

2022

**JOINT TRANSITION STRATEGY
TOWARDS A NATIONALLY OWNED
HOME-GROWN SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMME**

**CAMBODIA
Phase 1: 2022-2025**

17 March 2022

**Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
World Food Programme**

FOREWORD

The Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) under the **leadership of Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen**, the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, has prioritized investment in human capital within its Rectangular Strategy IV as a foundation to achieving the goals of Cambodia Vision 2030 and 2050. Investing in a national school feeding programme contributes to the achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) such as SDG 1: End poverty, SDG 2: Zero hunger, SDG 3: Good health and well-being, SDG 4: Inclusive and equitable quality education, SDG 5: Empowerment of girls and women, SDG 8: Inclusive and sustainable economic growth, and SDG 10: the reduction of inequality within countries.

Since 1999, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) and the World Food Programme (WFP) have together been providing nutritious school meals to primary school aged children in Cambodia, supporting enrolment, attendance, and boosting attentiveness and vitality. The programme also acts as an indirect income transfer supporting the most vulnerable households and boosts the local economy through local food purchase.

In 2020, the RGC started to take over the provision of school meals from WFP. In 2022, the national programme provides meals to schoolchildren in 290 schools. It aims to grow incrementally to achieve full national ownership by 2028, whilst receiving appropriate national, sub-national and school-level capacity transfer from WFP to implement the programme.

The RGC also reaffirmed its commitment to school feeding by joining the global School Meals Coalition, which aims to ensure every child has the opportunity to receive a healthy, nutritious meal in schools, and by signing in March 2022 a declaration of commitments in support of school meals.

The vision of the national home-grown school feeding programme is to develop Cambodian children to be physically strong, mentally intelligent, to promote community economic growth to contribute to build a prosperous, sustainable, and inclusive society.

To guide a phased and sustained shift to a fully national programme, this Joint School Feeding Transition Strategy 2022-25 is a 4-year plan outlining the initial phase of systematic handover of school feeding implementation and management to the MoEYS. The MoEYS and WFP have agreed that the government will increase schools gradually each year, aiming for a target of 685 schools in 33 districts by the end of this strategy and the full handover of 1,113 schools by 2028. Simultaneously, the government will gain expertise to enable further expansion of the programme to 2030 and beyond.

WFP will work through this process to prepare schools for handover, provide capacity building and act as a technical assistance partner to the national programme, resources permitting.

The Joint School Feeding Transition Strategy 2022-2025 outlines a capacity building roadmap and delineates the steps, timelines and multi-stakeholder responsibilities required over the next four years to enable a systematic expansion of the national home-grown school feeding programme.

The MoEYS and WFP would like to express gratitude for the strong cooperation with the National Social Protection Council as well as line ministries and partners in the development of this Transition Strategy 2022-25 and look forward to the continued partnership in its implementation and monitoring towards a national school feeding programme.

Siem Reap, 17 March 2022

Signed and Sealed



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GLOSSARY

Capacity: The ability of people, organizations and society to manage their affairs successfully” (OECD, 2021). This notion clearly goes beyond the knowledge, training, and technical skills of individuals. Capacity at individual level, although important, depends on the organizations in which people work. In turn, the enabling environment influences the behaviour of organizations and individuals.

Food diversity: refers to the diversity of the menu, which differs in culture, taste, cooking methods and ingredients.

Food safety: refers to the proper preparation, cooking, and storage of food to protect individuals from diseases caused by bacteria, parasites, and viruses.

Full day study schedule: Students’ study activities at public primary school which have full day learning schedule to receive breakfast/snack and lunch.

Handover: In school feeding terms, handover refers to the action where the implementation of school feeding is transferred from an external stakeholder (in this case WFP) to the appointed national stakeholder(s).

Healthy food: Nutritious food that can prevent various diseases and help develop the physical and mental growth of people.

Home-Grown: Local products/food such as vegetable, fish, meat, eggs, milk, grain which are available in the community supplying to public primary school.

Home-Grown School Feeding: Refers to the provision of fresh food which is locally purchased and produced in a community or country to the extent possible, with a focus on food safety, food diversity, and nutrition for children in school. This provision can be made in the form of a breakfast or lunch.

National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP): Refers specifically to the home-grown school feeding programme implemented with funding from the Royal Government of Cambodia.

Human capital: refers to the combination of the intellect, skills, knowledge, and experience of an individual.

Local Procurement: Refers to a simple pricing method to ensure transparency and efficiency in selecting food suppliers in community for implementation of school meal program.

Micronutrients: refers to substances that are needed in small quantities (iodine, vitamin A, iron etc.), but are important to help the body produce enzymes, hormones and other substances that are necessary for the better growth and development of the human body (especially children and pregnant women).

Nutrition: Refers to the essential nutrients found in food and beverages such as carbohydrates, fats, fibre, minerals, proteins, vitamins, and water to provide energy or metabolize into various tissues in the body for health and growth.

School Meal Programme: Programmes that provide meals regularly to schoolchildren. These programmes make use of various operational models (including procurement and preparation). They can be implemented in tandem with complementary interventions, such as nutrition

education, deworming, supplementation, etc. Also referred to traditionally as school feeding programmes¹.

Social Protection: Social protection is the set of policies and programmes designed to reduce poverty and vulnerability by promoting efficient labour markets, diminishing people's exposure to risks, and enhancing their capacity to protect themselves against hazards and interruption/loss of income.

Transition: In school feeding terms, transition is the gradual and long-term shift (while building capacity) from externally supported school feeding programme towards full national ownership while maintaining programme quality and sustainability.

¹ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Nutrition guidelines and standards for school meals. A report from 33 low and middle-income countries. 2019.

ACRONYMS

BSP	Budget Strategic Plan
CARD	Council for Agriculture and Rural Development
CFM	Complaints and Feedback Mechanism
DCP3	(World Bank) Disease Control Priorities (Third Edition)
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
DOE	(MoEYS) District Office of Education
HGSF	Home-Grown School Feeding
KHR	Cambodian Riel
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MAFF	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
MEF	Ministry of Economy and Finance
MoEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
MoH	Ministry of Health
Mol	Ministry of Interior
MoP	Ministry of Planning
MoWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs
MT	Metric Tonne
NCDD	National Committee for Sub-national Democratic Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NHGSFP	National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme
NSDP	National Strategic Development Plan
NSMP	National School Meals Policy
NSPC	National Social Protection Council
NSPPF	National Social Protection Policy Framework
PB	Programme Budget
PED	Primary Education Department
POE	Provincial Office of Education
SABER	Systems Approach for Better Education Results
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SFIS	School Feeding Information System
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SY	School Year
THR	Take-Home Ration
USD	United States Dollar
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	(United Nations) World Food Programme
WHO	(United Nations) World Health Organization

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) and the World Food Programme (WFP) have been implementing school feeding activities in Cambodia since 1999. Since then, WFP has been transferring the knowledge and capacity to MoEYS to establish and manage a nationally owned school feeding programme using domestic financing.

There are now plans for the MoEYS to take over much of the WFP supported school feeding programme in the coming 4-6 years. WFP will provide capacity strengthening support to the MoEYS and other national stakeholders to implement and manage the National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP), enabling annual increases in the number of schools supported by the government. Eventually, this will result in a scaled-up, nationally owned and managed school feeding programme. At the same time, WFP will reduce their school feeding operational footprint and move progressively to a capacity building/technical assistance role.

The Joint School Feeding Transition Strategy is a 4-year strategy (2022-2025) that outlines the initial phase of systematic transition of school feeding implementation and management to the MoEYS, and how the MoEYS will expand the NHGSFP. This transition strategy (2022-2025) will see the MoEYS scaling up the NHGSFP from 290 schools in 2022. The MoEYS, WFP, NSPC and MEF have agreed that the NHGSFP will increase schools gradually each year, aiming for a target of 685 schools in 33 districts by the completion of this phase of the transition (2022 to 2024-2025) and full handover of 1,113 schools by 2028. Simultaneously, the government will gain sufficient implementation experiences to enable further expansion of the programme to 2030 and beyond.

The Importance of Investing in School Children

The World Bank recommends providing school meals as one of the most cost-effective interventions to support school-going children during critical growth periods (5-18 years).²

More than 80% of countries provide school feeding programmes,³ generally targeting poor and food-insecure areas. Free school meals are a successful policy measure to promote development, especially in a country like Cambodia, which has a high school enrolment rate. Schools are the best place to reach most children from the poorest households.⁴

Global evidence indicates that school feeding contributes to positive nutrition, education, and other socio-economic outcomes. Using a local procurement model can also effectively increase the impact of a regular school feeding programme with economic benefits for farmers and local markets.⁵

Investing in a national school feeding programme also contributes to the achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) such as SDG 1: End poverty, SDG 2: Zero hunger, SDG 3: Good health and well-being, SDG 4: Inclusive and equitable quality education, SDG 5: Empowerment of girls and women, SDG 8: Inclusive and sustainable economic growth, and SDG 10: the reduction of inequality within countries.⁶

2 World Bank (2015). The State of Social Safety Nets Worldwide. Washington: World Bank

3 World Bank (2018). The State of Social Safety Nets Worldwide. Washington: World Bank

4 Bliss, F. (2018) A shared morning meal. Available at: <https://www.dandc.eu/en/article/school-feeding-helps-pupils-focus-their-lessons-cambodia>

5 FAO & WFP (2018) Home Grown School Feeding Resource Framework. Technical Document. Rome. Available at: https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000074274/download/?_ga=2.204916432.1984688803.1630976723-708513110.1629780186

6 FAO & WFP (2018) Home Grown School Feeding Resource Framework. Technical Document. Rome. Available at: https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000074274/download/?_ga=2.204916432.1984688803.1630976723-708513110.1629780186

School meals play a significant role in nourishing children; and facilitating access to education by increasing school enrolment, attendance, completion, and improving learning outcomes and dropout rates.⁷ Furthermore, school meals are a crucial social safety net that ensures that school going children from poorer socio-economic backgrounds receive at least one nutritious meal daily and help to promote equitable access to education.

School Feeding in Cambodia

The Kingdom of Cambodia recognizes the importance of investing in the health and nutrition of school-going children to build human capital. School feeding is included as a key social assistance action under the National Social Protection Policy Framework (NSPPF) Pillar 1. The transition to a nationally owned school feeding programme is also documented in the NSPPF, along with the scale-up of scholarships and school meals to help achieve the government's development objectives.

The Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2019-2023 also mentions school feeding as a strategy to increase primary school enrolment, attendance, and retentions of children from disadvantaged groups.

Over the last decade, there has been ongoing discussions about what model would be most appropriate for a nationally owned school feeding programme. Determining the model was a key step in establishing a national, sustainable school feeding programme – one that ensures safe and nutritious meals in schools, supports development of local economy, and is feasible for government implementation without requiring external funding.

In 2014, the MoEYS in collaboration with WFP introduced a new approach of providing schools meals – **the Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF)** model, which enables school to purchase fresh, diverse, and locally-produced food directly from local farmers and suppliers.

In 2015, the MoEYS and WFP jointly developed a School Feeding Road Map which documented the key actions to be taken between 2015 and 2021 to pave the way for the MoEYS to take over the responsibility for implementation and management of school feeding in Cambodia. The Road Map demonstrated the mutual commitment to a strategic and sustainable handover to a government-owned and operated school feeding program. The Road Map included the ongoing piloting, researching, and adapting the HGSF model for the Cambodian context. This work culminated in the MoEYS formally declaring its intention to adopt the HGSF model for the national school feeding programme in 2018, to ensure the provision of fresh,

What is Home-Grown School Feeding?

Home-Grown School Feeding is a school feeding model that provides safe, diverse, and nutritious food, sourced locally from smallholder farmers and local suppliers to children in schools.

The benefits of HGSF are:

- Promote quality and safety standards for fresh and local foods; support crop and dietary diversification and healthy eating habits; promote food and nutrition education including behavioural change.
- Maximize benefits for smallholder farmers, by linking schools to local production; strengthen the capacities of smallholder farmers and communities; promote a sense of ownership among communities and farmers involved.

⁷ WFP (2019) Cambodia Annual Country Report

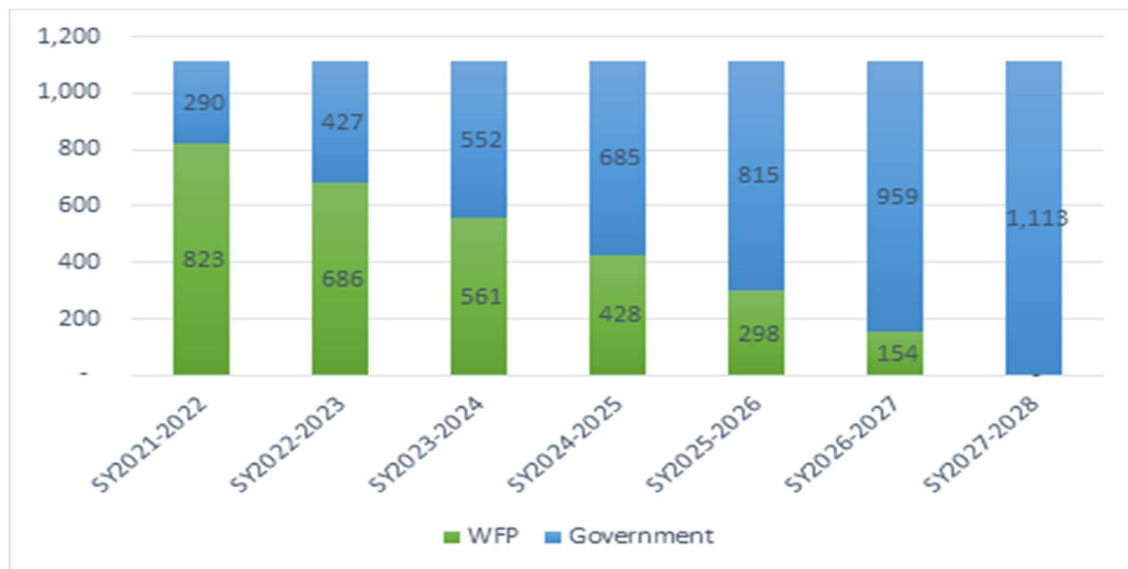
diverse, and nutritious meals in schools, boost local food systems, and support the livelihoods of farmers⁸.

The government's commitment and efforts to prioritize school feeding on the national agenda culminated with a **launch of the NHGSFP in January 2020**. The programme started in 205 target schools, covering 53,342 children in the most vulnerable districts (with high rates of poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition) of 6 provinces: Siem Reap, Preah Vihear, Battambang, Stung Treng, Banteay Meanchey and Kampong Cham. The RGC also reaffirmed its commitment to school feeding by joining the global School Meals Coalition, which aims to ensure every child has the opportunity to receive a healthy, nutritious meal in schools, and by signing in March 2022 a declaration of commitments in support of school meals.

The implementation of the NHGSFP was significantly affected when schools were closed in March 2020 to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. WFP and MoEYS repurposed the school meals and HGSF financial resources to provide take-home rations (THR) to children from the most vulnerable households in communities in which school feeding is implemented. In total, the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) and WFP supported more than 100,000 children of the poorest schoolchildren in Cambodia, with a THR of rice, canned fish, and oil.

There are now plans in place for WFP to hand over the direct implementation of school feeding to the MoEYS, while maintaining a technical advisory role. WFP is in the process of moving all its supported schools to the HGSF model to align with the NHGSFP (see Figure1).

Figure1: Planned expansion of the NHGSP (SY 2021/22 – SY 2027-28)



Resources permitting, WFP is committed to providing ongoing technical support the NHGSFP beyond this strategy, to help ensure that the MoEYS and other stakeholders have sufficient capacity to implement and manage the programme to an appropriate standard.

Over the next 4-6 years the goal is to build the capacity of the MoEYS to implement, manage and monitor the NHGSFP, increase the number of schools supported by the MoEYS and reduce WFP's

⁸ WFP (2019) School Feeding Overview: Cambodia.

school feeding operations; eventually, resulting in a scaled-up nationally owned and managed school feeding programme. The Joint School Feeding Transition Strategy outlines the necessary steps to enable this transition to happen.

The National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme

The overall vision of the NHGSFP is to ensure that children are physically and mentally strong, and able to contribute to society. The vision of the NHGSFP is documented in the HGSF Operational Guidelines⁹, and the HGSF sub-decree along with the overall goals and the immediate objectives of the programme.

Vision: The home-grown school feeding programme envisions to develop Cambodian children to be physically strong, mentally intelligent, to promote community economic growth to contribute to build a prosperous, sustainable, and inclusive society.

Goal: The home-grown school feeding programme aims to provide safe and healthy nutrition to Cambodian children to promote social protection, increase access to education services to contribute to the development of local economic and agricultural, and society.

Objectives: The home-grown school feeding programme has the following objectives:

- To provide safe and healthy nutrition to the children,
- To promote education and learning to children in communities faced with food insecurity
- To promote local economy and agricultural development
- To promote the implementation of life skill programmes linked to real life in the community
- To promote ownership, partnership, and cross sectoral coordination

The ultimate goal is to eventually expand the NHGSFP to national coverage, although the achievement of the goal is beyond the 4-year time line of the current transition strategy.

Over the period 2022-2025, the Royal Government of Cambodia intend to annually increase the number of schools under the direct management of the MoEYS, while building appropriate national, sub-national and school-level capacity to implement the programme.

The Joint School Feeding Transition Strategy outlines the additional capacity the government needs to be able to successfully manage implementation over the medium term years, and pave the way for ongoing expansion of the NHGSFP.

NHGSFP Stakeholders

The goals and objectives of the NHGSFP go beyond the education sector, providing opportunities for inter-ministerial engagement to achieve results in health and nutrition, social protection, and agricultural development. The implementation of the NHGSFP already involves multiple national stakeholders, including several government ministries working alongside the MoEYS. While the MoEYS takes the lead on the planning, management, implementation and oversight of the programme, there are key roles to be played by other ministries.

⁹ Operational Guidelines Home Grown School Feeding, Cambodia (2021)


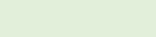
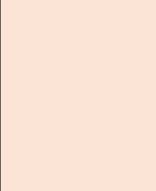





The General Secretariat-National Social Protection Council (GS-NSPC) has been engaged to oversee, monitor, and evaluate all social protection programmes, including school feeding. Other key stakeholders include the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF), Ministry of Interior (MoI), Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), Ministry of Health (MoH), Ministry of Women’s Affairs (MoWA), Ministry of Planning (MoP), and the Council for Agriculture and Rural Development (CARD).

The Joint School Feeding Transition Strategy 2022-2025 outlines a capacity building roadmap and delineates the responsibilities of stakeholders that is required over the next four years to enable a systematic expansion of the NHGSFP.

Action Plan (SY2021/22 – SY 2024/25)

All the capacity building activities mentioned in the Joint School Feeding Transition are compiled into Table 1 giving an overview of the actions needed to achieve the first phase of the transition strategy. The overview provides the prioritization, timeline and indicates whether MoEYS or WFP should take lead responsibility for the achievement of the action, or whether joint action is required.

