

SAVING
LIVES
CHANGING
LIVES



World Food
Programme

Operational Research on the WFP Cash Transfer Programme in Cambodia

FINAL REPORT



កិច្ចសហប្រតិបត្តិការ
អាល្លឺម៉ង់

DEUTSCHE ZUSAMMENARBEIT

giz Deutsche Gesellschaft
für Internationale
Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

Prepared by:



**Oxford Policy
Management**

All Rights Reserved © WFP 2022

World Food Programme (WFP) Cambodia Country Office

House 108, Street 63, Sangkat Boeung Raing,
Khan Daun Penh. Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Tel: +855 23 210 943

Email: WFP.PhnomPenh@wfp.org

Website: www.wfp.org/countries/cambodia

Disclaimer

The opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors/researchers, and do not necessarily reflect those of the World Food Programme. Responsibility for the opinions expressed in this report rests solely with the authors/researchers. Publication of this document does not imply endorsement by WFP of the opinions expressed. Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), provided financial support for this research and publication. Its contents do not necessarily reflect the views of GIZ and BMZ.

About Oxford Policy Management

Oxford Policy Management (OPM) is committed to helping low- and middle-income countries achieve growth and reduce poverty and disadvantage through public policy reform.

We seek to bring about lasting positive change using analytical and practical policy expertise. Through our global network of offices, we work in partnership with national decision makers to research, design, implement, and evaluate impactful public policy.

We work in all areas of social and economic policy and governance, including health, finance, education, climate change, and public sector management. We draw on our local and international sector experts to provide the very best evidence-based support.

Oxford Policy Management Limited
Registered in England: 3122495

Level 3, Clarendon House
52 Cornmarket Street
Oxford, OX1 3HJ
United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0) 1865 207 300
Email: admin@opml.co.uk
Website: www.opml.co.uk

Operational Research on the WFP Cash Transfer Programme in Cambodia

FINAL REPORT

Revita Wahyudi, Rahayu Maitri, Lyda Chea, and Sovith Sin

Oxford Policy Management

March 2022

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank our United Nations agency counterparts at the World Food Programme for their support and engagement during the study. We would also like to thank our counterparts and key informants in the Royal Government of Cambodia across numerous ministries, agencies, and departments, as well as the development partners – namely the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), and Save the Children – for generously giving their time and responding to our interview questions and data requests. Finally, we would also like to acknowledge and thank all our other interview respondents at the commune level, for contributing their time and knowledge to inform the findings of this report.

This operational research was conducted by Oxford Policy Management. The project manager was Revita Wahyudi. The remaining team members were Dr Sovith Sin, Ni Made Rahayu Maitri, and Lyda Chea. Seng Bunly played a key role in data collection at the commune level. The report was quality assured by Lucy Scott and Laura Phelps, and peer-reviewed by Gabrielle Smith.

Executive summary

Introduction

In 2021, the World Food Programme (WFP) implemented a cash transfer programme to support households impacted by both COVID-19 and floods in Cambodia. This was done in consultation with the General Secretariat for the National Social Protection Council (NSPC), the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (MoSVY), the Ministry of Planning (MoP), the National Committee for Disaster Management (NCDM), and relevant partners, including Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and Save the Children. GIZ, on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), provided financial support to the implementation of the cash transfer programme as part of the WFP Cambodia Country Strategic Plan (2019–2023). The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) also provided financial support for this programme. The objective of the cash transfer programme was to increase the beneficiaries' ability to fulfil essential needs and to support their recovery in the face of these shocks. Between September 2021 and February 2022, beneficiary households received up to three rounds of cash disbursements and a fourth transfer to cover cash transfer-related expenses.

Oxford Policy Management (OPM) was commissioned by WFP to conduct operational research to generate and document key learnings regarding the WFP cash transfer programme. The research seeks to answer the following main research question:

To what extent did the design and implementation of the WFP cash transfer programme align with and support the building blocks for shock responsive social protection (SRSP) in Cambodia, and what recommendations do WFP, the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC), and social protection actors need to take into account when designing and implementing future cash (and other) programmes to further strengthen the shock responsiveness of the social protection system in the country?

