due, beneficiary targeting remained aligned with the principle of humanity.

## Effectiveness

**Nutrition.** The effectiveness of the nutrition programme was challenged by funding constraints, low government capacity at the local level and the Government’s prioritisation of SAM treatment.

**Education.** Outcome targets under school meals were almost all met or exceeded. The School Meals Programme is acknowledged as an effective social safety net.

**Food Assistance for Assets.** Activities created improved access to infrastructure and services, increased agricultural productivity and reduced indebtedness, but were insufficiently linked to Government asset investments.

## Impact and Sustainability

The evaluation confirms the importance of WFP technical support to the Government. Increased Government capacity contributes to ownership and national management of activities. WFP improved disaster response capacity at the national level and ensured the sustainability of the school feeding initiatives. The CO reformulated its engagement under nutrition from direct service delivery to capacity strengthening and coordination.

## Recommendations

The evaluation made two operational and four strategic recommendations:

### Operational recommendations

1. Organise a sense-making workshop to consolidate results of numerous assessments/studies to integrate into the Strategic Review/CSP process;
2. Develop a range of information products and knowledge management strategies that consolidate the CO’s technical and financial contributions;

### Strategic recommendations

3. Strengthen support to the decentralisation process by examining a variety of models to strengthen sub-national capacities;
4. Rationalise and right-size CO staff capacity for its new institutional role;
5. Right-size the portfolio to fit CO capacity and resource outlook; and
6. Define required support from Headquarters and the Regional Bureau for the CO’s programmatic and institutional transition process.

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## Reference:

Full and summary reports of the evaluation and the Management Response are available at [www.wfp.org/evaluation](http://www.wfp.org/evaluation)  
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