Table 1: Overview of all capacity building activities with timeline

Key:			
Lead responsibility: MoEYS (with support from WFP as required)			
Responsibility: MoEYS and WFP jointly			
Capacity Building Activities under each of the SABER-SF Quality Standards	Immediate (6 months) By end of Q1 2022	Short term (1 year) By start of SY 2022/23	Longer-term (5 years) By end SY 2024/25
1. Policy Framework			
The MoEYS' policy development team should ensure the content of the National School Meals Policy provides a comprehensive picture of the reasons for school meal, and outlines institutional accountabilities and responsibilities, guiding principles for decision-making and design, and an understanding of how resources for the programme implementation will be mobilized.			
Ensure the draft National School Meals Policy is aligned with relevant legal framework approved by the government, e.g., sub-decree, NHGSF Operational Manual, Transition Strategy for NHGSFP etc.			
Establish inter-ministerial collaboration for NHGSF that promotes cross sectoral collaboration and enhances ownership of the programme.			
Operationalize the sub-decree for NHGSFP and the inter-ministerial Prakas.			
Ensure the draft National School Meals Policy is consulted upon and receives buy-in and engagement from relevant stakeholders.			
Finalize National School Meals Policy and obtain approval.			

Operationalize the National School Meal Policy, adjusting where necessary to ensure sustainable, multi-sectoral support to the implementation of the NHGSFP.			
Ensure that HGSF is integrated into the mid-term reviews of key national policies/strategies, advocating for increased articulation of the role that NHGSFP can play in reaching sectoral objectives.			
Continue to monitor progress of the National School Meal Policy and make adjustment where necessary.			
2. Stable Funding and Budgeting			
School handover criteria and plan to be developed by WFP and MoEYS to submit to NSPC for review before roll out.			
MoEYS to ensure reporting requirements are completed and submitted to MEF as per interministerial Prakas for in-year and year-end reporting of financial and non-financial performance.			
Strengthen routine NHGSFP technical department engagement with Finance Department to help build stronger awareness, support, and consensus within the MoEYS on investment and expenditure related to NHGSFP.			
MoEYS and PoEYS to ensure connection and visibility of school feeding in budget documents.			
Assess the financial flow and expenditure in schools with recommendations for improvement to promote accountability for budget management on the ground.			
MoEYS, MEF/Budget department and NSPC to collaborate to ensure that the NHGSFP has sustainable funding, including appropriate accountability mechanisms to ensure transparent budget expenditure.			
Integrate NHGSFP more clearly into MoEYS BSP and PB submissions – in narrative, in indicators and in relevant templates of Program Budget and Budget Strategic Plan.			
Ensure the SFIS is rolled out and used to promote accountability in NHGSFP financial planning, expenditure, and reporting.			
Continue to work with subnational stakeholders to integrate NHGSFP activities into planning documents.			
Identify what support WFP and other stakeholders can play in supporting government costing and budget allocation processes.			
Conduct a review of school feeding costing including facilities and utensils and other costs, to ensure it is sufficient for the implementation of the NHGSFP.			
MoEYS to develop a clear financial planning for programme in short, medium, long term with endorsement from high level to ensure budget affordability and WFP to also confirm commitment to support the government planning during the transition period.			
MoEYS and partners to mobilize funds to ensure that NHGSFP schools have sufficient school meals related facilities and utensils and other costs.			
Develop a budget plan to accommodate the transition of schools from WFP into the NHGSFP, to ensure that sufficient funding is allocated to the programme, considering the increasing number of schools for NHGSFP each year.			

Continue to integrate NHGSFP more clearly into MoEYS BSP and PB submissions – in narrative, in indicators and in relevant templates of Program Budget and Budget Strategic Plan.			
Continue to take the above actions to ensure that the NHGSFP is sufficiently funded and that funds are provided to participating schools in a timely manner.			
Continue to take the above actions to ensure that NHGSFP funds are managed and reported on in a timely manner.			
Continue to monitor the progress of Decentralization and Deconcentration (D&D) that may affect the NHGSFP budget/implementation as relevant.			
3. Institutional Arrangement and Coordination			
Establish a national inter-ministerial coordination mechanism focusing on the implementation of the NHGSFP.			
Develop a functional, inter-ministerial coordination committee at sub-national levels (provincial and district levels), and ensure joint work planning to enable consistent review of programme as per agreed commitments.			
Ensure that the office/department responsible for the NHGSFP has sufficient financial and human resources to provide full-time technical support in various areas to the implementation and management of the NHGSFP.			
Identify what support WFP and other stakeholders can play in building national and sub-national capacity and coordination structures.			
Ensure that management and coordination structures at national and sub-national levels are well functioning.			
Ensure that schools and local authorities have the means and resources to implement and manage the NHGSFP.			
4. Quality Program Design			
Develop a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework that includes monitoring of programme outputs, sectoral indicators to enable monitoring of multi-sectoral outcomes, and programme objectives, regular programme review, baseline and endline evaluation, and regular SABER-SF assessments to measure changes in national capacity.			
MoEYS and other relevant stakeholders to agree on takeover and expansion plan for the NHGSFP so that participating schools can be informed in time and be prepared.			
MoEYS in collaboration with WFP and relevant stakeholders to start working on the design of a pilot project for central procurement of rice.			
MoEYS and WFP to collaborate on the design of a minimum infrastructure package for schools based on reasonable costs.			
Pilot central procurement of rice, management systems and accountability mechanisms all need to be ready to start the pilot project by the start of SY 2022/23.			
Identify what support WFP and other stakeholders can play in building national and sub-national monitoring and evaluation capacity.			
WFP to provide ongoing capacity support to MoEYS and other stakeholders post-handover of schools including monitoring the NHGSFP implementation after handover of WFP supported schools.			

Continue discussions to explore potential alternate model for NHGSFP, e.g: locally blended fortified rice.			
5. Strong Community Participation			
MoEYS to finalise the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for the Complaints and Feedback Mechanisms for the NHGSFP. Once finalised, the SOP implementation should be monitored.			
Identify potential private sector partners that can be engaged in the NHGSFP			
Analyse the returns of the NHGSFP for farmers and suppliers, and the gender gaps in participation in the programme.			
MoEYS, NSPC and MEF to agree on appropriate ways to systematically engage the private sector in programme implementation.			
Continue working with local communities to ensure that the NHGSFP is implemented as per Operational Manual.			

INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) and the World Food Programme (WFP) have been implementing school feeding activities in Cambodia since 1999. Since then, WFP has been transferring the knowledge and capacity to MoEYS to establish and manage a nationally owned school feeding programme using domestic financing.

The MoEYS has already taken over aspects of WFP's school feeding support, including the food- and cash based take-home ration (THR) programme that was provided to children from poor households, and incorporating those children into a national cash-based scholarship programme. WFP continues to provide technical support to the monitoring and reporting system of the national scholarship programme at primary school level and further extend support to the lower secondary level following the governments' request.

The overarching intent of this document is to articulate a strategy for transitioning the current WFP-supported schools into the National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (NHGSFP), while building the capacity of the MoEYS to implement, manage and monitor the programme.

Phase 1 of this transition strategy (2022-2025) will see the MoEYS scaling up the NHGSFP from 205 schools. Increases in the number of schools will be made on an annual basis following the criteria outlined in sub-decree of NHGSFP and budget affordability. The transition strategy also lays out a capacity strengthening plan required for a sustainable NHGSFP as per the five quality standards following¹⁰ Cambodia Context. During 2022-2025 WFP will expand their capacity building/technical assistance role to support the transition process as per the action plan identified in this strategy contingent on availability of resources to support this.

Further expansion of the NHGSFP will be articulated in Phase 2 of the transition strategy based on the monitoring and evaluation of the transition process, needs for programme supported, and the national economic situation in the country. Eventually, this will result in a scaled-up, nationally owned and managed school feeding programme, with all the operational aspects of the NHGSFP under the management of the Royal Government of Cambodia.

This transition is a collaboration between MoEYS and WFP, with consultations and inputs from the National Social Protection Council (NSPC) which has been engaged to oversee, monitor, and evaluate all social protection programmes, including the NHGSFP.

Key ministries/institutions will play a role in the NHGSFP including: the National Social Protection Council (NSPC), the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS), the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF), , Ministry of Interior (Mol), Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), Ministry of Health (MoH), Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA), Ministry of Planning (MoP), , and the Council for Agriculture and Rural Development (CARD).

This transition strategy outlines the capacity building that is required over the next four years (2022-2025), to enable a systematic expansion of the NHGSFP.

¹⁰ The capacity building actions outlined in this strategy uses the WFP/World Bank Systems Approach to Better Education Results (School Feeding) (SABER-SF) guidance as a basis, since that is the global guidance used to assess national capacity on school feeding. The SABER-SF guidance is described in more detail in Section 7.

The specific objectives of this transition strategy are to:

- Outline the strategic roadmap for building the capacity of the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) to implement, manage and monitor the NHGSFP, focusing on five quality standards – the national policy framework; stable funding and budgeting; quality programme design; institutional arrangements and coordination; and community ownership and participation.
- Delineate roles and responsibilities of national stakeholders, enabling the RGC to be able to manage and implement the NHGSFP through multi-sectoral collaboration.

The strategy also aligns with several important school feeding-related national documents including the Sub Decree of NHGSFP¹¹, the NHGSF Operational Manual¹², the HGSF Implementation Framework¹³ and Prakas on the NHGSFP¹⁴.

The development of this strategy was undertaken through collaboration between MoEYS, WFP, and the NSPC. A desk review of existing policies and background documents relevant to school feeding in Cambodia was done, followed by discussions with WFP and MoEYS personnel from the Primary Education Department (PED), School Health Department, Policy Department, Finance Department, Planning Department, and other relevant departments from MoEYS, and other key stakeholders such as the NSPC and CARD. This was followed by multiple discussions between WFP, MoEYS, NSPC and other key stakeholders to develop and finalize the Operational Manual, Sub Decree and Prakas, upon which, the NHGSFP is built.

11 Royal Government of Cambodia. 2022 Sub-decree on the National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme

12 Royal Government of Cambodia. 2021 National Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF) Operational Manual

13 Royal Government of Cambodia. 2019 HGSF Implementation Framework

14 Royal Government of Cambodia. 2020 Inter-ministerial Prakas on the National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme

SCHOOL FEEDING IN CAMBODIA

The RGC recognizes the importance of investing in the health and nutrition of children in schools to build human capital. Since 1999, the MoEYS has been implementing school feeding activities in primary schools with the support of the WFP. School meals play a significant role in nourishing children; and facilitating access to education by increasing school enrolment, attendance completion, reducing dropout, and improving learning outcomes¹⁵. Furthermore, school feeding is a crucial social assistance tool that ensures at least one nutritious meal daily to children from poorer socio-economic communities and promotes equitable access to education.

School feeding in Cambodia was originally implemented through in-kind, direct donation of rice, vegetable oil, canned fish, iodized salt and yellow split peas to schools. The MoEYS supported this model by allocating human resources and an annual contribution from the RGC of 2,000MT of rice and associated costs. WFP also provided food or cash scholarship to children from poor households as conditional transfers linked to school attendance.

Over the last decade, there have been ongoing discussions about what model would be most appropriate for a nationally owned school meal programme, one that would use locally purchased commodities. Determining the model would be a key step in establishing a national, sustainable school meal programme – one that ensures safe and nutritious meals in schools, supports development of local economy, and is feasible for government implementation and management.

In 2014, the MoEYS, in collaboration with WFP, piloted the Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF) model, which purchases food locally from farmers. In Cambodia, a country where agriculture represents 37% of the economy and employs 67% of the workforce¹⁶, the HGSF model, offers the potential to extend the benefits of school meals beyond children and their families to also support local food suppliers and farmers.

What is Home-Grown School Feeding?

Home Grown School Feeding constitutes a school meals model that provides safe, diverse, and nutritious food, sourced locally from farmers to children in schools.

The benefits of HGSF are:

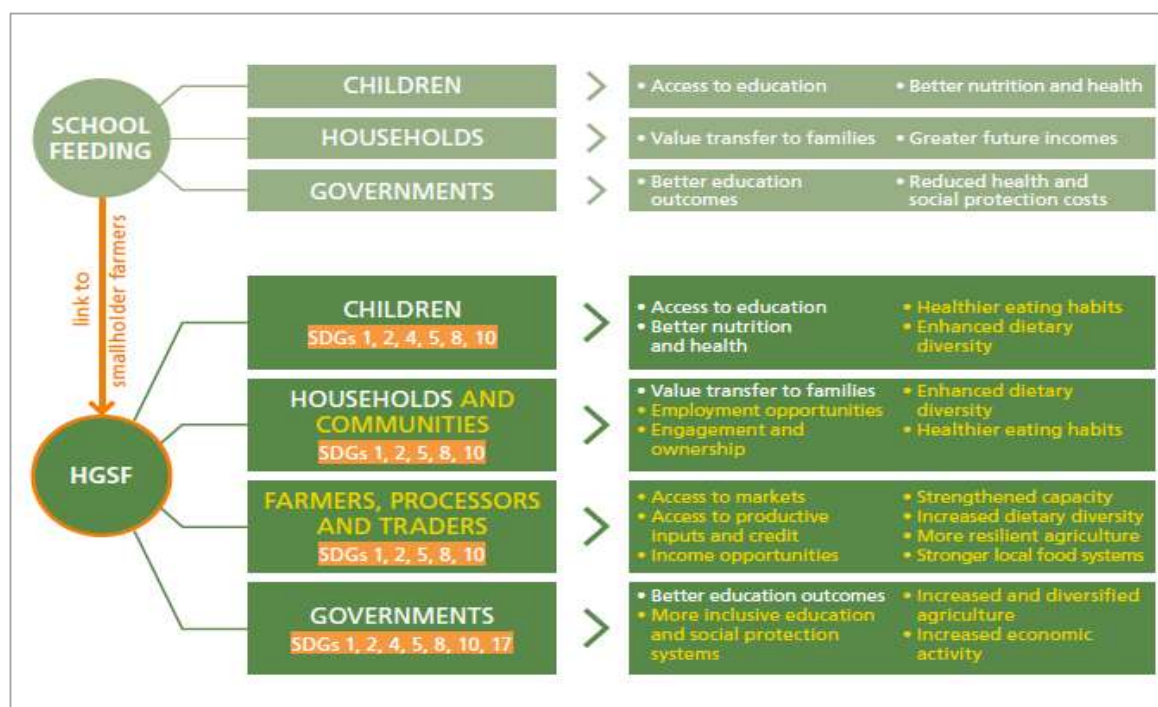
- Promote quality and safety standards for fresh and local foods; support crop and dietary diversification and healthy eating habits; promote food and nutrition education including behavioural change.
- Maximize benefits for farmers, by linking schools to local food production; strengthen the capacities of farmers and communities; promote a sense of ownership among communities and farmers involved.

School feeding also contributes to the achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), as shown in Figure 1.

¹⁵ WFP (2019) Cambodia Annual Country Report

¹⁶ ILO modelled data. Available at <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.AGR.EMPL.ZS?locations=KH>

Figure 1: Benefits and beneficiaries of HGSF



Source: FAO & WFP (2018)¹⁷

In 2015, the MoEYS and WFP jointly developed a School Feeding Road Map which documented the key actions to be taken between 2015 and 2021 to pave the way for the MoEYS to take over the responsibility for implementation and management of school feeding in Cambodia. The Road Map demonstrated the mutual commitment to a strategic and sustainable handover to a government-owned and operated school feeding programme. The roadmap also summarized the importance of school feeding to Cambodia's educational goals, stating that *"providing meals in schools to hungry children can be a powerful incentive to increasing school enrolment, attendance completion, reducing dropout, and improving learning outcomes."*

The 2015 Road Map included the ongoing piloting, researching, and adapting the HGSF model for the Cambodian context. In 2018, this work culminated in the MoEYS formally declaring its intention to adopt the HGSF model for the national school feeding programme, to ensure the provision of fresh, diverse, and nutritious meals in schools, boost local food systems, and support the livelihoods of farmers¹⁸.

The government's commitment and efforts to prioritize school meal as a national agenda culminated with a launch of the NHGSFP for school year (SY) 2019/20. The programme started in 205 target schools, covering 53,342 children in the most vulnerable districts of 6 provinces: Siem Reap, Preah Vihear, Battambang, Stung Treng, Banteay Meanchey and Kampong Cham. More information on the vision, goals, and objectives of the NHGSFP can be found in Section 5.

In 2021, the RGC also reaffirmed its commitment to school feeding by joining the global School Meals Coalition, which aims to ensure every child has the opportunity to receive a healthy,

17 FAO & WFP (2018) Home Grown School Feeding Resource Framework. Technical Document. Rome. Available at: https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000074274/download/?_ga=2.204916432.1984688803.1630976723-708513110.1629780186

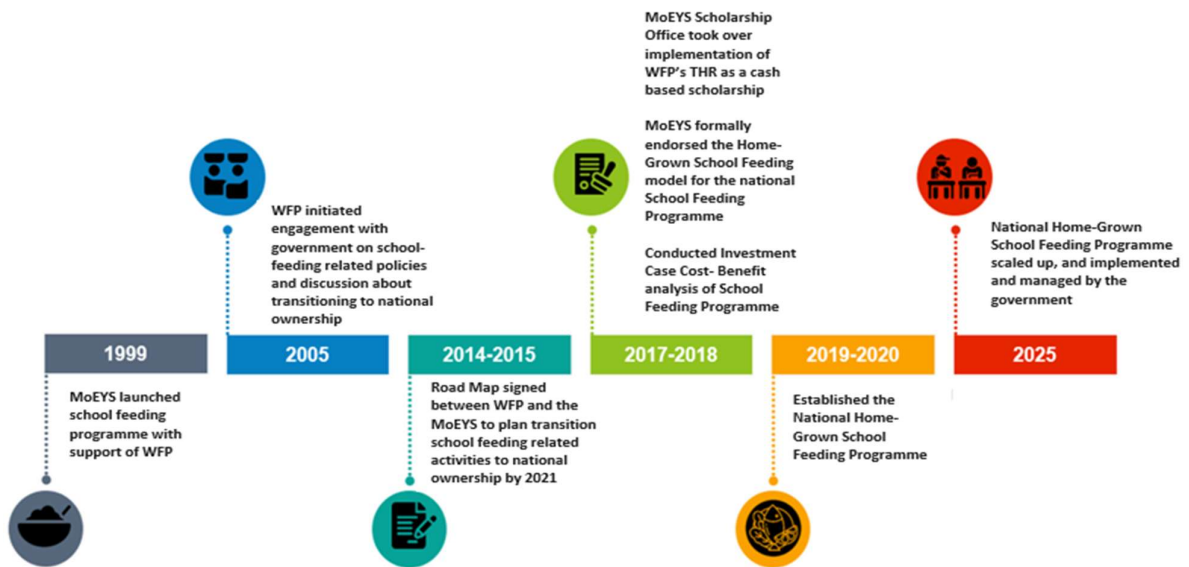
18 WFP (2019) School Feeding Overview: Cambodia.

nutritious meal in schools, and by signing in March 2022 a declaration of commitments in support of school meals.

WFP is now in the process of moving its supported schools to the HGSF model to align with the NHGSFP. In SY 2021-2022, WFP supported 823 schools across five provinces (Kampong Chhnang, Kampong Thom, Oddar Meanchey, Pursat and Siem Reap) to implement school meal/HGSFP, covering approximately 203,640 children. Details of the number of schools implementing school feeding by province, and model, can be found in Annex 1.

Figure 2 provides a summary of the key transition actions described above towards building the national school feeding programme. This transition strategy is intended to ensure that the government has the capacity to implement, manage and monitor a gradually scaled-up NHGSFP by 2025.

Figure 2: Timeline of Key Transitions Actions in School Feeding in Cambodia (1999-2025)



The implementation of the NHGSFP was significantly affected when schools were closed in March 2020 to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and introduced online learning platforms. WFP and MoEYS repurposed the school meals and HGSF financial resources to provide food Take Home Ration (THR) to children from the most vulnerable households, and cooks in communities participating in school feeding programme. In total, MoEYS and WFP supported more than 100,000 children from poor families, with a THR of rice, canned fish, yellow split peas and vegetable oil. Schools started to reopen in November 2021.