In line with this research question, the objectives of the research are to:

- investigate the design and implementation features of the WFP cash transfer programme that are the same as or similar to government social assistance programmes and other government sources;
- distil lessons learned from the design and implementation of the WFP cash transfer programme;
- document any elements that are unique to the WFP cash transfer programme;
- provide recommendations to guide the RGC and supporting partners in the design and implementation of future shock responsive social assistance schemes, and to guide humanitarian partners in the design and implementation of complementary and coordinated assistance; and
- inform disaster contingency planning for humanitarian cash assistance among humanitarian actors.

To conduct this research, OPM compared the WFP cash transfer programme, where relevant and for the purposes of analysing its alignment with the RGC social assistance systems, with the RGC's COVID-19 cash transfer programme and the RGC's Pregnant Women and Young Children (PWYC) cash transfer programme, which are the main cash transfer programmes currently being implemented by MoSVY, the primary line ministry responsible for the delivery of social assistance programmes in Cambodia.

Methodology

The research applied a mixed methods approach, commencing with a short literature review covering the current context and relevant policies and legislation in Cambodia, alongside key issues and challenges in the delivery of emergency response for poor and vulnerable households during shocks, within the social protection system in Cambodia. This review informed the qualitative and quantitative data analysis and helped identify relevant stakeholders, who were then engaged in key

informant interviews (KIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) at national and sub-national levels (including at commune level).

KIs were conducted with four categories of stakeholders: (i) the RGC staff from the relevant ministries and departments; (ii) other development partners and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) who are also closely involved in supporting social assistance programmes for poor and vulnerable households; (iii) implementing partners supporting the WFP cash transfer programme, including Life With Dignity (LWD) and the financial service provider, WING; and (iv) commune councils/leaders, together with beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of the WFP and RGC programmes. In total, 145 informants were interviewed.

FGDs were conducted at commune level with both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of the WFP cash transfer programme. Four of the five provinces where the WFP cash transfer programme was implemented were chosen as study sites. (Pursat was not included due to time and resource constraints.) The criteria for selecting communes within the provinces related to whether they had been affected by the floods in 2020 and 2021, and their distance from the provincial town, on the assumption that they would differ in terms of access to information, coordination with provincial government, quality of public services, etc. In total, 100 people took part in the FGDs.

In addition to the primary data collection, the research also drew on available secondary data, including the following: (i) the standard operating procedures of the WFP cash transfer programme and the two RGC social assistance programmes; (ii) the baseline survey report conducted by the WFP monitoring and evaluation (M&E) team, as well as monthly process monitoring updates; (iii) the performance assessment of the cash transfer programme for poor and vulnerable households during the COVID-19 pandemic; (iv) the beneficiary verification and registration results; (v) WFP beneficiary management system outputs; and (vi) the weekly reports of the programme's complaints and feedback mechanism.

Key lessons learned from the findings

The findings and its lessons learned are organised by each element of the building blocks of shock responsive social protection (SRSP): (i) programme design; (ii) the programme delivery systems; (iii) programme data and information systems; (iv) policy and institutions; and (v) financing.

Programme design

Targeting

The WFP cash transfer programme, like the COVID-19 cash transfer programme and PWYC, used data on poverty status, as defined in the Identification of Poor Households (IDPoor) database, which was taken as the starting point to determine target beneficiaries. The poverty status in the IDPoor system, which was determined based on the observable assets owned by the households and other non-asset criteria, needs to be examined further to find out whether these criteria can identify the newly poor during shocks. The reform of IDPoor through the on-demand (OD) mechanism makes it more dynamic and more up to date, so there is potential for the system to underpin social protection and SRSP going forward. The changes that are currently being tested and rolled out by the RGC (i.e. to develop a unified questionnaire for rural and urban areas and to use consumption per capita as another proxy indicator) have the potential to help improve it further. There is also greater potential for the further use of IDPoor data for various programmes targeting poor and vulnerable households implemented by other organisations, with an agreement on data sharing between government and non-government organisations (to address data protection concerns).

WFP also used satellite-derived flood extent information made available through the Platform for Real-time Impact and Situation Monitoring (PRISM) system and overlaid with IDPoor data to focus the assistance on flood-affected locations. It is important to review this approach.

Benefit package

Both the WFP cash transfer programme and the RGC COVID-19 and PWYC cash transfer programmes provided assistance in the form of cash transfers; this was the preferred form of assistance for 67% of interviewed households. However, it was reported that some vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities (PWDs), the elderly, and beneficiaries in remote locations, could find it difficult to access cash.

The decision on the transfer size took the Expenditure Gap Analysis/Minimum Expenditure Basket calculation as a starting point. The combined transfer of the WFP cash transfer programme and the COVID-19 programme met 77–118% of the identified gap in a household's expenditure. However, there has been no evaluation to show whether this transfer value is adequate, and there has been no recalculation of the value during the programme's implementation. WFP will analyse the impact of its cash assistance programme through a post-distribution monitoring survey.

Regarding duration, the WFP cash transfer programme lasted for three months; at the time of writing this report, it is unknown whether this was sufficient to help the beneficiaries to cope with the impact of shocks, and it is expected that the post-distribution monitoring that is currently being carried out by WFP will be able to explain the impact of the WFP cash transfer programme.

In regard to the timing of its assistance, it is important to ensure preparedness measures are ready in advance for timely SRSP. The RGC's ability to leverage its existing relationship with financial service providers was crucial in the timely disbursement of funds. Once WFP's agreement had been established, this too enhanced the timeliness of its assistance.

Programme delivery systems

Registration and enrolment

The IDPoor system may not be sufficiently dynamic to capture the change in situation and movement of households. The WFP cash transfer programme experienced unsuccessful registration for a number of beneficiaries due to this issue. Special attention also needs to be given to poor households living in remote locations to ensure that these poor households are not excluded.

Implementing additional requirements in the registration process (e.g. creating bank accounts in the WFP cash transfer programme) led to delays in the response. Given that the verification/registration processes rely on commune councils, there is a need to strengthen the capacity of commune councils in terms of their human resources and equipment to enable them to implement rapid registrations when shocks occur.

Benefit delivery

Both the WFP cash transfer programme and the RGC COVID-19 and PWYC cash transfer programmes used WING as the primary financial service provider transferring cash to beneficiaries' accounts. The existing delivery system underpinning the social assistance system has both strengths and limitations for SRSP, and these limitations also undermine the delivery of routine social assistance. The noted limitation on WING agent availability in rural villages and transaction capacity may have posed issues around the ability of beneficiaries to access the benefits rapidly. Other challenges were reported in the delivery of the assistance, including problems related to the use of mobile phones for some of WFP cash transfer programme's beneficiaries, and the fact that multiple cash transfers were implemented at the same time, which meant that beneficiaries were unclear about which transfer they wanted to cash out. WING agents were not familiar with all of the programmes being implemented locally. Despite its more complex procedures, the

modality used in the WFP cash transfer programme (a cardless account for each beneficiary household) provided a more secure method by which to withdraw cash, whereby the PIN code was sent only to beneficiaries' phone numbers, and beneficiaries were required to present their PIN code and phone number when cashing out.

Communication

The preferred method of communication among households was through direct face-to-face communication because it was deemed clearer and allowed them to easily ask questions immediately when the information was not clear. Commune/sangkat councils are centrally important to the effective roll-out of SRSP but their current capacities are limited and need to be enhanced. Additional attention is also needed for the elderly, households where there are PWDs, and those living in remote locations, to ensure that programme information is accessible to them.

Complaints and feedback

WFP established three channels for the complaints and feedback mechanism: a hotline; the WFP Area Office; and LWD staff. However, these various channels were under-utilised by beneficiaries due to concerns that complaints would not be responded to. Nevertheless, providing these channels for the complaints and feedback mechanism, such as the hotline, remains important to provide alternative options for those who are not comfortable in expressing complaints or feedback directly to the local authority.

The RGC programmes also established a standard operating procedure that provides a formal procedure for the complaints and feedback mechanism, but the common approach adopted in practice was the use of the mobile phone application Telegram, which is widely used in Cambodia. This was the preferred approach among the local authorities as it was deemed faster. As with the other building blocks, ensuring that the commune/sangkat councils

are well equipped with programme information and have the capacity (in terms of human resources and tools) to investigate and mediate complaints is important.

Monitoring & Evaluation

A combination of three types of monitoring in the WFP cash transfer programme (process monitoring, output monitoring, and outcome monitoring) provided useful information and tools to monitor the progress of the programme, inform programme implementation for improvement, and assess the impacts of the programme itself.