NATIONAL CONTEXT

Cambodia's economic growth is a success story driven by solid performances in garment manufacturing, construction, tourism, and production of food and cash crops.¹⁹ The economy has sustained an average annual Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate of about 7.7% between 1998 and 2019, making it one of the fastest-growing economies in the world.²⁰ This substantial economic growth allowed the country to attain lower middle-income country status in mid-2016. However, human capital development and economic sustainability still lag, delaying graduation from the United Nations' least developed country rating.

Food and nutrition security: Over the past two decades, the country has made tremendous progress in reducing hunger, poverty, as well as multidimensional poverty. According to the Global Hunger Index 2019, Cambodia has a score of 22.8, which, despite being classified as “serious” hunger, is edging closer to the next category of “moderate” hunger.^{21,22} The proportion of the population living in poverty also fell from 47.8% in 2007 to 13.5% in 2014.²³ The Multidimensional Poverty Index declined from 0.21 in 2011 to 0.17, as stated in the Human Development Report 2019.²⁴

Despite this significant poverty reduction, income inequality exists between rich and poor.²⁵ More than 60% of individuals living in rural communities, which account for most of the country's poor population, predominantly depend on subsistence farming. Most agricultural households produce their rice but rely on markets and foraging to access micronutrient-rich foods other than staple rice. These households are vulnerable to shocks that impact their production, livelihood, income, and access to nutrient-rich foods.

A large share of a typical Cambodian diet constitutes rice, accompanied by some fish and vegetables. At the same time, the consumption of other micronutrient-rich foods, such as beans, nuts, dairy, and eggs, remains low.²⁶ In 2017, WFP conducted a Fill the Nutrient Gap (FNG) analysis and found that **one-fifth of the population could not afford the least expensive adequate nutritious diet**. Non-affordability of a nutritious diet varied across provinces, ranging from 12% in Pursat and Siem Reap to 66% in Ratanak Kiri/Mondul Kiri.²⁷ The quality, diversity and affordability of household diets remain a concern due to limited crop diversification, dietary preferences, and economic access.²⁸ The analysis also found that a nutritious diet for an adolescent girl was more expensive than young children and adults in the household due to their increased nutritional needs.

Undernutrition is also a major challenge among children under five, older children and adolescents. The 2014 Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey (CDHS) indicated that despite a reduction in childhood stunting (rates falling from 49.2% in 2000 to 32.4% in 2014), the current rate is still ‘very high’ based on World Health Organization (WHO) cut-off values for public health significance.²⁹ About 10% of children under five suffered from wasting. Micronutrient deficiencies of iron, iodine and zinc deficiencies are widespread, impacting growth, cognitive development, and protection against illnesses.

19 World Bank Open Data

20 <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/cambodia/overview>

21 Global Hunger Index (GHI) scale: <9.9-Low; 10.0-19.9-Moderate; 20.0-34.9-Serious; 35.0-49.9-Alarming; ≥50.0 Extremely alarming

22 CARD (2017) Mid-Term and Strategic Review of the National Strategy for Food Security and Nutrition 2014-2018.

23 Cambodia: A Vulnerability Analysis, United Nations Country Team Cambodia, 2017

24 WFP (2019) Cambodia Country Strategic Plan 2019-2023; CARD (2017) Mid-Term and Strategic Review of the National Strategy for Food Security and Nutrition 2014-2018; <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/KHM>.

25 Cambodia: A Vulnerability Analysis, United Nations Country Team Cambodia, 2017

26 WFP (2017) Fill the Nutrient Gap: Cambodia-Summary Report, World Food Programme, November 2017

27 Ibid.

28 WFP (2017) Fill the Nutrient Gap: Cambodia-Summary Report, World Food Programme, November 2017

29 Classification of Public Health Significance, World Health Organization

Between 2000 and 2016, Global Health Observatory data showed a declining trend in undernutrition among boys and girls aged 5-19 years. **In 2016, underweight affected more than 30% of boys and girls.** Even though the boys (37.9%) were slightly more underweight than girls (31.6%), evidently, the rate of reduction was gradual among the girls. During the same period, a worrying trend showed a three-fold increase in the prevalence of overweight among children and adolescents. Obesity among boys increased drastically from 1.1% in 2000 to 5.1% in 2016, while among girls, it rose from 0.2% in 2000 to 1.2% in 2016.³⁰ **Rapid urbanisation, excessive rice consumption relative to other nutritious foods, and increased consumption of unhealthy snack foods exacerbate malnutrition.**³¹ Approximately half of the students (44%) aged 13-17 years reported consuming carbonated soft drinks one or more times per day.³²

Education: In the education sector, Cambodia has made promising strides in improving primary education programmes in rural areas. The net primary enrolment rate increased from 82% in 1997 to 86.7% in SY 2019/20 and has achieved gender parity in primary education (87% of girls; 86.4% of boys).³³

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic (SY 2018/19), primary school dropout was approximately 4%, with higher rates for lower secondary. In SY 2019/20, the dropout rates increased across all levels of education, 7.3% for primary, 18.2% for lower secondary, and 8.4% for upper secondary schools.³⁴ For SY 2019/20, primary completion rates were 85.7% (girls 87.9%; boys 83.6%)³⁵ Possible explanations include boys falling behind academically; boys usually perform less well in reading and tend to drop out early and seek employment.³⁶ Access to education remains limited among vulnerable groups, such as children from poor, rural, or ethnic minority households or those with disabilities. At the same time, retention, completion, and quality of learning are also sources of concern.³⁷

Climate vulnerability: Cambodia's vulnerability to natural disasters and climate change threatens economic growth, agriculture productivity, livelihood, and population's well-being. The Mekong River and Tonle Sap Basin underlie floodplains' agricultural productivity, making the country vulnerable to floods, storms, cyclones, landslides, and droughts. The climate projections for Cambodia indicate prolonged periods of drought, more frequent tropical cyclones, and a shorter or delayed rainy season by 2030.³⁸ These natural disasters can also perpetuate the vicious cycle of poverty, hunger, and inequality, disproportionately affecting poorer households.³⁹

COVID-19: Cambodia has been greatly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Movement restrictions to reduce the spread of COVID-19 had resulted in loss of incomes and disruptions to the food supply chain, adversely affecting people's ability to access and afford nutritious meals. Data from WFP's Vulnerability Assessment and Mapping Unit (VAM) indicates that there has been an increase in households adopting negative food and livelihood-based coping strategies since the pandemic started.

The recent COVID-19 Socio-Economic Impact Assessment⁴⁰ conducted by UN agencies in Cambodia found that from August 2020 to March 2021, more than 50% of survey respondents

30 Global Nutrition Report: <https://globalnutritionreport.org/resources/nutrition-profiles/asia/south-eastern-asia/cambodia/>

31 WFP (2017) Fill the Nutrient Gap: Cambodia-Summary Report, World Food Programme, November 2017

32 Cambodia Global School-based Student Health Survey, 2013

33 UNICEF Cambodia (2019) Education: UNICEF Country Programme 2019-2023; UNESCO UIS: Cambodia; Department of Education Management Information System (2019/20) Public Education Statistics & Indicators 2018-2019. Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, Kingdom of Cambodia.

34 Department of Education Management Information System (2019) Public Education Statistics & Indicators 2019-2020. Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, Kingdom of Cambodia.

35 Ibid.

36 United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (2019) Situation Analysis of SDG 4 with a Gender Lens.

37 UNICEF Cambodia (2019) Education: UNICEF Country Programme 2019-2023.

38 USAID (2019) Climate Risk Profile: Cambodia.

39 UNDRR (2019) Disaster Risk Reduction in Cambodia: Status Report 2019.

40 UNICEF, WFP, UNAIDS, UNFPA and UNWomen (2021) COVID-19 Socio-Economic Impact Assessment. August 2020-March 2021. Cambodia.

encountered changes in their employment status due to the pandemic. For most of the affected households, the employment changes resulted in reduced income. The report also highlights several food and nutrition security-related impacts (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Some Key Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic



Source: UNICEF, WFP, UNAIDS, UNFPA and UNWomen (2021) COVID-19 Socio-Economic Impact Assessment. August 2020-March 2021. Cambodia.

As of June 2021, more than 70% of households, particularly poor, rural households reported using strategies such as cutting down on portion sizes and eating a diverse range of foods to better manage limited income and food resources.⁴¹ These changes have affected poor and rural households the most. Furthermore, closure of schools disrupted the provisioning of school meals, which had previously been a critical safety net for poor households with school age children.

WHY INVEST IN SCHOOL MEALS?

The recent 3rd edition of the World Bank Disease Control Priorities (DCP3)⁴² confirms that the unlocking of human capital requires investment in child and adolescent development throughout the first 8,000 days of life.⁴³ The research outlined in DCP3 have led to a move towards a new 8,000-days paradigm, supporting the development of children from conception until the age of five and then continuing to support them during the next three critical phases of development:

1. The middle childhood growth and consolidation phase (5–9 years), when infection and malnutrition constrain growth, and mortality is higher than previously thought
2. The adolescent growth spurt (10–14 years), when substantial physical and emotional changes require good diet and health; and
3. The adolescent phase of growth and consolidation (15-19 years), when new responses are needed to support brain maturation, intense social engagement, and emotional control.⁴⁴

The World Bank recommends providing school meals as one of the most cost-effective interventions to support school-going children during critical growth periods (5-19 years).⁴⁵

More than 80% of countries provide school meal programmes,⁴⁶ generally targeting poor and food-insecure areas. Free school meals are a successful policy measure to promote development, especially in a country like Cambodia, which has a high school enrolment rate. Schools are the best place to reach many children from the poorest households.⁴⁷

Global evidence indicates that school meal can contribute to positive nutrition, education, and other socio-economic outcomes. The HGSF model can also effectively increase the impact of a regular school meal programme with economic benefits for farmers and local markets.⁴⁸

Investing in a NHGSFP also contributes to the achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) such as SDG 1: End poverty, SDG 2: Zero hunger, SDG 3: Good health and well-being, SDG 4: Inclusive and equitable quality education, SDG 5: Empowerment of girls

41 WFP (2021) Food security and nutrition. WFP Monitoring data. WFP Cambodia VAM Unit, PowerPoint presentation.

42 Bundy, D. et al (Eds) (2018) Re-imagining school feeding: A high return on investment in human capital and local economies. Washington, D.C.: World Bank. Disease Control Priorities, Third Edition. Available at <http://dcp-3.org>

43 Bundy, D. et al (2018) Re-imagining School Feeding: A High-Return Investment in Human Capital and Local Economies [Internet]. 2018. Available from: www.worldbank.org

44 Bundy, D. et al (Eds) (2018) Re-imagining school feeding: A high return on investment in human capital and local economies. Washington, D.C.: World Bank. Disease Control Priorities, Third Edition. Available at <http://dcp-3.org>

45 World Bank (2015). The State of Social Safety Nets Worldwide. Washington: World Bank

46 World Bank (2018). The State of Social Safety Nets Worldwide. Washington: World Bank

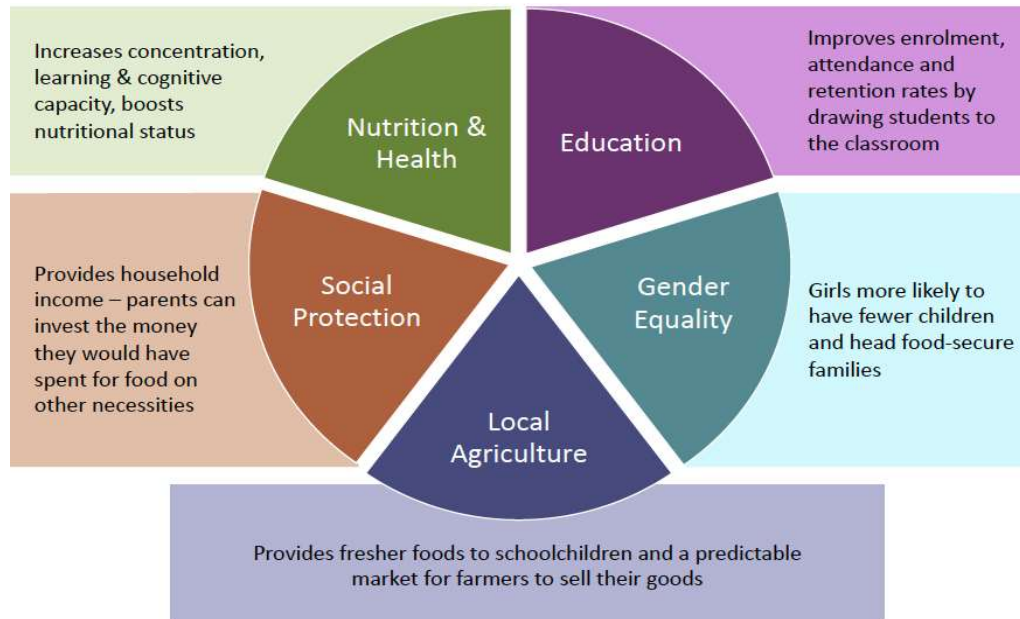
47 Bliss, F. (2018) A shared morning meal. Available at: <https://www.dandc.eu/en/article/school-feeding-helps-pupils-focus-their-lessons-cambodia>

48 FAO & WFP (2018) Home Grown School Feeding Resource Framework. Technical Document. Rome. Available at: https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000074274/download/?_ga=2.204916432.1984688803.1630976723-708513110.1629780186

and women, SDG 8: Inclusive and sustainable economic growth, and SDG 10: the reduction of inequality within countries.⁴⁹

The potential outcomes of implementing a HGSF model go well beyond nutrition and education as it mutually reinforces the efforts of other sectors: 1) Nutrition and Health, 2) Education, 3) Agriculture and Local economies, 4) Social protection, and 5) Gender equality, critical in delivering healthy diets (Figure 4). In time of crisis, school meals can also act as an important safety net for food insecure households.

Figure 4: Potential Outcomes of School Meal



Source: WFP (2017)⁵⁰

1. Nutrition and Health

Evidence suggests that a well-designed school meal programme can enhance school children’s diet quality, leading to improved nutrition, health, and decreased illness.⁵¹ In the most vulnerable communities, nutritious school meals can offer children a regular source of macro- and micronutrients essential for a child’s physical, mental, and cognitive development. The provision of school meals can also support many children from low-income families to overcome malnutrition and poor health.

A HGSF model offers school children the benefit of hot, fresh meals prepared using diverse local food items. Inclusion of local produce such as vegetables, fruits, lentils, fish, dairy, and other animal products can complement the staple food to enrich the overall nutrient quality of school meals. **School meal therefore helps to fight child hunger and address the burden of malnutrition in children.**

Hunger can affect children in multiple ways. It can result in an impaired immune system, increased morbidity, impaired cognition, and malnutrition, which in turn affect education by increasing

49 Ibid.

50 WFP (2017) The School Meal Investment Case: Cost Benefit Analysis and National Cost Assessment. User’s Manual. April 2017

51 WFP (2019) The impact of school meal programmes

absenteeism, grade repetition, or drop-outs, ultimately affecting human capital development. School meal programmes have the potential to address multiple forms of malnutrition among schoolchildren, including underweight, overweight and micronutrient deficiencies. By improving the quality of food for children, diversifying their diets, and teaching them how to eat better, the programmes can support healthier lives for children.

A NHGSFP will allow the schools to plan a rotating menu with diverse options based on food availability, cultural habits, and cost. The nutritious recipes provided in school are also more likely to be adopted at home at the child's request for a varied diet. Furthermore, free school meals give families greater purchasing power to invest in nutritious foods. A HGSF model can also have a nudging influence on the dietary behaviours as engagement of local farmers/producers (and communities) can facilitate trust-building of parents in local produces as a more fresh, safer, and healthier option for their children than packaged food.

Good nutrition at home and in school leads to an alleviation of the burden on national healthcare system charges due to the better overall health of children throughout their life. This averted expenditure is an additional value available for the country, allowing re-investment in development sectors. In addition, other school-based interventions such as deworming, weekly iron and folic acid supplementation, nutrition education, water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services, and school gardens can further complement the impact of school meals ensuring better nutrition and health outcomes.

2. Education

Hungry or malnourished children find it harder to learn than their well-fed peers. School meal promotes equal access to education and learning for all children. **There is now solid empirical evidence of the impact of school meal programmes on educational outcomes, which proves that school meal increases school enrolment, attendance and reduce drop-out.**⁵²

HGSF can help ensure access to regular nutritious meals which can adequately nourish children in schools. School meals are often the first full meal that children receive on school days, satisfying their hunger, letting them stay focused during class hours and boosting learning outcomes.

A study of the Cambodia school meal programme conducted in 2017 found that school feeding contributed to increased school enrolment, attendance, and school performance.⁵³ This aligns with global research which indicates that implementation of school meal programmes is associated with increased enrolment, particularly for girls.⁵⁴

Evidence also shows that receiving meals in schools has positive impacts on school participation (attendance, concentration, completion) and learning scores on cognitive, language, and mathematics tests.⁵⁵

3. Social Protection

School feeding provides an opportunity to invest in children, the future leaders of the country, while helping to alleviate poverty. There is evidence that a HGSF model contributes to reducing poverty by boosting income for households and communities.⁵⁶

52 Molinas, L. & de la Mothe, M. Chapter 14: The multiple impacts of school feeding: a new approach for reaching sustainability. Included in WFP (2010) Revolution: From food aid to food assistance. Innovations in overcoming hunger. Rome, World Food Programme.

53 Bliss, F. (2017) Home-Grown School Feeding as a "good practice" for poverty alleviation and nutrition security in Cambodia. Institute for Development and Peace (INEP), University of Duisburg-Essen (AVE-Studie 4/2017, Wege aus extremer Armut, Vulnerabilität und Ernährungsunsicherheit – Ways out of extreme poverty, vulnerability, and food insecurity).

54 FAO (2010). Gender and Nutrition. Rome: FAO.

55 WFP (2019) The impact of school feeding programmes.

56 ibid

The NHGSFP runs throughout the school year, making it a reliable source of income for smallholder farmers. This can **help prevent families from taking on debts or migrating in search of work.** Steady income can also help families better look after their children and break intergenerational cycles of hunger and poverty. The income generation through HGSF can give farmers the freedom to invest in modern agricultural practices, expand their farms and business, and buy productive assets. Households with better income, food and education also demonstrate better resilience to shocks and unpredictable disasters.

School meals, free of cost, can help low-income families save the 500-1000 KHR per day, which is often given to children to buy a snack for breakfast. For families with several children, this could mean substantial savings. Families can use these savings to provide a better, nutritious meal later in the day for their children.⁵⁷ For some families, the school meal can also save them food preparation time at home, allowing parents time for other productive activities. Furthermore, school meals compensate families, especially poorest households, for direct educational costs and opportunity costs from the loss of child labour when children go to school.⁵⁸

A study of the Cambodia school meal programme conducted in 2018⁵⁹ found that providing a meal to all children eliminates discrimination against children who are poor, and for whom the school meal is an important form of social assistance. For poor families, the household saving of not having to provide a meal for their children before school, can be substantial. In times of crisis, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic, school meals can be a significant social assistance intervention for poor households.

4. Agriculture and Strengthening Local Economies

A HGSF model provides an opportunity to support the livelihoods of smallholder farmers and local communities by generating stable and predictable demand of their products.⁶⁰ This **demand for locally produced foods can further boost agricultural development and the rural economy by stimulating local and regional food production, creating new jobs, and generating more income.** HGSFP has tremendous potential to benefit and empower smallholder farmers and women farmers who are the backbone of agriculture in Cambodia but who often struggle to make ends meet as they are often poor and work on a small scale⁶¹.