The RGC also implemented periodic programme M&E. However, the design of indicators for monitoring and the implementation of M&E itself remained heavily supported by development partners. If the M&E mechanism can be structured in a simple and cost-effective manner, the RGC will also be able to use M&E data from the programmes for improvement during programme implementation.

Data and information system

As stated, the WFP cash transfer programme and the two RGC social assistance programmes used IDPoor data to target beneficiaries. IDPoor identifies poor households using proxy means testing based on structured questionnaires and a community-based validation process to assign household poverty levels. A key issue in the original IDPoor system is that IDPoor data were collected only every three years, so a reliance on IDPoor data for targeting social protection programmes could lead to exclusion and inclusion errors.

This problem is now being addressed by the OD IDPoor mechanism, which is triggered when households (or other stakeholders on their behalf) request to be interviewed; if they are then found to be eligible, they are registered in the database. This approach was scaled up nationwide in May–June 2020 and has now become a regular approach – vulnerable

households can request an interview at any time. The interview results are reviewed and approved during commune/sangkat council meetings, once a month, and the data and production of equity cards are carried out on a monthly basis. The use of the OD IDPoor mechanism was perceived by many stakeholders to be highly beneficial in the implementation of the WFP cash transfer programme and the RGC COVID-19 and PWYC cash transfer programmes, with almost half (43%) of commune and village authorities reporting that it was effective in capturing newly poor households.

Nevertheless, there remain some data quality challenges. Further study that specifically examines the current performance of the IDPoor and the OD IDPoor system could be helpful to clarify how prevalent these issues are. Exclusion errors remain a concern, as some poor households are still not registered in the database (as reported by 30% of commune and village authorities), particularly returning migrants from Thailand, who were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, inclusion errors seem to persist, with some well-off households (e.g. those owning a motorbike or car) observed to have cashed out the COVID-19 cash transfer programme in the initial phase of implementation. There are also discrepancies between the number of household members among the beneficiaries of the WFP cash transfer programme, as recorded in the database, and the results of real-time spot checks. Finally, more than 5,300 records of IDPoor data which WFP received from the Ministry of Planning in May 2021 contained duplicate, missing, or wrong information.

Policy and institutions

Legal and regulatory frameworks

The Cambodian Constitution recognises certain vulnerable groups as requiring state support, including mothers, children, PWDs, and the families of deceased soldiers, and stipulates that the state is obliged to prioritise improving the welfare and standard of living of such citizens. The National Social Protection Policy Framework 2016–2025 (NSPPF) (currently undergoing a midterm review) lays out an ambitious agenda for reforming and expanding social protection, with emergency response being one of the components in its social assistance pillar, focusing on food security programmes. At the same time, a separate Shock Responsive Social Protection Framework was developed in 2020–2021 and is due to be submitted to the Executive Committee of the NSPC for endorsement in 2022. In the meantime, emergency programmes are currently run on an ad hoc basis, with policy on social protection programming set by different ministries and departments (e.g. the COVID-19 cash transfer programme is administered by MoSVY).

A recent positive development is the formulation of the Family Package as part of the implementation of the NSPPF. This consolidates the four existing RGC cash transfer programmes (PWYC, disability allowance, school age scholarship, and old age allowance), and represents a significant step towards bringing cash-based social assistance programmes under one umbrella framework.

Governance and coordination

In 2017, the RGC established the National Social Protection Council (NSPC) to strengthen coordination between the ministries involved in social protection. The NSPC is tasked with coordinating the relevant ministries on social protection policy development and implementation, providing policy and strategic direction, facilitating budget discussion, and monitoring and evaluating social protection

programme implementation. Its members include representatives from various ministries and institutions.

Another important committee is the National Committee for Disaster Management (NCDM), which plays an important role in providing emergency/humanitarian response and disaster risk management, together with the associated Provincial, District, and Commune Committees for Disaster Management. Some responses involve the Provincial Committees using their own resources and mobilising local government and partner resources (e.g. water, sanitation and hygiene materials provided by UNICEF). However, a challenge is that each organisation has different standards for triggering a response, with different focuses and objectives. Under NCDM, the RGC has been encouraging the development of emergency preparedness and response plans as part of contingency planning and operational readiness. Furthermore, the National Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction 2019–2023 identifies four priority issues to be addressed: (i) developing an awareness-raising campaign for communities to increase their knowledge of risks and how to respond to these; (ii) preparing legal instruments to reflect the policy and strategy; (iii) undertaking low-expenditure and high-efficiency measures to strengthen resilience; and (iv) establishing direct and effective early warning systems (EWSs).

Since 2011/12, the Humanitarian Response Forum (HRF) coordinates United Nations agencies and international non-governmental organisations (INGO) for humanitarian response and is structured around six sectors: (i) food security and nutrition; (ii) water, sanitation, and hygiene; (iii) shelter; (iv) health; (v) education; and (vi) protection. A Cash Working Group was also established in 2021. The HRF is chaired and co-chaired by a United Nations organisation (currently, WFP) and an INGO (currently, DanChurchAid), respectively, and has in place an annual contingency plan for certain disasters, such as droughts, floods, and storms. WFP hosts the HRF Secretariat, which handles information management and runs monthly coordination meetings.

The Development Partner’s Social Assistance Working Group, chaired by UNICEF, has been running informally for a number of years, and functions as a dialogue platform for the RGC and development partners (UN agencies, INGOs, donors, and other international organisations) on social assistance programmes in the country. In the past, it met on a quarterly basis but is in the process of being aligned with the new government–development partner coordination mechanisms approved in 2021.

One problem is the fact that the linkages and lines of coordination between these various coordinating bodies and forums are not always clear.

Capacity

The RGC continues to receive significant support from development partners for implementing social assistance programmes. There remains a need for capacity building at all levels of government, so that the RGC can take on these tasks itself. For example, there are capacity gaps at the commune level in the process of identifying poor and vulnerable households as part of IDPoor, as well as in monitoring and evaluating the implementation of programmes and the complaints and feedback mechanisms. Nevertheless, MoSVY demonstrated the capacity to implement social assistance programmes at scale in 2020–2021, in the COVID-19 cash transfer programme and the routine PWYC cash transfer programme.

Financing

Public spending on social protection in Cambodia has historically been low: while spending on social protection across the region is on average 5.3% of gross domestic product, Cambodia's is less than 1%. Although the NSPPF 2016–2025 was approved in 2017, funding for it still needs to be identified. This is particularly important as official development assistance declines as a result of the country's transition to middle-income status. Designated funding for disaster management in Cambodia is also limited, with the result that there is a much greater focus on responding to shocks than preparing for them.

Recommendations for future shock responsive social assistance

A number of policy implications follow these key learnings, which can be useful for all stakeholders involved in the implementation of future shock responsive social assistance under the SRSP Framework.

Programme design

Targeting: There should be collective discussion between the RGC and development partners on feasibility of setting up a new category with a different poverty threshold/score for targeting SRSP, which could help to capture the 'near-poor' and expand social assistance programme horizontally for shocks. There should also be discussion on how else the IDPoor data (beyond the score) could also inform targeting, e.g. by means of vulnerability criteria or livelihood information, derived from the interview and recorded in the database.

The use of the WFP-supported NCDM system, PRISM, for the layering and geospatial analysis of data sources on climate hazards and vulnerability (i.e. IDPoor) can be a useful basis to

prioritise the geographic targeting of SRSP. This pilot has provided some proof of concept, but further assessment needs to be conducted to enhance it (e.g. to use additional data sources besides the number of IDPoor households and setting rules/thresholds for triggering a response).

Benefit package: In regard to the form of the assistance provided, the RGC and development partners should work together to: a) strengthen the existing payment system reach and any additional support requirements for vulnerable groups eligible under the forthcoming Family Package; and b) consider any additional surge support during crises where a scale-up of payments is needed with SRSP. It is also important to conduct rapid needs assessment of whether cash is a feasible response for all when a shock hits, such as in areas where financial service provider infrastructure has been affected and areas where households will have reduced access to markets. In regard to the amount of assistance, it is necessary to utilise ex ante SRSP M&E data to facilitate discussion of the amount of assistance that is optimal for an SRSP programme, including validating the available MEB to be used for future programming. The transfer rate needs to be clearly tied to the programme objective to ensure that programme goals are achievable within the allocated timeframe. Adjusting the transfer amount during programme implementation to respond to changes in the context, including, for example, spikes in prices of food or other essential goods, should also be considered. In regard to programme duration, SRSP data should be analysed ex ante in order to agree on the SRSP programme duration, although the availability of funds and fiscal space are acknowledged as critical factors in this decision. Further, there is a need to conduct periodic reviews to identify whether or not the programme duration is sufficient to meet the programme objectives for a particular shock. Finally, in regard to the timing of benefits, development partners should support government in rolling out timely and effective SRSP through existing systems as far as possible, rather than investing in parallel systems. Development partners could preserve