The 2018 Inter-agency Social Protection Assessment on home grown school meal in Cambodia found that the fact that HGSF programme sources the vegetable, rice, animal protein, iodized salt and vegetable oil from the local communities helps create income generation opportunity and making foods available for the rural communities.⁶² The programme is a significant support to poor communities, in areas prone to food insecurity.

The HGSF model can also act as a catalyst for encouraging food diversity if farmers grow a wider range of crops to fulfil school and market requirements. Better access to diverse foods can positively affect the diets of families growing the food. Linking schools to local agriculture can

57 WFP (2019) The impact of school feeding programmes

58 Bundy, D. et al (Eds) (2018) Re-imagining school feeding: A high return on investment in human capital and local economies. Washington, D.C.:

World Bank. Disease Control Priorities, Third Edition. Available at <http://dcp-3.org>

59 Bliss, F. (2017) Home-Grown School Feeding as a "good practice" for poverty alleviation and nutrition security in Cambodia. Institute for Development and Peace (INEF), University of Duisburg-Essen (AVE-Studie 4/2017, Wege aus extremer Armut, Vulnerabilität und Ernährungsunsicherheit – Ways out of extreme poverty, vulnerability and food insecurity).

60 Bundy, D. et al (Eds) (2018) Re-imagining school feeding: A high return on investment in human capital and local economies. Washington, D.C.:

World Bank. Disease Control Priorities, Third Edition. Available at <http://dcp-3.org>

61 FAO & WFP (2018) Home Grown School Feeding Resource Framework. Technical Document. Rome. Available at:

https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000074274/download/?_ga=2.204916432.1984688803.1630976723-708513110.1629780186

62 FAO (2018) Inter-agency Social Protection Assessment for Food Security and Nutrition. FAO, Cambodia.

overall complement national efforts to strengthen food production and diversification and can be playing a vital role in the transition to sustainable national school meal programmes.⁶³

5. Gender Equality

School meals narrow the gender gap, increasing access and equity to education and health, as globally, more girls and women disproportionately have a higher vulnerability of exposure to hunger and malnutrition than boys⁶⁴. School meals provide an incentive for parents to send their female children to school, which facilitates learning, empowering them with new skills, improving their health and reducing child marriages and early pregnancies⁶⁵.

Furthermore, **HGSF can also help in closing the gender gap by empowering women farmers and retailers by increasing their opportunities for employment.** Women farmers are crucial actors in primary production along the food supply chain. However, women face structural and cultural constraints putting them at a disadvantage at household, community, and market level. The HGSF model can be capitalized upon to address some of these challenges by implementing complementary programmes to improve women's access to land, water and other farming inputs, farming knowledge and business skills, and increasing their access to capital to invest in production activities (for inputs, technology and additional labour on their farms, etc.).⁶⁶ Actively linking the NHGSFP with female farmers and retailers can empower women to make appropriate decisions related to food, health, and household finances, which can have a 'multiplier effect' on child's health and nutrition.

6. Crisis response

In times of crisis, **school meal programmes can also serve as a shock responsive social protection.** During periods of reduced income, families often resort to negative coping mechanisms, including taking children out of school to save on school related expenses.⁶⁷ Data from WFP Cambodia VAM unit shows that many households are currently using negative coping mechanisms because of financial pressures from the COVID-19 pandemic.⁶⁸

School meal programmes are often able to rapidly expand their role as a social protection, taking food rapidly and directly into the communities that need help the most, even if schools are closed.⁶⁹ Evidence from previous real income shocks such as the global financial crisis of 2008 suggests that there is a significant risk to educational outcomes. This is already a concern in Cambodia because the COVID-19 pandemic has meant that schools were closed for almost two school years since 2020.

The MoEYS and WFP have worked hard over the last two years to change the school meal modality to take-home rations (THR) and have continued distributing food to vulnerable households with food that their children would have ordinarily received at school. As well as contributing to household food security and child nutrition, **the availability of school meals and take-home rations can act as a strong incentive to keep children learning at home** during times of crisis.

63FAO & WFP (2018) Home Grown School Feeding Resource Framework. Technical Document. Rome. Available at: https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000074274/download/?_ga=2.204916432.1984688803.1630976723-708513110.1629780186

64 FAO (2010). Gender and Nutrition. Rome: FAO

65 WFP (2019) The impact of school feeding programmes.

66 FAO & WFP (2018) Home Grown School Feeding Resource Framework. Technical Document. Rome. Available at:

https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000074274/download/?_ga=2.204916432.1984688803.1630976723-708513110.1629780186

67 World Bank (2009) (2009a) Averting a Human Crisis during the Global Downturn. Washington, DC.

68 WFP (2021) Food security and nutrition. WFP Monitoring data. WFP Cambodia VAM Unit, PowerPoint presentation.

69 Molinas, L. & de la Mothe, M. Chapter 14: The multiple impacts of school feeding: a new approach for reaching sustainability. Included in WFP (2010) Revolution: From food aid to food assistance. Innovations in overcoming hunger. Rome, World Food Programme.

THE NATIONAL HOME-GROWN SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMME

The government is committed to implementing a nationally owned school meal programme and has chosen the HGSF model to enable children to be provided with a nutritious meal in schools, using locally produced food. While it is acknowledged that school meal has the potential to contribute to multiple outcomes, for children, and for the wider community, the government is particularly interested in ensuring that the NHGSFP supports the improvement of education and health and nutrition outcomes, while providing social assistance benefits to poor households.

The overall vision of the programme is about ensuring that children are physically and mentally strong, and able to contribute to society. The vision of the NHGSFP is documented in the HGSF legal documents, along with the overall goal and the objectives of the programme.

Vision: The home-grown school feeding programme vision is to develop Cambodian children to be physically strong, mentally intelligent, to promote community economic growth in order to contribute to build a prosperous, sustainable and inclusive society.

Goal: The home-grown school feeding programme aims to provide safe and healthy nutrition to Cambodian children to promote social protection, increase access to education services to contribute to the development of local economy, agricultural, and society.

Objectives: The home-grown school feeding programme has the following objectives:

- To provide safe and healthy nutrition to the children,
- To promote education and learning to children in communities faced with food insecurity,
- To promote local economy and agricultural development,
- To promote the implementation of life skill programmes linked to real life in the community,
- To promote ownership, partnership, and cross sectoral coordination.

1.1 Scaling up the NHGSFP

In January 2020, when the NHGSFP was launched, 205 schools were included, in six provinces: Siem Reap, Banteay Meanchey, Battambang, Kampong Cham, Steung Treng and Preah Vihear. However, the programme was implemented for less than 3 months (January – March 2020) before schools closed to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

In 2022, the government agreed to increase another 85 schools on top of 205 from 2020 to reach 290. However, COVID-19 has reduced government fiscal space and slowed down the expansion of the programme. The expansion of the NHGSFP has recently been agreed as part of the signing of this transition strategy. This is described in more detail in Section 8.

The expansion of the NHGSFP will include public primary schools currently operating school meal with support from WFP, and to other locations/schools following the set target criteria.

WFP commits to providing ongoing technical support to the NHGSFP beyond SY2024/25, resources permitting, to help ensure that the MoEYS and other stakeholders have sufficient capacity to implement and manage the programme to an appropriate standard.

STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

The goals and objectives of the NHGSFP, which go beyond the education sector, provide opportunities for inter-ministerial engagement to also achieve results in health, social protection, and agricultural development. The implementation of the NHGSFP already involves multiple national stakeholders, including key ministries/institutions aside from the MoEYS. While the MoEYS takes the lead on the planning, management, implementation and oversight of the programme, there are key roles to be played by other ministries/institutions. This section outlines the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders that have already been discussed while establishing the NHGSFP.

To date, decisions about implementing and managing the NHGSFP have primarily been made through the strong collaboration between MoEYS, NSPC and WFP. The decision to implement a HGSF model opens the doors for greater engagement with relevant ministries/institutions and new stakeholders, including private sector, local farmers/producers, and traders.

Bilateral discussions with multiple ministries/institutions indicated wide support for a national school meal programme, and acknowledgement of the multi-sectoral benefits of the programme. There is also wide support for transitioning the programme to national ownership to ensure the sustainability of the programme. Relevant stakeholders also drew attention to potential strong synergies between the NHGSFP and their own or other development initiatives.

Discussions with stakeholders also identified some concrete entry points for partnerships and complementary activities which would strengthen the enabling environment and the sustainability of the programme. Strengthening work planning between departments within the MoEYS and through inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms (described in Section 7.3) will be critical for ensuring multi-sectoral, inter-ministerial engagement in the programme.

The NHGSFP leadership will need to actively develop partnerships with other relevant UN agencies, NGOs, and other development partners to support a functioning and sustainable NHGSFP.

Eleven ministries/agencies have recently agreed to effectively implement their roles and responsibilities as outlined in the new sub-decree on National HGSF as shown in Table 1.

The roles and responsibilities for sub-national stakeholders have not yet been finalized. The HGSF Operational Manual highlights the role of committees and the commune offices, with the roles of other sub-national stakeholders to be further explored during implementation of the NHGSFP.

Table 2: Key National Stakeholders and their Potential Roles and Responsibilities in the NHGSFP

Ministry	Roles and responsibilities
National Social Protection Council (NSPC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate the collaboration with relevant ministries, institutions, and development partners for HGSF programme implementation. • Provide guidance/direction on policies, strategies, legal instruments for HGSF programme implementation. • Follow up, monitoring, evaluation and problem solving for HGSF programme implementation. • Prepare progress report and challenges to the Royal Government.
Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead and manage the implementation of HGSF programme. • Develop documents, legal instruments for HGSF programme management and implementation. • Develop the information management system HGSF programme management. • Provide capacity strengthening to all level of relevant officials and disseminate on the essential of HGSF programme. • Prepare the budget and activity plan for programme implementation for short-, medium-, and long-term period to the royal government for review and approval. • Prepare progress report of HGSF programme implementation to National Social Protection Council as per the set deadline. • Follow up, monitoring, evaluation and address challenges related to HGSF programme implementation.
Council for Agriculture and Rural Development (CARD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate to provide training to relevant stakeholders on food security and nutrition. • Collaborate with MoEYS in promoting school gardening activities in schools to improve nutrition in Cambodia. • Participate in following up, monitoring, evaluation and provide recommendation on the progress of the programme by focusing on food security and nutrition.
Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review, comment, and approve on budget plan for HGSF programme implementation • Allocate budget for HGSF programme implementation • Review and comment on progress reports, financial reports, progress report of HGSF programme implementation. • Follow up, monitoring, evaluation, and address challenges relevant to financial matters.
Ministry of Interior (Mol)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and revise legal instruments to improve the effectiveness of sub-national administration for HGSF programme implementation. • Collaborate with MoEYS to provide training to sub-national administration officials and relevant stakeholders. • Strengthen the existing mechanism of sub-national administration, follow up, monitoring and support to HGSF programme. • Participate in following up, monitoring, evaluation and problem solving related to HGSF programme implementation.
Ministry of Health (MoH)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with MoEYS for providing training on food nutrition, food safety and hygiene protocol and other information related to prevalence of malnutrition etc. • Follow up and monitor on hygiene, food safety and food poisoning management • Technical Coordination for document development on food nutrition, food safety and hygiene protocol. • Participate in following up, monitoring, evaluation and problem solving related to HGSF programme implementation

Ministry	Roles and responsibilities
Ministries of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate in organizing and mobilizing for safe and quality agriculture food production activities. • Collaborate with institutions and development partners in community management on cultivation techniques and food production for supplying to each target schools. • Collaborate in promoting food quality, food safety and nutrition in schools. • Collaborate with MoEYS to provide training on knowledge of safe agriculture production.
Ministry of Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide data of food insecurity, poverty rate, and household with ID Poor for the HGSF coverage areas. • Participate in following up, monitoring, evaluation and problem solving for HGSF programme implementation as requested.
Ministry of Women Affairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child and women advocacy is integrated to all sectors of HGSF programme including small holder farmers, cooks, and suppliers. • Technical support in gender mainstreaming into monitoring and evaluation of the HGSF programme implementation. • Involve in follow up, monitoring, evaluation and problem solving for HGSF programme implementation.

Source: Royal Government of Cambodia (2021) Annex to the Anukret (Sub-Decree) on the Home-Grown School Feeding Programme.

TRANSITION PROGRESS AND GAP ANALYSIS (1999-2021)

In 2009, WFP and the World Bank's undertook a joint analysis of school feeding⁷⁰ to better understand how to develop and implement effective school feeding programs both as a social protection instrument and as a financially sustainable investment in human capital. The analysis determined that quality school feeding programmes have the following in place:

- (1) A national policy framework
- (2) Stable and predictable funding and budgeting
- (3) Sufficient institutional capacity for implementation and coordination
- (4) Sound design and implementation; and
- (5) Community participation

In 2012, the World Bank, WFP and Partnership for Child Development built on the above work and developed tools to measure national capacity in these five key areas. The tools are called the Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) – School Feeding (Figure 5).⁷¹

SABER-School Feeding outlines the level of capacity that national stakeholders should strive for under each of the five key areas and provides a pathway to achieving a quality school feeding programme (Annex 2). There are 12 goals to achieving the highest levels of capacity across the five areas. Each of these goals is described below.

This section of the strategy describes the goals, progress, and gaps in building a NHGSFP in Cambodia. The gaps and actions to improve the NHGSFP are then taken forward into Section 9 – to build the Action Plan, which provides a summary of all capacity building activities, responsibilities, and timeline.

1.2 Policy Frameworks

What is the goal?

High-level policy frameworks (“Advanced”) are achieved when there is an overarching school feeding policy aligned with other national policies. There are two aspects to consider:

- the development, embeddedness and dissemination of the policy
- the extent to which the content is complete

Achieving these two aspects (**Goal 1 and Goal 2 below**) is the ultimate goal of capacity building efforts to strengthen the national policy framework on school feeding.

70 Bundy et al. (2009) Rethinking School Feeding: Social Safety Nets, Child Development, and the Education Sector. Directions in Development: Human Development. World Food Programme and the World Bank.

71 World Bank Group, World Food Programme and Partnership for Child Development (2014) Systems Approach to better Education Results (SABER) – School Feeding. Towards Nationally Owned School Feeding Programmes.

1.2.1 Development and embeddedness of school feeding policy in the national landscape

Goal 1: The national policy landscape will best support school feeding when there is an overarching policy/strategy/law for school feeding that is –

- a) Endorsed by the government
- b) Supported by all the relevant regulations
- c) Adequately disseminated
- d) Embedded in relevant national development plan
- e) Reflected in relevant sectoral plans/strategies etc

What has been done so far?

Over the last two decades, significant progress has been made in building the policy framework in Cambodia to support the implementation of school meal programme. Several national policies, strategies and plans relevant to the implementation of the NHGSFP have been approved and are in force. School feeding is mentioned in social protection, education, food security and nutrition, and health sector policies. The HGSF model is particularly relevant for the agricultural sector and is specifically embedded in food security sector documents with respect to food value chains and food systems. Many of these documents provide a good entry point for supporting the implementation of school feeding.

The dissemination of relevant policies and strategies is made available through government websites, social media, dissemination workshops and material distribution that could be accessed by the public. Hence, to ensure the effective dissemination, and operationalization of policies and strategies need to be supported at both national and sub-national levels.

- *National development policies and strategies*

At the highest strategic level, the government's long-term development aims are documented in **Vision 2030**, a roadmap towards achieving upper-middle-income status. Vision 2030 is operationalized through two overarching development strategies: The **Rectangular Strategy IV (2019-2023)**⁷² and the **National Strategic Development Plan (2019-2023)** (NSDP),⁷³ which integrate the SDGs into development priorities.

Rectangular Strategy IV mentions plans to establish a national school feeding programme and indicates that there are potential opportunities for the next Rectangular Strategy to include school feeding within education, improving nutrition, small and micro-enterprise promotion, and the promotion of agricultural and rural development.

Also, under the Rectangular Strategy, the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA), in partnership with relevant ministries/institutions and other partners, developed the Neary Rattanak IV (2019-2023) strategic plan to continue the government's efforts to meet SDG 5 and promote gender equality and the empowerment of women in Cambodia. The strategic plan focuses on increasing the participation of women in the economy and their contribution to national goals. Although there is no mention of school feeding in these documents, supporting a HGSF model contributes to the local economic development, and encouraging women farmers, suppliers, and cooks to contribute to the implementation of the NHGSFP will help build gender equality.

72 Royal Government of Cambodia (2018) Rectangular Strategy Phase IV, 2019-2023

73 Royal Government of Cambodia (2018) National Strategic Development Plan, 2019-2023

- **Social protection**

School Feeding is recognized in the **National Social Protection Policy Framework (NSPPF) (2016-2025)**⁷⁴ as a social protection instrument. The main objectives of the NSPPF are to harmonize, concentrate/integrate and strengthen existing schemes or programmes to enhance their effectiveness, transparency, consistency and to expand the coverage to better protect and respond to the needs of Cambodian citizens in all segments, in accordance with the country's level of economic growth.

The NSPPF consists of two distinct pillars, 1) social assistance and 2) social security. The first pillar explicitly recognizes vulnerabilities along the life cycle, including human capital development linked to the needs of school-age children; both in terms of food security and nutrition, as well as equitable access to education.

School Feeding is recognized as a key feature of social assistance under the NSPPF Pillar 1. The transition to a nationally owned school feeding programme is also documented in the NSPPF, along with the scale-up of school feeding to help achieve the government's development objectives.

The NSPPF envisages that the Government will take over the management and financing of school feeding, with home-grown school feeding specifically mentioned. The NSPPF encourages the HGSF model to be used to improve the nutrition of children in schools.

- **Education sector**

School meals are incorporated in the **Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2019-2023**⁷⁵ to support the contribution of the Primary Education Sub-Sector to achieving the objective of *"Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all"*. The programme is considered as a measure to increase school enrolment, attendance, and retention, especially of children from disadvantaged groups.

The Primary Education Sub-Sector Objective 1 includes multiple strategies to expand measures to increase school enrolment, attendance, and retention of children from disadvantaged groups. Specifically mentioned are the need to *"strengthen the school meal programme to ensure its sustainability"*, and *"expand the provision of school meals for primary school students, especially disadvantaged students"*.

Similarly, under Objective 1 of the Early Childhood Education Sub-Sector, the ESP mentions the three relevant key strategies: *"pilot school meal programme at pre-school level"*, *"provide WASH, nutrition and health-promotion in pre-schools"* and *"disseminate guidelines on food safety and the quality of meals"*.

The **National School Health Policy (2018)**⁷⁶ provides guidance on the practical implementation of programmes to prevent disease. The policy aims to contribute to improving the quality of education and giving learners and educational personnel access to good health and welfare services to become human resources of high potential. The policy includes a section on "promoting nutrition provision" with a focus on providing meals in schools.

- Promote nutrition provision for learners in educational institutions.
- Promote establishment of vegetable gardens in educational institutions.
- Set minimum hygiene standards and monitor cafeteria and/or food stalls in educational institutions.
- Set nutrition safety standards in educational institutions.

74 Royal Government of Cambodia (2016) National Social Protection Policy Framework (2016-2025). Council of Ministers.

75 Royal Government of Cambodia (2019) Education Strategic Plan (2019-2023). Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports.

76 Royal Government of Cambodia (2018) National Policy on School Health. Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport

- Encourage guardians to prepare safe and nutritious food for their children.

The **National School Meals Policy** (NSMP) is currently being drafted by the MoEYS Policy Department, aiming to provide safety and healthy nutrition to Cambodian children with equitable inclusive and promote social protection to improve student learning outcome and education as well as to contribute to economic and agricultural development in local community and society. The policy development was made in close collaboration with various actors to ensure buy-in and smooth implementation of the policy once is roll-out. The COVID-19 pandemic has, however, slowed the development process. The draft policy was consulted at sub-national level with various representative ministries in February 2021 and inter-ministerial bilateral discussion with seven key ministries were done virtually in October 2021. The draft policy is currently being reviewed to be ready for the National Consultative Workshop with all relevant stakeholders. Then there will be additional technical meetings to ensure its consistency and rigorous for implementation. The NSPM is expected to be finalized in 2022.

While the NSMP is being finalized, the MoEYS has developed an Anukret (sub-decree) for the NHGSFP **as part of the transition for the national programme**. The sub-decree will receive acknowledgement from NSPC before proceeding to obtain approval from the Prime Minister. The sub-decree will serve as an intermediary legal framework for the NHGSFP while the NSMP is being finalized and endorsed. The sub-decree outlines several aspects of NHGSFP implementation including the allowable budget expenditure for the programme, reporting arrangements and inter-ministerial coordination structures. The Prakas acts as a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the MoEYS and all the ministries outlined in the stakeholder analysis (Section 6).

- *Health sector*

The **Health Strategic Plan (2016-2020)**⁷⁷ includes several mentions of school health and nutrition programmes, although school meal is not specifically mentioned. The Plan mentions the importance of social determinants of health, including access to education (enrolment) and improving the average years of schooling achieved by the population. It also notes that in 2004, six years ahead of schedule, Cambodia was the first country in the world to pass the 75% international target for coverage of deworming programmes. The Plan also promotes hygiene and sanitation, food safety, oral health and school health, all of which are relevant and complementary to school meal efforts.

- *Food security and nutrition*

The **National Strategy of Food Security and Nutrition (2019-2023)**⁷⁸ aims to improve food security and nutrition in Cambodia through multisectoral action. The strategy highlights several areas relevant to school meal, including linking food security and nutrition to social protection to promote equity and access, nutrition-sensitive and safe food systems and improved nutrition and food security through small-scale farmers.

- *Agricultural sector*

The **Agriculture Sector Development Plan (2019-2023)**⁷⁹ focuses on value chains, farmer cooperatives, and commercial farming, which are relevant to HGSF. However, the Agricultural Sector Development Plan does not mention the benefits of a HGSF model of school feeding to the local agriculture sector.

77 Royal Government of Cambodia (2016) Health Strategic Plan (2016-2020). Ministry of Health.

78 Royal Government of Cambodia (2018) The second National Strategy for Food Security and Nutrition (2019-2023). Council for Agricultural and Rural Development (CARD) in consultation with the Technical Working Group for Social Protection and Food Security Nutrition (TWG-SP&FSN)

79 Royal Government of Cambodia (2019) Agricultural Sector Development Plan (2019-2023). Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.

The **Agricultural Strategic Plan (2019-23)** outlines the vision of the Government for modernizing Cambodia's agricultural sector, including building climate change resilience and sustainability, increasing farmers' incomes, to build prosperity and well-being of the Cambodian people. The Plan outlines new approaches to transform the sector, relying heavily on existing resources (and focusing on intensification, using new technologies, smart agriculture, research, and development of mechanization, as well as increasing irrigation capacity to increase productivity, diversification of potential crops and markets, or commercial animal husbandry and aquaculture.

- *Specific HGSF policies/strategies/guidance*

Some documents directly related to the NHGSFP have already been endorsed by the Royal Government of Cambodia, with more expected in 2022. The NHGSF Implementation Framework was endorsed in 2019 along with the NHGSF Operational Manual. The Operational Manual has recently been revised to incorporate feedback from NSPC and is planned for endorsement in early 2022.

The **National HGSF Implementation Framework (2019)** is a brief action plan for the transition and expansion of the NHGSFP endorsed by the Minister of Education and supported by the MEF. It outlines the operating framework for the NHGSFP.

National HGSF Operational Manual: The MoEYS in collaboration with WFP and NSPC, developed the manual for the NHGSFP which cover all key operational aspects, including criteria for geographical targeting, principles for recipe and commodity selection, food ration quantities, a selection process, and criteria for food suppliers (including local farmers/groups), cash and reporting flow process, food safety and hygiene, training and capacity development plan, governance, monitoring and reporting, a complaints process, community participation, and a management and implementation mechanism.

The manual illustrates a multi-sectoral programme, with farmers and suppliers being supported with agricultural technical assistance from MAFF, and food safety and hygiene practice capacity building supported by the MoEYS Department of School Health, Ministry of Commerce (CamControl) and by the MoH etc.

The 2020 GS-NSPC audit recommended that the manual be reviewed to capture relevant component for the programme as well as to ensure that the processes outlined, align with government procedures.

This Joint National HGSF Transition Strategy builds on the work done to develop the National HGSF Implementation Framework, providing a comprehensive outline of transition of school feeding activities to SY2024/25.

1.2.2 Content of the overarching policy

Goal 2: The overarching policy/strategy/law for school feeding should be evidence-based and include –

- a) Clear multi-sectoral objectives reflecting established needs
- b) Clear articulation of value proposition
- c) Clear institutional accountabilities and responsibilities
- d) Clear guiding principles for decision making and design
- e) Clear description of how resources for the implementation will be mobilized

What has been done so far?

The National School Meals Policy, is currently being drafted, so its finalization and endorsement remain a critical gap. This policy will be the key document that articulates the need for school meal for addressing prioritized national needs, and outlines institutional accountabilities, roles and responsibilities, and a description of how resources for programme implementation will be mobilized.

Programme elements documented in the 2021 NHGSF sub-decree will need to be incorporated into the National School Meals Policy.

1.2.3 What still needs to be done to build sufficient policy frameworks to support school feeding in Cambodia?

Overall, the school feeding-related policy framework of the Royal Government of Cambodia is supportive of a NHGSFP. It acknowledges the multiple benefits and opportunities presented by the HGSF model to achieve education, health, agriculture, nutrition and social protection outcomes, local economic development, gender, and broader human capital development.

Operationalizing the sub-decree, Inter-ministerial Prakas and the National School Meals Policy in coordination with multiple ministries and stakeholders will be key to ensuring the programme supports multi-sectoral objectives.

Issues that require immediate decisions or actions as soon as possible:

- The MoEYS' policy development team should ensure the content of the National School Meals Policy provides a comprehensive picture of the reasons for school meal, and outlines institutional accountabilities and responsibilities, guiding principles for decision-making and design, and an understanding of how resources for the programme implementation will be mobilized.
- Ensure the draft National School Meals Policy is aligned with relevant legal framework approved by the government, e.g., sub-decree, NHGSF Operational Manual, Transition Strategy for NHGSFP etc.
- Establish inter-ministerial collaboration for NHGSF that promotes cross sectoral collaboration and enhances ownership of the programme.

Issues to be actioned before SY 2022/23:

- Operationalize the sub-decree for NHGSFP and the inter-ministerial Prakas.
- Ensure the draft National School Meals Policy is consulted upon and receives buy-in and engagement from relevant stakeholders.

- Finalize National School Meals Policy and obtain approval.
- Operationalize the National School Meal Policy, adjusting where necessary to ensure sustainable, multi-sectoral support to the implementation of the NHGSFP.
- Ensure that HGSF is integrated into the mid-term reviews of key national policies/strategies, advocating for increased articulation of the role that NHGSFP can play in reaching sectoral objectives.

Issues to be actioned by end of SY 2024/25:

- Continue to monitor progress of the National School Meal Policy and make adjustment where necessary.

1.3 Financial Capacity

What is the goal?

High-level financial capacity (“Advanced”) is achieved when the NHGSFP has stable funding and budgeting. To achieve this, two aspects need to be considered:

- The status of budget development, sources, disbursement and use of funds
- The extent of cost coverage and inclusiveness of budget plans.

Achieving these two aspects (**Goal 3 and Goal 4 below**) is the ultimate goal of capacity building efforts to strengthen the funding of **NHGSFP**.

1.3.1 Budget development, sources, disbursement and use of funds

Goal 3: An approved implementation plan and budget exist, and budget meeting requirements outlined in the plan. All financial resources -

- a) are allocated from stable national sources and disbursed
- b) are used in accountable and transparent manner, reflected in the Government’s financial management information system (FMIS) and routinely fully disbursed in a timely manner.

What has been done so far?

Budget-policy linkages: As described in Section 7.1, significant progress has been made in building the policy framework in Cambodia to support the implementation of NHGSFP. This provides a foundation for budget allocation.

- Implementation, expansion and strengthening of school feeding is integrated into the Primary Education sub-sector of the ESP. The ESP also includes school feeding indicators – number of primary students receiving food at school, and number of schools implementing school feeding.
- The 2022 sub-decree on the NHGSFP and the Inter-ministerial Prakas (2020) between MEF and MoEYS provide the official basis for funding the NHGSFP.

- NHGSFP is included in the key policy measure of the Strategic Framework and Programmes for Economic Recovery in Context of Living with COVID-19 in New Normal 2021-2023⁸⁰ under the social protection component.
- School feeding is mentioned in the Rectangular Strategy (Phase 4), and the NSDP (2019-2023).
- School feeding is embedded in the NSPPF (2016-2025).

National budget allocation: For many years, school feeding has relied on external funding from WFP, along with in-kind support by the Royal Government of Cambodia through the MEF in the form of human resources allocated and an annual contribution of 2,000MT of rice including associated costs.

In June 2018, the use of national funding for school feeding was first agreed during an inter-ministerial workshop on school feeding in Siem Reap. This was followed by the development of a concept note that laid out the need for domestic funding to the programme, an Implementation Framework (2019-2024) with key elements for programme implementation until 2024 and the NHGSFP Operational Manual.

The NHGSFP budget allocations are calculated on an annual basis, in line with the increased number of schools participating in the NHGSFP each year, and the cash transfer value for schools described ahead in Section 7.2.2. For SY 2019/20, MoEYS was allocated a budget of 7,072 million KHR (USD 1.7 million) to implement the NHGSFP in 205 schools. For SY 2021/22 this has been increased to 11,732 million KHR (USD 2.9 million) to support 290 schools.

The allocation of budget to NHGSFP schools is a significant step in cementing the government's commitment to implementing NHGSFP and its understanding that the programme is a good investment for national development.

The NHGSFP budget:

The MoEYS Program Budget (PB) is articulated only at high level, with the budget to Primary Education Department being contained in a single sub-program (SP 1.2) which includes only two high level activity clusters: 1.2.1 – provision of quality primary education services, and 1.2.2 – capacity development of primary education service providers.

There is currently no specific budget line for the relatively small funding required for the current level of school feeding activities. The MoEYS Department of Finance allocates the cost of NHGSFP implementation to Sub-Account 62028 "Other Social Assistance" on centrally funded budgets of designated Provincial Offices of Education.

Instead of a dedicated budget line it would be more useful to work towards getting the NHGSFP fully integrated into both internal MoEYS financial management systems (i.e. the Education Financial Management Information System (EFMIS)), and into activity-level tables of the PB.

Financial flow including disbursement to schools: Information on financial flow and disbursement to schools is included in the National HGSFP Operational Manual in the chapter on Financial Management for Programme Implementation. For SY 2019/20 it was planned that the NHGSFP budget would be allocated to schools three times per school year (once per quarter).

A separate system for managing the implementation of school feeding in Cambodia is currently being developed with support from WFP. The School Feeding Information System (SFIS) includes all aspects of NHGSF implementation including the budgeting and planning of school feeding activities. The SFIS will help to plan, manage, and report on NHGSF related expenditures at all

80 Royal Government of Cambodia (2021). "Strategic Framework and Programs for Economic Recovery Plan in Context of Living with COVID-19 in New Normal 2021-2023". Ministry of Economy and Finance.

levels. The SFIS is expected to be rolled out for SY2021/22. Once rolled out, school feeding financial information will be included in SFIS and FMIS.

1.3.2 Extent of cost coverage and inclusiveness of budget plans

Goal 4: The national budget for school feeding should cover all costs of the programme including food and transport, facilities, management, monitoring and capacity building. The budget plan should include -

- a) costs for different administrative levels, including timelines
- b) cost for relevant sectors, including timelines
- c) guidelines on funds realignment for contingencies

What has been done so far?

In SY2019/20 the transfer value for targeted schools was agreed at 720KHR (or 0.18 USD) per child per meal for breakfast for children attending half-day school, and 1200KHR (or 0.30 USD) per meal for the schools implementing a full-day school model and providing school lunch then increased to 780KHR (0.195 USD) for breakfast and 1260KHR (0.315 USD) for lunch in SY 20/21. More than 75% of primary school students in Cambodia attend half-day school.

The 780KHR allocated per child includes only the cost of food. Other costs related to kitchen utensils, soap, aprons etc. and school feeding related facilities such as energy-efficient stoves, handwashing stations, kitchen maintenance/repairs etc., were estimated by WFP in 2021-2022 school year (Annex 3). The costing was done, to provide decision-makers with an overview of programme costs for consideration in a NHGSFP investment plan.. These costings will need to be updated following a revision of the standard of the design of the facilities and current market price of the indicated required items.

1.3.3 What still needs to be done to ensure stable funding and budgeting for school feeding in Cambodia?

Stable funding can only be assured if national school feeding funding allocations are made more predictable, and the disbursement process is monitored to ensure that funding covers the required expenses of the programme beyond just food. Distribution of funds by MEF and Provincial Treasury must also be timely, with well-functioning accountability mechanisms.

MoEYS will need to integrate financial input into the financial planning required to operate the NHGSFP. This includes continuing to support the cost of food and the cost of the cooks, as well as the other operational costs such as the cost of school feeding-related facilities including kitchens, dining spaces, fuel-efficient stoves, handwashing facilities, and kitchen utensils and equipment including firewood, water and fuel, and funds for additional items such as soap, aprons, etc.

MoEYS will also need to promote inter-departmental collaboration to develop annual budget plans to support for capacity strengthening, cooking utensils and facilities, WASH equipment, and follow up monitoring and evaluation activities.

The MEF Budget Department, NSPC and MoEYS have recently agreed on the financial flow and disbursement model for the NHGSFP. That is, that MoEYS will authorize the payments of funds by Provincial Treasury offices to individual school accounts to enable them to operate the NHGSFP.

This fund transfer aligns with School Operation Fund Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) which elaborates the accountability mechanisms that schools need to adhere to. The financial flow and disbursement currently go through the MoEYS Finance Department to MEF through the Government Financial Management Information System (FMIS).

Working towards stable funding for the NHGSFP will require collaboration between MoEYS, NSPC and MEF on several areas including:

- Getting consensus from key stakeholders on the NHGSFP expansion plan and on key elements of supporting documentation such as the National School Meals Policy.
- Continuing to build on the strong policy framework by highlighting the budget-policy linkages.
- Making the NHGSFP more visible in MoEYS BSP documentation (narrative and indicators) and assessing and supporting the role of POE's in BSP/PB preparation.
- MoEYS enhance advocacy for budget by making a case for programme budget allocation in line with annual budget cycle
- A national research agenda should also be considered to provide more evidence of the benefits and outcomes of the NHGSFP activities in Cambodia, which in turn could help support advocacy efforts for increased financial investment into the programme. Regular collection of appropriate performance indicators align with social protection M&E framework will also help to establish evidence of the contribution of HGSF to human capital and local economic development as per the vision of the NHGSFP.

Issues that require immediate decisions or actions as soon as possible:

- School handover criteria to be developed by WFP and MoEYS to submit to NSPC for review before roll out.
- MoEYS to ensure reporting requirements are completed and submitted to MEF and NSPC as per Interministerial Prakas for in-year and year-end reporting of financial and non-financial performance.
- Strengthen routine NHGSFP technical department engagement with Finance Department to help build stronger awareness, support, and consensus within the MoEYS on investment and expenditure related to NHGSFP.
- MoEYS and PoEYS to ensure connection and visibility of NHGSFP budget documents.
- Assess the financial flow and expenditure in schools with recommendations for improvement to promote accountability for budget management on the ground.
- MoEYS, MEF/Budget department and NSPC to collaborate to ensure that the NHGSFP has sustainable funding, including appropriate accountability mechanisms to ensure transparent budget expenditure.
- Integrate NHGSFP more clearly into MoEYS BSP and PB submissions – in narrative, in indicators and in relevant templates of Program Budget and Budget Strategic Plan.
- Ensure the SFIS is rolled out and used to promote accountability in NHGSFP financial planning, expenditure, and reporting.
- Continue to work with subnational stakeholders to integrate NHGSFP activities into planning documents.
- Identify what support WFP and other stakeholders can play in supporting government costing and budget allocation processes.
- Conduct a review of school feeding costing including facilities and utensils and other costs, to ensure it is sufficient for the implementation of the NHGSFP.

- MoEYS to develop a clear financial planning for programme in short, medium, long term with endorsement from high level to ensure budget affordability and WFP to also confirm commitment to support the government planning during the transition period.

Issues to be actioned before SY 2022/23:

- MoEYS and partners to mobilize funds to ensure that NHGSFP schools have sufficient school meals related facilities and utensils and other costs.
- Develop a budget plan to accommodate the transition of schools from WFP into the NHGSFP, to ensure that sufficient funding is allocated to the programme, considering the increasing number of schools for NHGSFP each year.
- Continue to integrate NHGSFP more clearly into MoEYS BSP and PB submissions – in narrative, in indicators.
- Continue to take the above actions to ensure that the NHGSFP is sufficiently funded and that funds are provided to participating schools in a timely manner.
- Continue to take the above actions to ensure that NHGSFP funds are managed and reported on in a timely manner.

Issues to be actioned by end of SY 2024/25:

- Continue to take the above actions to ensure that the NHGSFP is sufficiently funded and that funds are provided to participating schools in a timely manner.
- Continue to take the above actions to ensure that NHGSFP funds are managed and reported on in a timely manner.
- Continue to monitor the progress of Decentralization and Deconcentration (D&D) that may affect the NHGSFP budget/implementation as relevant.

1.4 Institutional Capacity and Coordination

What is the goal?

The three key elements of institutional capacity and coordination that need to be developed to ensure adequate management and accountability structures are:

- A national, government-led entity is mandated, recognized, and capacitated to provide adequate leadership for school feeding
- School-level committees ensure adequate adherence to programme standards and plans
- Mechanisms are established at the relevant (central, subnational and community) levels to ensure the coordination of relevant sectors and other actors

Achieving these three aspects (**Goal 5, Goal 6 and Goal 7 below**) is the ultimate goal of capacity building efforts to strengthen institutional capacity and coordination of school feeding.

1.4.1 National leadership of the NHGSFP

Goal 5: High-level national leadership (“Advanced”) is achieved when there is the entity charged with the leading the national programme and they are doing the following:

- a) is formally mandated and recognized by all stakeholders.
- b) assures adequate, skilled, and capacitated staff
- c) requests and receives respective reports and accounts from relevant sectoral and sub-national actors
- d) has fully adequate monitoring capacity and arrangements in place
- e) assures a suitable school infrastructure to safely store, prepare and distribute quality food in all covered schools
- f) secures access to safe water and gender-separated sanitation facilities in all covered schools
- g) provides functional and necessary systems, tools, and equipment in all covered schools
- h) develops and adequately disseminates clear operational guidelines/standing operating procedures and minimum / quality standards, including for staff handover and community engagement
- i) fosters compliant and result-oriented implementation

What has been done so far?

The MoEYS is the line ministry responsible for the implementation of the NHGSFP, managed through the Primary Education Department (PED) Scholarship Office. The Scholarship Office was formed in 2017 to be responsible for school meal and Primary Scholarship Programme for grade 4 to 6. The primary scholarship programme has since been expanded to cover all primary grades (Grades 1-6).

Key personnel from the PED and the Scholarship Office have been engaged in school feeding discussions with WFP since the beginning, holding vital institutional memory of the development and implementation of school feeding activities to date. The Scholarship Office has the responsibility for initiating the NHGSFP guidance, providing capacity strengthening to sub-national actors for NHGSFP, receiving all sub-national and school level monitoring information on the implementation of the NHGSFP and taking action to ensure that the programme is implemented to an appropriate standard.

However, a fundamental gap in the leadership of the Scholarship Office is that its mandate still needs to be formally documented, stipulating that its focus is solely be on school feeding implementation (scholarship and school meal programme). Currently, the Scholarship Office has 11 personnel, but with no one full-time position on school feeding as all personnel have other responsibilities within the PED. To ensure quality implementation and monitoring of the NHGSFP, the Scholarship Office needs full-time, multi-skilled team, with school feeding operational expertise, monitoring and data analysis capacity, and financial management skills.

The Scholarship Office regularly engages other departments of the MoEYS to provide technical support to the NHGSFP: Department of School Health, Department of Infrastructure, Finance Department, Planning Departments, Policy Department, Legislation Department, and Early Child Care Department. The PED also utilizes other offices within their own department to contribute to the programme as required.

The PED, including the Scholarship Office, and other departments from the MoEYS, have also been working with WFP for several years on the development of Scholarship Information System, and SFIS to enable the MoEYS to receive and use scholarship and HGSF related information to ensure quality implementation. This information is in addition to education outcome data that is already

available through the Education Management Information System (EMIS), and the FMIS for national budget flow information.

In addition to the leadership role played by the PED and the Scholarship Office, the MoEYS recently established the National HGSP Committee chaired by the Minister of Education. The committee will oversee two sub-committees - Technical Management and Financial Management of the NHGSFP, along with a secretariat function by the PED and representatives from relevant departments (Annex 4). Their role will be to lead, manage and coordinate technical and financial management works related to the programme, agree on programme standards, and ensure inter-ministerial coordination takes place.

The National HGSP Committee will also link to similar committees at sub-national levels. At sub-national levels (Province and District) there are already School Feeding Committees in place in the provinces/districts that WFP has been supporting but more work is needed to build sub-national capacity.

1.4.2 National and sub-national coordination mechanisms

Goal 6: High-level coordination on school feeding (“Advanced”) is achieved when there are –

- Fully functioning mechanisms established at all levels with all relevant actors
- Detailed and calendarized joint workplans with clear roles, responsibilities and accountabilities are fully established, understood, adopted, and respected

What has been done so far?

The MoEYS currently participates in several inter-ministerial coordination fora at central level that are relevant to school feeding including school health and nutrition, food security and nutrition, and social protection. However, there are no mechanisms specifically for the coordination of school feeding activities. The November 2020 GS-NSPC audit of the NHGSFP recommended that an inter-ministerial collaboration for the NHGSFP be established at both national and sub-national levels.

The sub-decree on NHGSF drafted in 2021 with leadership of MoEYS, specifies the need for several ministries to play roles in the NHGSFP. It will therefore be important to establish coordination mechanisms at both national and sub-national levels. It is expected to approve in mid-2022.

Once the inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms are decided, the MoEYS will need to draft an appropriate ToR, and identify appropriate candidates to facilitate and lead. Coordination then needs to be established, and made operational with clear roles and responsibilities formalized. Inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms also need to be agreed for sub-national levels.

1.4.3 School level committees

Goal 7: High-level functioning and accountability at school-level (“Advanced”) is achieved when functioning and proactive School Feeding Committees –

- a) are in place at every school
- b) with operational guidelines and standard operating procedures at school level
- c) have access to systematic pre-and in-service training
- d) prepare regular and accurate records and reports
- e) ensure reliable provision of agreed-on community contributions

What has been done so far?

All the schools targeted under the NHGSFP are supposed to have a School Feeding Committee (SFC) to support the implementation of the NHGSF activities.

All the 205 schools currently part of the NHGSFP have established SFCs. The SFCs were established either by WFP or by MoEYS as part of preparations for establishing the NHGSFP. WFP has agreed to provide ongoing support to implement their roles and responsibilities in a consistent manner.

The SFC role and responsibility has been developed as part of the National Operational Guidelines from the national to local level. The Implementation Framework also indicates what training will be provided to the SFCs, how often and by whom, and outline what reporting information is required.

1.4.4 What still needs to be done to build sufficient institutional capacity and coordination structures for school feeding in Cambodia?

The endorsement of a legal framework for school feeding, including the sub-decre, Inter-ministerial Prakas and the National School Meal Policy should help to facilitate the establishment of an appropriate coordination structure at both national and sub-national levels.

Issues that require immediate decisions or actions as soon as possible:

- Establish a national inter-ministerial coordination mechanism focusing on the implementation of the NHSGFP.

Issues to be actioned before SY 2022/23:

- Develop a functional, inter-ministerial coordination committee at sub-national levels (provincial and district levels), and ensure joint work planning to enable consistent review of programme as per agreed commitments.
- Ensure that the office/department responsible for the NHGSP has sufficient financial and human resources to provide full-time technical support in various areas to the implementation and management of the NHGSFP.
- Identify what support WFP and other stakeholders can play in building national and sub-national capacity and coordination structures.

Issues to be actioned by end of SY 2024/25:

- Ensure that management and coordination structures at national and sub-national levels are well functioning.

- Ensure that schools and local authorities have the means and resources to implement and manage the NHGSFP.

1.5 Design and Implementation

What is the goal?

There are three key elements of programme design and implementation that need to be developed to ensure that programme design and implementation is both needs-based and cost-effective:

- Extent to which programme design corresponds to identified needs and established standards
- Extent to which programme implementation corresponds to design and standards
- Extent to which programme monitoring ensures systematic collection, analysis, and use of up-to-date information

Achieving these three aspects (**Goal 8, Goal 9 and Goal 10 below**) is the ultimate goal of capacity building efforts to strengthen school feeding design and implementation.

1.5.1 Programme design

Goal 8: High-level programme design (“Advanced”) is achieved when the programme –

- Fully reflects the objectives of the school feeding strategy
- Includes an updated, disaggregated situation analysis on the vulnerabilities and needs of school age children
- Defines adequate coverage, targeting criteria, modalities, and appropriate food baskets
- Outlines reliable supply of safe, diverse, and good quality food, procured as closely as possible to the respective school
- includes effective measures to assure food safety and quality
- Includes transparent criteria and processes to adapt to local/ seasonal context, to address monitoring and evaluation findings, and to react to crisis situations.
- Maximizes impact on local value chain actors including smallholder farmers
- Fully meets standards for gender mainstreaming, protection, and accountability to affected populations

What has been done so far?

Objectives of school feeding: The vision, goals, and immediate objectives of school feeding in Cambodia are outlined in the DRAFT National School Meals Policy (elaborated in Section 6). The vision is of increased economic growth, increased education and human capital, agricultural production, and local economic development. Multi-sectoral immediate objectives are also identified, including in the education, nutrition, health, agriculture, and development sectors. The current HGSF model endorsed by the government has the potential to provide multi-sectoral benefits set out in the DRAFT National School Meal Policy.

Situation analysis: Information about the national context for primary school-aged children is available for the education sector and included in the DRAFT National School Meals Policy. The EMIS also provides sufficient data on access to education indicators such as enrolment,

completion, drop-out and retention rates. However, attendance information is not routinely collected in schools, and information on the nutrition and health status of school-aged children is very limited.

National-level health data is regularly collected through a Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), with the last one done in 2014. Another DHS is planned for late 2021 to provide updated information. However, school-aged children are not part of the sampling for the DHS, nor are they included in National Nutrition Surveys, which focus on children under 5 years of age, in line with MoH priorities. This lack of nutrition and health information is not specific to Cambodia. It's a common information gap, with few countries regularly collecting data on children aged 5-18 years. The limited information that is available is from the Cambodia Global School-based Student Health Survey (2013), which collected data on nutritional status, consumption of carbonated soft drinks, physical activity and hygiene of school children aged 13-17 years⁸¹.

Coverage and targeting: The DRAFT NSMP indicates that the ultimate vision for the NHGSFP is to have universal targeting, with all primary schools in the country covered by the programme. At present, however, school feeding coverage is low.

Over the next four years as the MoEYS scales up the NHGSFP, geographical targeting criteria based on poverty, nutrition and education will be followed:

The expanding the scope of NHGSFP will follow these criteria:

- Geographical vulnerability: Targeting areas of high food security (poverty & malnutrition) and poor education performance.
- Operational programming considerations: Feasibility for programme operation, including school/ local authority/ community participation and commitment for success.

Food basket: The food basket is discussed in the National Operational Manual, including the nutritional content of the basket, and nutritional requirements of primary school-aged children.

- The public primary schools who carry out full day study will receive lunch through Home Grown School Feeding Programme.
- The public primary schools who do not carry out full day study schedule receive one breakfast.

The National Operational Manual indicate there is some level of flexibility allowed by schools, to enable cost-efficiency, and allow for seasonal and local availability of items. The recommended items for the school meals are outlined in the HGSF Operational Manual.

Procurement model: When the MoEYS formally declared its preference for a HGSF model, the intent was to implement a model using locally grown commodities to support local economic development. The HGSF model aligns well with the capacities of implementing parties, the production capacity in the country, the quality of the food available locally, cost efficiency considerations, and the stability of the pipeline. While it is clear that the national programme will use the HGSF model, the specific procurement model to be implemented, particularly for rice, is still under discussion.

The government is in the process of determining the most suitable procurement model for the NHSGFP, one that will maximize impact, while also being cost-effective and easy to implement. For the moment, it has been agreed to continue to use the same local procurement model for all

81 Global School-based Student Health Survey (2013) Cambodia Factsheet. Available at: https://www.who.int/ncds/surveillance/gshs/2013_Cambodia_GSHS_Fact_Sheet.pdf

commodities for SY 2021/22 while planning a pilot project for SY 2022/23 to determine if central purchase of rice is more cost-effective and operationally feasible.

Use of local value chain actors: One of the reasons for selecting the HGSP model was to support economic development by supporting local suppliers and farmers to supply the food to the targeted schools. Therefore, discussions on the procurement model should ensure that the procurement model/s selected maximize benefits to local value chain actors.

Since the HGSP was developed, MoEYS and WFP has been actively looking for partners to provide technical assistance to local suppliers and farmers. Support from FAO and MAFF will be needed to make this possible.

Food safety and quality measures: The School Directors and teachers play key roles in selecting commodities for the NHGSP. It is therefore important that they receive adequate training and guidance to ensure food safety and enable the selection of high-quality foods that contribute to a nutritious meal for children. SOPs for food safety and hygiene practices in schools are already in place.

Standard package of school health and nutrition-related activities: The MoEYS Department of School Health already oversees the implementation of many school health and nutrition activities, including WASH, school health assessments, nutrition and health education, vision checks, oral health, and the promotion of school gardens, and food safety and hygiene practice for school meal programme. The Department of School Health has also been heavily involved in the school meal activities and engagement with WFP and have specifically designed some school health and nutrition activities to complement the NHGSP. The Department of School Health is responsible for the implementation and monitoring and reporting of all the complementary school health and nutrition activities.

Standards for school infrastructure: A package of school infrastructure was identified as part of the costing exercise (Annex 3), and the MoEYS has agreed to maintain a standard package of school meal related infrastructure for all schools as they join the NHGSP. However, the current costing of the package as per Annex 3 limits the capacity for a scale-up of NHGSP. The MoEYS is therefore looking at alternative options, including considering private sector engagement and other donors to raise the necessary funds.

1.5.2 Programme implementation

Goal 9: High-level programme implementation (“Advanced”) is achieved when -

- a) Programme is implemented as planned
- b) Output targets are met
- c) All individuals are trained on their roles and responsibilities
- d) Training takes place systematically, and is institutionalized by national actors, and complemented by standing support platforms
- e) Supply chain breaks are extremely rare
- f) Facilities and food supplies are well-maintained or timely replaced
- g) Compliance with programme design, guidance and quality standards are systematically verified and confirmed to be high
- h) Established handover procedures to new staff turnover are followed

What has been done so far?

Earlier HGSF guidelines were disseminated to schools, and national and sub-national stakeholders as part of the launch of the NHGSP in January 2020. The NHGSFP implementation standards were revised and documented in the 2021 National Operational Manual.

Once the standards are finalized, they should be disseminated to schools and to sub-national levels and local authorities, and key NHGSFP stakeholders including other ministries to ensure awareness of the programme, a standardized implementation approach and accountability for ensuring high quality programming.

A training schedule has been developed to enable schools to receive training before they join the NHGSFP, and provide regular opportunities for follow-up/refresher training, and for new personnel as required. MoEYS with WFP support, has developed a comprehensive package of training materials to facilitate the necessary training, including food safety, the supplier selection process, programme operations, SFIS and financial management. IEC materials and instruction videos have also been developed and disseminated to relevant stakeholders.

Ongoing technical support should also be provided at the local level to ensure that funds are expended in an accountable way, and the NHGFP is implemented as planned. The capacity development was also focus on making sure that appropriate tender/bidding process is followed, and that the food items received are of appropriate quality, are stored in hygienic conditions and meals are prepared with adequate considerations of food safety.

1.5.3 Programme monitoring

Goal 10: High-level programme monitoring (“Advanced”) is achieved when -

- a) Monitoring plan and budget is being implemented
- b) Monitoring tools and systems ensure collection, aggregation, storage, analysis, and access of timely, complete, and quality data to measure progress and results, and are integrated with national information systems
- c) Performance reports/dashboards are regular and reliable, cover and are accessible at all administrative levels, and are proactively used to engage stakeholders and guide programme management
- d) Monitoring staff has required skills and knowledge and fulfils respective responsibilities reliably and efficiently
- e) Evaluations, based on complete baselines, provide in-depth analysis and recommendations

What has been done so far?

Currently, the NHGSFP does not have a comprehensive monitoring plan. Programme monitoring is included in the costing of the programme under ‘core activities’. For SY 2019/20, the MoEYS has utilized some of WFP’s monitoring tools (checklist), pending the development of a national monitoring framework.

The School Feeding Information System (SFIS) is a school-based digital information management system used to crosscheck the accuracy and consistency of data collected from schools. SFIS was expected to be finalized and rolled out the school-level training in 2020 but delayed due to COVID-19 school closures.

SFIS includes information on monthly stock positions, financial status, programme progress and monitoring, displayed on a dashboard to support decision making for programme

implementation. The system has a function for auto-validation and cross aggregation of data, with alert messages to help the users at all levels: school, sub-national and national level, and WFP programme staff, to generate automated reports in real-time for verification and approval. All monitoring data is uploaded at school level and linked to a geographic information platform and alerts programme managers if any attention required.

1.5.4 What still needs to be done to ensure the NHGSFP is designed and implemented appropriately?

The finalization of the National Operational Manual provides sufficient information to stakeholders on the design and implementation of the NHGSFP. However, more work is required to ensure adequate programme monitoring systems are developed, users trained, and the system operationalized. A comprehensive M&E system also needs to be developed, which include appropriate identification and measurement of programme outputs, and evaluation of the progress of achieving programme outcomes. Ideally, a baseline assessment should be undertaken of the NHGSFP during SY 2021/22 to document the situation in the 205 target schools before implementation takes place.

To monitor the progress of this transition strategy it is recommended that two SABER-School Feeding exercises are done: one in 2022 to act as a baseline, and one in 2025 as endline.

- **SABER-SF assessments**

SABER-SF is an inclusive exercise that should include multiple school feeding stakeholders - different ministries, educational leaders, relevant non-governmental organizations (NGOs), donors, and other partners. The assessment process includes interviews and group discussions, facilitated to enable decision-makers to diagnose the state of school feeding in their countries and make informed decisions on ways to improve school feeding activities. One of the advantages of this participatory approach is to strengthen the collaboration between various stakeholders and develop a sense of ownership over the process.

WFP can support the SABER-SF assessment process. At the beginning of the process, it is recommended to have a dialogue with key stakeholders to explain the methodology and purpose of SABER-SF and agree on how it will be conducted and who should participate.

- **Annual review of progress**

In addition to the baseline and endline SABER-SF assessment, it is recommended to conduct regular review meetings including key stakeholders, at least on an annual basis to assess progress of capacity building activities, discuss the results achieved to date, whether key benchmarks have been achieved as indicated in the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, and decide whether additional capacity building actions are required. Both these aspects should be incorporated into the NHGSFP M&E Framework.

- **M&E framework and plan**

A comprehensive M&E plan, the includes regular collection of key output indicators, and regular evaluations and SABER-SF assessments to measure programme outcomes and impacts, is recommended. As a starting point, a baseline assessment should be carried out of the 205 NHGSFP schools during SY2021/22 to ensure there is sufficient data from which to measure implementation progress. A midline and endline evaluation covering the period of this Joint Transition Strategy should also be considered to measure programme outcomes. Regular evaluations are recommended at least every 5 years afterwards.

WFP is committed to providing technical support to the MoEYS to monitor handed over schools and build the MoEYS capacity to operationalize M&E systems and reporting, to ensure quality implementation of the NHGSFP.

- **School Feeding Information System (SFIS)**

SFIS has been developed but still needs to be rolled out. Once rolled out, staff will need to be supported to operate the system, and generate appropriate reports in a timely manner. Programme managers at all levels will also need support to utilize monitoring data appropriately for course corrective actions to ensure quality programme implementation.

Issues that require immediate decisions or actions to be completed as soon as possible:

- Develop a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework that includes monitoring of programme outputs, sectoral indicators to enable monitoring of multi-sectoral outcomes, and programme objectives, regular programme review, baseline and endline evaluation, and regular SABER-SF assessments to measure changes in national capacity.
- MoEYS and other relevant stakeholders to agree on takeover and expansion plan for the NHGSFP so that participating schools can be informed in time and be prepared.
- MoEYS in collaboration with WFP and relevant stakeholders to start working on the design of a pilot project for central procurement of rice.
- MoEYS and WFP to collaborate on the design of a minimum infrastructure package for schools based on reasonable costs.

Issues to be actioned before SY 2022/23:

- Pilot central procurement of rice, management systems and accountability mechanisms all need to be ready to start the pilot project by the start of SY 2022/23.
- Identify what support WFP and other stakeholders can play in building national and sub-national monitoring and evaluation capacity.
- WFP to provide ongoing capacity support to MoEYS and other stakeholders post-handover of schools including monitoring the NHGSFP implementation after handover of WFP supported schools.

Issues to be actioned by end of SY 2024/25:

- Continue discussions to explore potential alternate model for NHGSFP, e.g: locally blended fortified rice.

1.6 Community Roles – Reaching Beyond Schools

What is the goal?

There are two key elements of community participation and accountability that need to be developed to ensure strong community ownership of the programme:

- The level of community awareness, engagement and feedback
- The level of involvement and extent of benefits from the local private sector actors.

Achieving these two aspects (**Goal 11 and Goal 12 below**) is the ultimate goal of capacity building efforts to strengthen community roles in school feeding.

1.6.1 Community engagement

Goal 11: High-level community engagement (“Advanced”) is achieved when the community is –

- a) aware of the programme and of its objectives
- b) actively engaged in menu design
- c) actively participate in the local school feeding committee and supplier selection process
- d) actively engage in programme implementation with regular contributions
- e) are ready to step-up contributions in case of supply chain breaks
- f) receive regular training
- g) actively engage in setting up and contributing to monitoring
- h) support other relevant programme components
- i) A functional, transparent community feedback and complaints mechanism is in place and routinely used.

What has been done so far?

In the locations where school feeding has been implemented for many years with the support of WFP, the local community (parents, commune councils, and other community members) is aware of the programme. Communities have also been actively engaged in programme design and implementation consultations and evaluations to contribute to the programme for years.

In 2020, for the first 205 NHGSFP schools, the MoEYS conducted extensive community mobilization to raise awareness of the programme. In the new NHGSFP locations moving forward, community awareness of the programme may be lower, and will need similar active engagement from the District Office of Education (DOE) and other partners to raise awareness prior to starting the programme in those schools.

The NHGSFP Operational Manual outlines the key roles of the community including identification of the cook, and providing in-kind support to the programme depending on their ability. Communities may also be engaged to construct or repair school feeding related infrastructure. Community members are not expected to make financial contributions to the NHGSFP, with the MoEYS providing incentive for the cooks at least 200,000 KHR (approximately USD 50) per month, per cook, for 10 months of the school year.

MoEYS continue working closely with WFP to promote effectively engage communities (parents, school children, school support committee, village chiefs, commune councils) in programme design, delivery and feedback through strengthened consultation and coordination mechanisms at community level.

1.6.2 Private sector engagement

Goal 12: High-level private sector engagement (“Advanced”) is achieved when the private sector –

- a) Is involved in and financially supports programme implementation
- b) Benefits from increases of turnover and income to a considerable extent locally.

What has been done so far?

To date, there has not been systematic engagement with the private sector beyond the engagement of farmers and suppliers providing commodities to the NHGSFP. However, there

have been some ad hoc engagement and several discussions about the potential to engage private sector actors to support aspects of school feeding, particularly rice fortification and providing agricultural inputs to local farmers. Three examples of private sector support are as follows:

- Green Trade company and WFP launched the local rice fortification facility to blend fortified rice kernels with Cambodian white rice for MoEYS's school feeding programme.
- WFP supported the Siem Reap Provincial Office of Education, Youth and Sport (POE) to engage with the Rotary Club to purchase bicycles for cooks and poor children.
- The MoEYS' School Health Department engaged Unilever to donate hygiene items to support cooking competition activities.

In the coming five years, it will be useful for the MoEYS to identify the key areas where private sector engagement could most usefully support the NHGSFP. There might also be opportunities to re-engage with previous private sector partners.

1.6.3 What still needs to be done to ensure community engagement in school feeding in Cambodia?

In the WFP supported schools, communities are aware of the HGSF activities and are highly engaged in programme implementation. In the NHGSFP schools that have not recently had WFP support, it will be critical for the MoEYS to ensure appropriate community awareness is done, so that the community is aware of its roles and responsibilities as outlined in the National Operational Manual. Engaging the private sector in a systematic way, with support from other key ministries will need to be an ongoing component of the programme.

Issues that require immediate decisions or actions to be completed as soon as possible:

- MoEYS to finalise the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for the Complaints and Feedback Mechanisms for the NHGSFP. Once finalised, the SOP implementation should be monitored.
- Identify potential private sector partners that can be engaged in the NHGSFP
- Analyse the returns of the NHGSFP for farmers and suppliers, and the gender gaps in participation in the programme.

Issues to be actioned before SY 2022/23:

- MoEYS, NSPC and MEF to agree on appropriate ways to systematically engage the private sector in programme implementation.

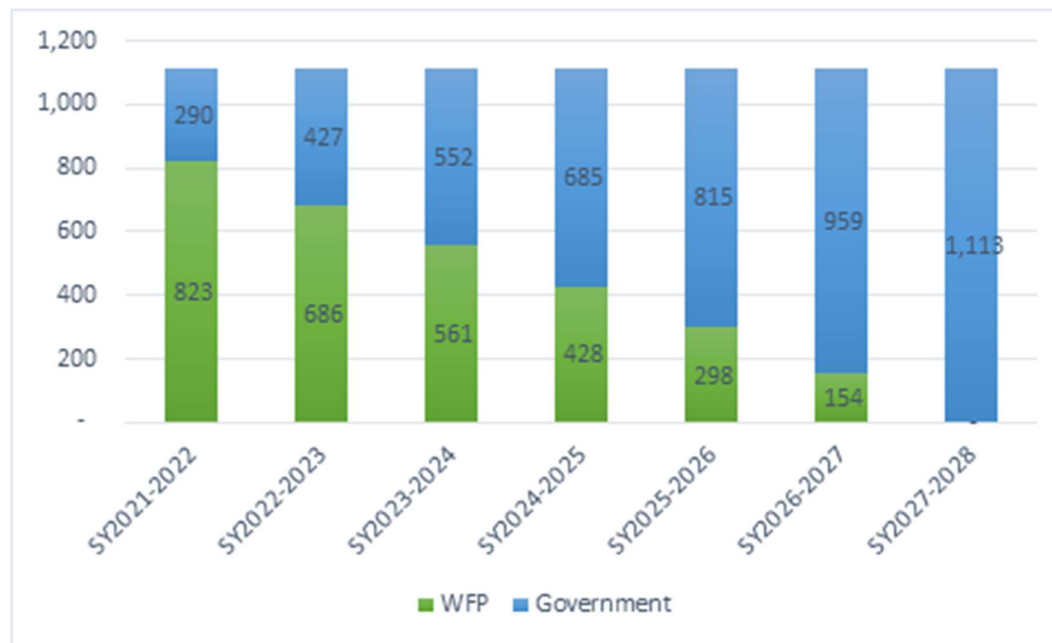
Issues to be actioned by end of SY 2024/25:

- Continue working with local communities to ensure that the NHGSFP is implemented as per Operational Guidelines.

Transition Targets and Handover Plan

Phase 1 of this transition strategy (2022-2025) will see the MoEYS scaling up the NHGSFP from 290 schools. The MoEYS, WFP, NSPC and MEF have agreed that the NHGSFP will increase schools gradually each year, aiming for a target of 685 schools in 33 districts by the completion of this phase of the transition (2022 to 2024/25) and full handover of 1,113 schools by 2028.

Figure 5: Planned expansion of the NHGSFP (SY 2021/22 – SY 2027-28)



The process for handing over the WFP supported schools to the NHGSFP by SY 2024/25 has also been agreed. WFP supported schools will be handed over only once they have achieved an appropriate level of readiness. For schools to be “ready” for handover, the school personnel must be experienced in implementing HGSF activities, and the necessary infrastructure and equipment must be available (Box 1).

Box 1: Criteria for handing over schools from WFP to the NHGSFP

1. The **capacity** of implementers. This criterion refers to the experience and knowledge of stakeholders (school directors, suppliers, commune council, cooks, storekeepers, school management committee members) to run the HGSF programme according to the national guidelines. The capacity of implementers is built through trainings, mentoring and coaching, and experience running the programme.
2. The **infrastructure**. This criterion refers to the necessary infrastructure required at school level to safely prepare meals for children and ensure adequate hygiene practices are adopted. It refers to water systems, kitchens (with fuel-efficient stoves), storerooms and hand-washing stations.
3. The **equipment**. Each school would be equipped with the necessary items for the safe preparation of meals, including cool boxes, scales, and a set of kitchen utensils.

For ease of programme management, all schools in a district will be handed over at the same time. WFP has already scored and ranked all their supported schools based on the criteria in Box 1. This has enabled certain schools/school districts to be prioritized for handover in SY 2022/23. Each year, MoEYS and WFP will update the scoring and ranking so that handover numbers can be confirmed. The scoring and ranking also enables WFP to identify the work that remains in their supported schools.

WFP is committed to:



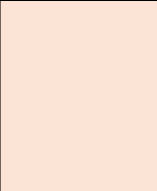

- Building the capacity of school personnel and establishing the necessary infrastructure and equipment in their schools to the extent that resources enable, to assist with a smooth transition to the NHGSFP.
- Continuing to offer technical assistance to the NHGSFP as required even after their supported schools have been handed over.

As WFP is a voluntarily funded organisation, it's commitment to a long-term funding to support the above process is dependent on resource availability. Nonetheless, it committed to undertake all reasonable efforts to raise funds needed to support the transition process.

Capacity Strengthening Action Plan (SY 2021/22 – SY 2024/25)

All the capacity building activities mentioned in this strategy are compiled into Table 2 giving an overview of the actions needed to achieve the first phase of the transition strategy, up to the end of SY 2024/25. The overview provides the prioritization, timeline and indicates whether MoEYS or WFP should take responsibility for the achievement of the action, or whether joint action is required.

Table 3: Overview of all Capacity Building Activities with Timeline

Key:			
Lead responsibility: MoEYS (with support from WFP as required)			
Responsibility: MoEYS and WFP jointly			
Capacity Building Activities under each of the SABER-SF Quality Standards	Immediate (6 months) By end of Q1 2022	Short term (1 year) By start of SY 2022/23	Longer-term (5 years) By end SY 2024/25
1. Policy Framework			
The MoEYS' policy development team should ensure the content of the National School Meals Policy provides a comprehensive picture of the reasons for school meal, and outlines institutional accountabilities and responsibilities, guiding principles for decision-making and design, and an understanding of how resources for the programme implementation will be mobilized.			
Ensure the draft National School Meals Policy is aligned with relevant legal framework approved by the government, e.g., sub-decree, NHGSF Operational Manual, Transition Strategy for NHGSFP etc.			

Establish inter-ministerial collaboration for NHGSF that promotes cross sectoral collaboration and enhances ownership of the programme.			
Operationalize the sub-decree for NHGSFP and the inter-ministerial Prakas.			
Ensure the draft National School Meals Policy is consulted upon and receives buy-in and engagement from relevant stakeholders.			
Finalize National School Meals Policy and obtain approval.			
Operationalize the National School Meal Policy, adjusting where necessary to ensure sustainable, multi-sectoral support to the implementation of the NHGSFP.			
Ensure that HGSF is integrated into the mid-term reviews of key national policies/strategies, advocating for increased articulation of the role that NHGSFP can play in reaching sectoral objectives.			
Continue to monitor progress of the National School Meal Policy and make adjustment where necessary.			
2. Stable Funding and Budgeting			
School handover criteria and plan to be developed by WFP and MoEYS to submit to NSPC for review before roll out.			
MoEYS to ensure reporting requirements are completed and submitted to MEF as per interministerial Prakas for in-year and year-end reporting of financial and non-financial performance.			
Strengthen routine NHGSFP technical department engagement with Finance Department to help build stronger awareness, support, and consensus within the MoEYS on investment and expenditure related to NHGSFP.			
MoEYS and PoEYS to ensure connection and visibility of school feeding in budget documents.			
Assess the financial flow and expenditure in schools with recommendations for improvement to promote accountability for budget management on the ground.			
MoEYS, MEF/Budget department and NSPC to collaborate to ensure that the NHGSFP has sustainable funding, including appropriate accountability mechanisms to ensure transparent budget expenditure.			
Integrate NHGSFP more clearly into MoEYS BSP and PB submissions – in narrative, in indicators and in relevant templates of Program Budget and Budget Strategic Plan.			
Ensure the SFIS is rolled out and used to promote accountability in NHGSFP financial planning, expenditure, and reporting.			
Continue to work with subnational stakeholders to integrate NHGSFP activities into planning documents.			
Identify what support WFP and other stakeholders can play in supporting government costing and budget allocation processes.			
Conduct a review of school feeding costing including facilities and utensils and other costs, to ensure it is sufficient for the implementation of the NHGSFP.			
MoEYS to develop a clear financial planning for programme in short, medium, long term with endorsement from high level to ensure budget affordability and WFP to also confirm commitment to support the government planning during the transition period.			

MoEYS and partners to mobilize funds to ensure that NHGSFP schools have sufficient school meals related facilities and utensils and other costs.			
Develop a budget plan to accommodate the transition of schools from WFP into the NHGSFP, to ensure that sufficient funding is allocated to the programme, considering the increasing number of schools for NHGSFP each year.			
Continue to integrate NHGSFP more clearly into MoEYS BSP and PB submissions – in narrative, in indicators and in Table 7 of MEF’s BSP template and Table 5 of the PB template.			
Continue to take the above actions to ensure that the NHGSFP is sufficiently funded and that funds are provided to participating schools in a timely manner.			
Continue to take the above actions to ensure that NHGSFP funds are managed and reported on in a timely manner.			
Continue to monitor the progress of Decentralization and Deconcentration (D&D) that may affect the NHGSFP budget/implementation as relevant.			
3. Institutional Arrangement and Coordination			
Establish a national inter-ministerial coordination mechanism focusing on the implementation of the NHSGFP.			
Develop a functional, inter-ministerial coordination committee at sub-national levels (provincial and district levels), and ensure joint work planning to enable consistent review of programme as per agreed commitments.			
Ensure that the office/department responsible for the NHGSP has sufficient financial and human resources to provide full-time technical support in various areas to the implementation and management of the NHGSFP.			
Identify what support WFP and other stakeholders can play in building national and sub-national capacity and coordination structures.			
Ensure that management and coordination structures at national and sub-national levels are well functioning.			
Ensure that schools and local authorities have the means and resources to implement and manage the NHGSFP.			
4. Quality Program Design			
Develop a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework that includes monitoring of programme outputs, sectoral indicators to enable monitoring of multi-sectoral outcomes, and programme objectives, regular programme review, baseline and endline evaluation, and regular SABER-SF assessments to measure changes in national capacity.			
MoEYS and other relevant stakeholders to agree on takeover and expansion plan for the NHGSFP so that participating schools can be informed in time and be prepared.			
MoEYS in collaboration with WFP and relevant stakeholders to start working on the design of a pilot project for central procurement of rice.			
MoEYS and WFP to collaborate on the design of a minimum infrastructure package for schools based on reasonable costs.			
Pilot central procurement of rice, management systems and accountability mechanisms all need to be ready to start the pilot project by the start of SY 2022/23.			

Identify what support WFP and other stakeholders can play in building national and sub-national monitoring and evaluation capacity.			
WFP to provide ongoing capacity support to MoEYS and other stakeholders post-handover of schools including monitoring the NHGSFP implementation after handover of WFP supported schools.			
Continue discussions to explore potential alternate model for NHGSFP, e.g: locally blended fortified rice.			
5. Strong Community Participation			
MoEYS to finalise the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for the Complaints and Feedback Mechanisms for the NHGSFP. Once finalised, the SOP implementation should be monitored.			
Identify potential private sector partners that can be engaged in the NHGSFP			
Analyse the returns of the NHGSFP for farmers and suppliers, and the gender gaps in participation in the programme.			
MoEYS, NSPC and MEF to agree on appropriate ways to systematically engage the private sector in programme implementation.			
Continue working with local communities to ensure that the NHGSFP is implemented as per Operational Manual.			

Looking Towards 2030

Once all the activities outlined in Section 7 and summarized in Table 2 are complete, it is likely that WFP will still be needed to provide technical assistance to various aspects of the NGSHFP. This support and any other remaining actions required to build MoEYS capacity the implement, manage and monitor the NHGSFP will be elaborated in Phase 2 of the Transition Strategy (2026-2030).

Monitoring the implementation of this strategy will enable a clearer understanding of the progress of capacity building and areas where more support may be needed once this strategy ends, after SY 2024/25.

It is clear that the implementation of the NHGSFP relies on the revised 2021 Operational Manual, aligned with the new National School Meals Policy. This means that programme implementation will need regular reviews to ensure that guidelines are in use, and that they are appropriate for the operating context. When these reviews are conducted, it is possible that additional areas of technical support will be identified.

Further, as the NHGSFP continues to expand, sub-national capacity in newly added provinces and districts will be required, so additional support from WFP may be required.

Thirdly, some aspects of the programme require work over a longer period than the five years allocated in this transition strategy – including fortification of rice, private sector engagement and possible, inter-ministerial budget contributions to the programme (Table 3). It is therefore likely that there will be a role for WFP to play in providing technical assistance in these areas, even if the MoEYS is effectively implementing and managing the remainder of the NHGSFP.

Towards the end of this transition strategy period, it is therefore recommended that the endline evaluation include the identification of areas where technical assistance is required from WFP. These areas will then be more clearly elaborated in Phase 2.

Table 4: Potential areas of technical assistance that may need support after SY 2024/25

Longer-term: To be completed by 2030	
Quality Standards	
1. Policy Framework	Operationalizing the National School Meal Policy may require programmatic adjustment or review of the Prakas or National Operational Guidelines to ensure sustainable, multi-sectoral support to the implementation of the NHGSFP.
	Building a comprehensive national policy framework to support implementation of the NHSGFP will require review and input into relevant sectoral policies/strategies as they are updated, advocating for increasing articulation of the role that the NHGSFP can play in reaching sectoral objectives.
2. Stable Funding and Budgeting	Inter-ministerial budget contributions to relevant components of the NHGSFP.
3. Institutional Arrangement and Coordination	Ongoing technical assistance will need to be provided at sub-national levels as new provinces/districts/schools join the NHGSFP.
4. Quality Program Design	Establishing a process for locally fortifying rice with micronutrients for use in the school meal, will require ongoing technical assistance from WFP.
5. Strong Community Participation	Private sector engagement is likely to need ongoing support, once potential partners have identified and been made aware of the benefits of the NHGSFP.

Annexes

Annex 1: Number of schools providing school meals, with support from the government or from WFP (2021/2022)

Government schools for SY 2021/22 (HGSE)					
Province	# District	#Commune	#Village	HGSE	
				# Schools	Student
Banteay Meanchey	4	15	49	49	14,824
Battambang	1	6	32	32	5,398
Kampong Cham	3	21	33	33	11,493
Kampong Chhnang	1	5	10	10	2,556
Oddar Meanchey	1	4	21	21	3,433
Preah Vihear	2	13	40	40	7,362
Pursat	1	3	8	8	1,967
Siemreap	3	22	77	77	23,397
Stung Treng	3	11	20	20	4,521
Grand Total	19	100	290	290	74,951

WFP schools for SY 2021/22						
Province	HGSE		SMP		Total	
	# Schools	Student	# Schools	Student	# Schools	Student
Kampong Chhnang	116	32,771	-	-	116	32,771
Kampong Thom	144	31,673	75	14,389	219	46,062
Oddar Meanchey	103	20,775	-	-	103	20,775
Pursat	117	33,063	-	-	117	33,063
Siem Reap	117	27,844	151	43,125	268	70,969
Total	597	146,126	226	57,514	823	203,640

Annex 2: SABER classifications for the five policy goals

Policy Lever	Indicator #	Indicator	Latent (points: 0+score)	Emerging (points: 25+score)	Established (points: 50+score)	Advanced (points: 75+score)
Policy Goal b.1: Policy frameworks						
b.I. Overarching policies for school feeding - sound alignment with the national policy	b.1a	Status of development, embeddedness and dissemination	<i>Recognition of:</i> a) the usefulness of school feeding b) importance of supporting policy with relevant regulations	Policy, strategy or law under preparation Supported by some of the relevant regulations <i>Mentioned in relevant:</i> a) national development plan b) sectoral development instruments	Policy, strategy or law drafted Supported by most of the relevant regulations Policy, strategy or law partially disseminated Embedded in relevant national development plan Reflected in some relevant sectoral plans/strategies	Policy, strategy or law endorsed by the government Supported by all the relevant regulations Adequately disseminated Embedded in relevant national development plan Reflected in majority of relevant sectoral plans/strategies etc.
	b.1b	b.III. Management and accountability structures, including staffing - strong institutional frameworks for implementation	Recognition of evidence justifying appropriateness of school feeding	Context analysis done or being conducted At least one sectoral objective <i>Expressed interest to:</i> a) define institutional accountabilities and responsibilities b) gradually mobilize resources for the implementation	Evidence based Clear multi-sectoral objectives articulated Value proposition partially articulated Partially clear institutional accountabilities and responsibilities Some guiding principles for decision making and design General description how resources for the implementation will be mobilized	Evidence based Clear multi-sectoral objectives reflecting established needs Clear articulation of value proposition Clear institutional accountabilities and responsibilities Clear guiding principles for decision making and design Clear description how resources for the implementation will be mobilized

Policy Goal b.2: Financial capacity			Latent (points: 0+score)	Emerging (points: 25+score)	Established (points: 50+score)	Advanced (points: 75+score)
b.II. Governance of the national school feeding program - stable funding and budgeting	b.2a	Status of budget development, sources, disbursement and use of funds	<p><i>Up to 25% of:</i></p> <p>a) the financial resources required are allocated from stable national sources</p> <p>b) allocated funds are disbursed</p>	<p>Implementation plan and budget are being developed</p> <p><i>Up to 50% of:</i></p> <p>a) the financial resources required are allocated from stable national sources</p> <p>b) allocated funds are disbursed</p> <p><i>Funds are:</i></p> <p>a) reflected in public financing management information system</p> <p>b) disbursed timely some of the time</p>	<p>Approved implementation plan and budget</p> <p>Budget sufficiently matches implementation plan requirements</p> <p><i>Up to 75% of:</i></p> <p>a) the financial resources required are allocated from stable national sources</p> <p>b) allocated funds are disbursed</p> <p><i>Funds are:</i></p> <p>a) used in accountable and transparent manner</p> <p>b) reflected in public financing management information system</p> <p>c) disbursed timely most of the time</p>	<p>Approved implementation plan and budget</p> <p>Budget sufficiently matches implementation plan requirements</p> <p><i>100% of:</i></p> <p>a) the financial resources required are allocated from stable national sources</p> <p>b) allocated funds are disbursed</p> <p><i>Funds are:</i></p> <p>a) used in accountable and transparent manner</p> <p>b) reflected in public financing management information system</p> <p>c) disbursed timely all time</p>
	b.2b	Extent of cost coverage and inclusiveness of budget plans	Budget covers some food cost.	Budget covers all food Budget plan with basic costs for different administrative levels.	Budget covers all food cost and some institutional capacity, including infrastructure cost <i>Budget plan with:</i> a) clear costs for different administrative levels b) clear costs for relevant sectors.	Budget covers all food and institutional capacity, including infrastructure costs <i>Budget plan with clear:</i> a) costs for different administrative levels, including timelines b) cost for relevant sectors, including timelines c) guidelines on funds realignment for contingencies

Policy Goal b.3: Institutional capacity and coordination			Latent (points: 0+score)	Emerging (points: 25+score)	Established (points: 50+score)	Advanced (points: 75+score)
b.III. Management and accountability structures, including staffing - strong institutional frameworks for implementation	b.3a	Extent to which a national, government-led entity is mandated, recognized, and capacitated to provide adequate leadership for school feeding	<p>School feeding is mainly managed by external partners <i>External partners</i></p> <p>a) produce reports on their own activities and sporadically to the government. b) assure access to safe water and gender-separated sanitation facilities in the covered schools c) provide functional and necessary tools and equipment in the covered schools.</p>	<p><i>The entity</i></p> <p>a) is de facto mandated to manage school feeding interventions at national level b) requests reports from relevant sectoral and subnational actors c) has established a basic monitoring system d) assures suitable school infrastructure to safely store, prepare and distribute quality food in at least 50% of covered schools e) secures access to safe water and gender separated sanitation facilities in at least 50% of covered schools f) provides functional and necessary tools and equipment in at least 50% of covered schools g) provides basic operational guidelines/standing operating procedures, h) assures skilled, but not yet capacitated, and insufficient staff i) assures somewhat compliant implementation, but not yet results-oriented</p>	<p><i>The entity</i></p> <p>a) is formally mandated to manage school feeding interventions at all levels. b) requests and receives reports from relevant sectoral and subnational actors c) has some monitoring capacity d) assures suitable school infrastructure to safely store, prepare and distribute quality food in at least 75% of covered schools e) secures access to safe water and gender separated sanitation facilities in at least 75% of covered schools f) provides functional and necessary systems, tools and equipment in all schools in at least 75% of covered schools g) provides generic operational guidelines/standing operating procedures, including for staff handover h) assures skilled and capacitated, but insufficient staff i) assures somewhat compliant and results-oriented implementation</p>	<p><i>The entity</i></p> <p>a) is formally mandated and recognized by all stakeholders. b) requests and receives respective reports and accounts from relevant sectoral and sub-national actors c) has fully adequate monitoring capacity and arrangements in place d) assures a suitable school infrastructure to safely store, prepare and distribute quality food in all covered schools e) secures access to safe water and gender separated sanitation facilities in all covered schools f) provides functional and necessary systems, tools and equipment in all covered schools g) develops and adequately disseminates clear operational guidelines/standing operating procedures and minimum / quality standards, including for staff handover and community engagement h) assures adequate, skilled and capacitated staff i) fosters compliant and result oriented implementation</p>

b.3b	Extent to which school-level committees ensure adequate adherence to programme standards and plans	Few school feeding committees are established	<p><i>School feeding committees</i></p> <p>a) are in place, but not always functioning, in every school</p> <p>b) assure limited compliance with operational guidelines and standard operation procedures</p> <p>c) have limited access to pre-and in-service training</p> <p>d) have limited influence to ensure reliable provision of agreed-on community contributions.</p>	<p><i>Functioning school level committees:</i></p> <p>a) are in place in every school</p> <p>b) assure general compliance with operational guidelines and standard operating procedures at school level</p> <p>c) have occasional access to pre-and in-service training</p> <p>d) prepare sporadic records and reports</p> <p>e) can generally ensure provision of agreed-on community contributions.</p>	<p><i>Functioning and proactive school feeding committees:</i></p> <p>a) are in place at every school</p> <p>b) with operational guidelines and standard operating procedures at school level</p> <p>c) have access to systematic pre-and in-service training</p> <p>d) prepare regular and accurate records and reports</p> <p>e) ensure reliable provision of agreed-on community contributions</p>
b.3c	Extent to which mechanisms are established at the relevant (central, subnational and community) levels to ensure the coordination of relevant sectors and other actors	Informal and ad-hoc coordination mechanisms at some levels	<p>Basic coordination mechanism established at all levels with some relevant actors</p> <p>Role is mainly limited to exchange of information of participants' activities</p>	<p>Functional mechanisms established at all levels with most relevant actors</p> <p>General joint workplans with roles, responsibilities and accountabilities are established, largely understood and partially adopted</p>	<p>Fully functioning mechanisms established at all levels with all relevant actors</p> <p>Detailed and calendarized joint workplans with clear roles, responsibilities and accountabilities are fully established, understood, adopted and respected</p>

Policy Goal b.4: Design & implementation			Latent (points: 0+score)	Emerging (points: 25+score)	Established (points: 50+score)	Advanced (points: 75+score)
b.V. Quality assurance of programming and targeting, modalities, and procurement design, ensuring design that is both needs-based and cost-effective	b.4a	Extent to which programme design corresponds to identified needs and established standards		<p><i>Programme design:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Hardly reflects the objectives of the school feeding policy, strategy or law b) Includes basic situation analysis on the vulnerabilities and needs of school age children c) Defines basics of adequate coverage, targeting criteria, modalities and appropriate food baskets d) Outlines the supply of food e) Allows inclusion of local value chain actors 	<p><i>Programme design:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) partially reflects the objectives of the school feeding policy, strategy or law b) includes a disaggregated situation analysis on the vulnerabilities and needs of school age children c) defines adequate coverage, targeting criteria, modalities and appropriate food baskets d) generally outlines reliable supply of safe, diverse and good quality food, procured as closely as possible to the respective school e) includes measures to assure food safety and quality to some extent f) meets standards for protection and accountability to affected populations g) foresees some flexibility to adapt to local/seasonal context h) Allows inclusion and limited preference for local value chain actors, including smallholder farmers 	<p><i>Programme design:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Fully reflects the objectives of the school feeding strategy b) includes an updated, disaggregated situation analysis on the vulnerabilities and needs of school age children c) Defines adequate coverage, targeting criteria, modalities and appropriate food baskets d) Clearly describes the reliable supply of safe, diverse and good quality food, procured as closely as possible to the respective school e) includes effective measures to assure food safety and quality f) fully meets standards for protection and accountability to affected populations g) includes transparent criteria and processes to adapt to local/ seasonal context, to address monitoring and evaluation findings, and to react to crisis situations. h) maximizes impact on local value chain actors including smallholder farmers

	b.4b	Extent to which implementation corresponds to design and standards		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Programme is somewhat implemented as planned b) Between 50 and 70% of output targets are achieved c) Some individuals are trained on their roles and responsibilities d) Training takes place occasionally e) Supply chain breaks are frequent f) Facilities and food supplies are to some extent maintained g) Compliance with programme design and guidance is planned to be verified h) Handover procedures to new staff are still to be followed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Programme is mostly implemented as planned b) More than 70% of output targets are achieved c) All individuals are trained on their roles and responsibilities d) Training takes place regularly e) Supply chains are somewhat reliable f) Facilities and food supplies are generally maintained g) Compliance with programme design and guidance is occasionally verified h) Handover procedures to new staff are partially followed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Programme is implemented as planned b) Output targets are met c) All individuals are trained on their roles and responsibilities d) Training takes place systematically, and is institutionalized by national actors, and complemented by standing support platforms e) Supply chain breaks are rare f) Facilities and food supplies are well-maintained or timely replaced g) Compliance with programme design, guidance and quality standards is systematically verified and confirmed to be high h) Established handover procedures to new staff turnover are followed
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	b.4c	Extent to which monitoring ensures systematic collection, analysis and use of up-to-date information		<p>a) Monitoring plan and budget is under development</p> <p>b) Monitoring tools and systems ensure collection, aggregation, storage, analysis and access of data on activities and outputs, but not on outcomes.</p> <p>c) <i>Performance reports:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - are sporadic - cover some administrative levels <p>d) Monitoring staff has limited skills and knowledge</p> <p>e) Evaluations, based on rudimentary baselines, provide basic analysis and recommendations.</p>	<p>a) Monitoring plan and budget is in place</p> <p>b) Monitoring tools and systems ensure collection, aggregation, storage, analysis and access of timely data to measure progress (activities and outputs) and results (outcomes).</p> <p>c) <i>Performance reports are:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - are regular - cover most administrative levels <p>d) Monitoring staff has general skills and knowledge required and mostly fulfils respective responsibilities</p> <p>e) Evaluations, based on mostly complete baseline, provide general analysis and recommendations.</p>	<p>a) Monitoring plan and budget is being implemented</p> <p>b) <i>Monitoring tools and systems</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ensure collection, aggregation, storage, analysis and access of timely, complete and quality data to measure progress and results - are integrated with EMIS <p>c) <i>Performance reports/dashboards</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - are regular and reliable - cover and are accessible at all administrative levels - are proactively used to engage stakeholders and guide programme management <p>d) Monitoring staff has required skills and knowledge and fulfils respective responsibilities reliably and efficiently</p> <p>e) Evaluations, based on complete baselines, provide in-depth analysis and recommendations</p>
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Policy Goal b.5: Community roles—reaching beyond schools			Latent (points: 0+score)	Emerging (points: 25+score)	Established (points: 50+score)	Advanced (points: 75+score)
b.VI. Community participation and accountability - strong community participation and ownership (teachers, parents, children)	b.5a	Level of community awareness, engagement and feedback		<p><i>Communities:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) are vaguely aware of the programme b) engage in the implementation of the programme through school-level committees c) hardly receive any training to fulfil their roles <p>A basic community feedback and complaints mechanism is in place</p>	<p><i>Communities:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) are generally aware of the programme b) are consulted on menu/food basket design c) engage in programme implementation through school-level committees and by contributing some resources d) receive some training e) support discussions with other stakeholders <p>A functional, transparent community feedback and complaints mechanism is in place and sometimes used</p>	<p><i>Communities:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) aware of the programme and of its objectives b) actively engaged in menu basket design c) actively participate in the local school feeding committee d) actively engage in programme implementation with regular contributions e) are ready to step-up contributions in case of supply chain breaks f) receive regular training g) actively engage in setting up and contributing to monitoring g) support other relevant programme components <p>A functional, transparent community feedback and complaints mechanism is in place and routinely used</p>
	b.5b	Level of involvement of extent of benefits for local private sector actor		<p>Private sector is sometimes involved in programme implementation</p> <p>Somewhat benefits from limited increases of turnover and income</p>	<p>Private sector is involved in programme implementation</p> <p>Somewhat benefits from increases of turnover and income to some extent locally</p>	<p>Private sector is involved in and financially supports programme implementation</p> <p>Benefits from increases of turnover and income to a considerable extent locally</p>

Annex 3: Costing of the complete HGSF programme package (SY 2021/22)

The costing present in this table estimated based on the National HGSF implementation in SY 2021-22 based on WFP experience in HGSF operations over the past six years, aiming to provide the decision-makers the overview of programme cost incurred that enable them to consider for NHGSFP investment plan.

1. Costing of school meals (minimum requirement)

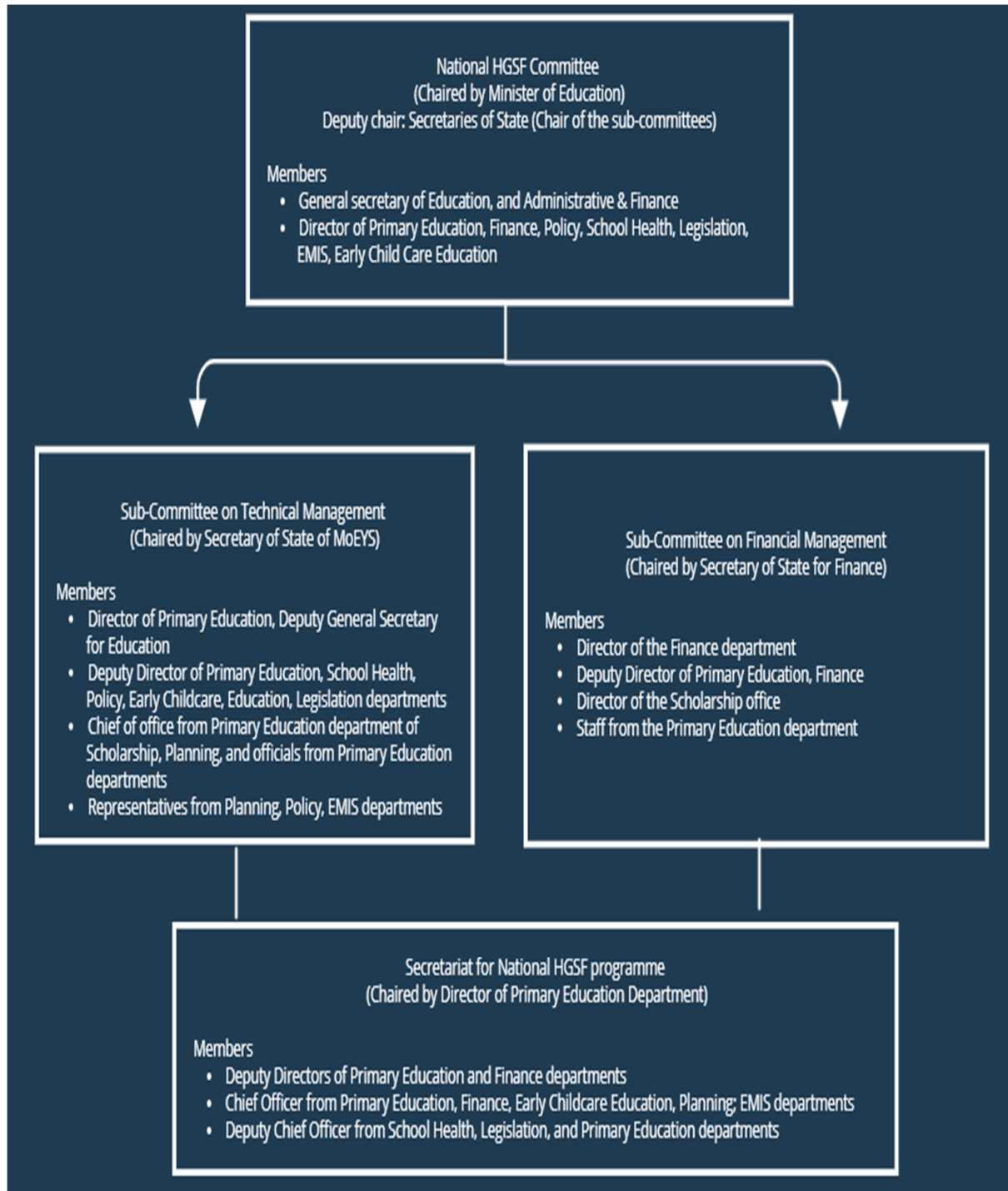
Descriptions	Qty.	Daily ration	Cash	Monthly cost/ person	Yearly cost
1- Food (per student per day)					
1.1 Breakfast = 780KHR					
Rice	115g	780 riels/child			156,000 riels/child
Oil	5g				
Salt	1g				
Protein	20g				
Vegetable	50g				
1.2 Lunch = 1,260KHR					
Rice	120g	1,260 riels/child			252,000 riels/child
Oil	5g				
Salt	1g				
Protein	40g				
Vegetable	80g				
2- Core activities and items for meal operations					
Cooking utensils (new school) **	1 school				135\$/ 5 years
Kitchen & storeroom	1 building				4,500\$
Cook incentives (one school year)	2.2 person			50\$	1,100\$
HGSF training (new school)	1 school				40\$
Monitoring	1 school			5\$	50\$
3- Community Contribution					
Firewood	1 school			10\$	100\$
Water (drinking, cooking, toilet, cleaning, etc) Estimate fuel for water from the well.	1 school			10\$	100\$
4- Addition activities and items					
Soaps	1 school			1.5	15\$
Dish wash	1 school			1.7	17\$
Hand washing station	1 school				150\$
Printing school forms	1 school				10\$
Posters	1 school				5\$
Apron	1 school				5\$
Food tray	1 student				2.5\$ for 5 years
Seeds	1 school				10\$
Meetings	3 meetings				24\$

2. Costing of school infrastructure and other necessary materials (per school)

No	Products	Unit cost S
1	Mobile hand washing station	150.00
2	Latrines (6 new latrines, for boy, girl, disable and hand washing)	4,760.00
3	Drilled Well (new)	2,800.00
	Well (repaired and connect water system to hand washing station and kitchen)	1,300.00
4	Rainwater catchment (new 25m3)	3,500.00

5	Kitchen with storeroom (upgrade floor, wall and roof)	4,500.00
6	Energy stove	200.00
7	Apron	3.5
8	Cooking utensils	
8.1	Aluminium wash basin	8.00
8.2	Cooked or Soup pot with lid	5.00
8.3	Storage containers with lid	6.00
8.4	Stainless steel rice serving spoon	3.50
8.5	Colander	7.00
8.6	Ladles	3.00
8.7	Flat ladles	3.00
8.8	Small cooking knife	0.70
8.9	Big cooking knife	1.80
8.10	Cleaver	4.50
8.11	Plastic Jars	0.60
8.12	Cooking pans	45.00
8.13	Cutting boards	5.50
8.14	Scales	46.00
8.15	Plastic food storage container (3L)	1.50
8.16	Cool Box (100L)	60.00

Annex 4: Home Grown School Feeding Management Structure





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