the pre-agreements set up and enhance data sharing protocols with the Ministry of Planning, so that this can be done in a timely manner in the event of a crisis and when the RGC requests support from development partners for the response.

Delivery system

Registration and enrolment: Ensure that agile and flexible registration and enrolment mechanisms are in place, especially in remote rural locations, to prevent the exclusion of potential beneficiaries. Reduce or simplify registration/enrolment procedures for rapid SRSP responses to enable a more time-sensitive process. This could include establishing proxy verification to allow for a rapid registration process, facilitating additional capacity for commune and village authorities to better support affected households, and ensuring more robust outreach to households in remote locations. When the data quality of the IDPoor database is enhanced, other programmes/institutions should utilise the existing database and registration results, rather than implementing separate registration processes, so that assistance can be delivered more quickly.

Benefit delivery: Use feasibility assessments to identify modalities that can be easily utilised by communities and take into consideration literacy, age, gender, and disability, while minimising the risk of fraud by applying the necessary security measures. Conduct a two-level reconciliation to verify whether the benefit has been transferred to the intended beneficiaries. Ensure that benefit delivery systems do not unnecessarily exclude or disadvantage potential beneficiaries due to overly rigorous security restrictions (to create the beneficiary account and to cash out). Use feasibility assessments to identify whether the financial service provider involved has the capacity to maintain business as usual in times of shock. For this, the RGC could work with the National Bank of Cambodia to explore future digital payment solutions.

Communication: Strengthen outreach and sensitisation on programme information to ensure a clear understanding of SRSP programmes within the national and local governments, communes, village authorities, and poor households, particularly where multiple cash transfer programmes are being implemented at the same time. Strengthen the capacity of commune councils and village leaders to engage in direct communication, and equip them with information related to the implementation of the programmes.

Complaints/feedback mechanisms: Prepare adequate resources to ensure the availability of several channels for complaints/feedback as easily accessible options for households and local authorities (such as a hotline, Telegram, and other possible channels). The RGC can maintain its use of Telegram, while at the same time diversifying the channels. In addition to this, a clearer mechanism needs to be developed so that responses and resolution to complaints can be provided promptly.

Monitoring & Evaluation: Agree and adopt standard monitoring indicators and similar M&E frameworks across the cash transfer programmes implemented by the RGC and development partners. Strengthen the M&E capacity of the RGC, in terms of human resource capacities and supporting tools. Establish a simple and cost-effective M&E system that the RGC can easily adopt and incorporate into its existing system. Agree on standardised approaches and guidance on M&E frameworks, indicators, reporting, and the use of mobile applications for data collection (such as the Kobo toolbox or a similar open-source application).

Data and information system

Social protection data and information system: Further develop and refine the IDPoor system and the OD mechanism to enable the rapid registration and verification of existing poor and new poor households in the event of a shock. Conduct data analysis to reduce inclusion and exclusion errors within the OD IDPoor database. Support the strengthening of local systems (financing and capacity building) to enable commune and village leaders to fulfil their support functions. Conduct a learning review of the effectiveness and accuracy of OD IDPoor in regard to identifying poor households, including the IDPoor scoring mechanism that is used to identify near-poor and vulnerable households. Explore the possible integration of social protection data with other available data, such as civil registration data, to improve the accuracy of targeting.

Poverty and vulnerability data: Consider using simplified PRISM and other data to support early warning, poverty, and vulnerability data verification.

EWS and data: Support further integration of the PRISM data into the national EWS, and ensure that data are disaggregated by geographic or climatic zones to support the prioritisation of SRSP responses.

Policy and institutions

Legal and regulatory frameworks: Once the draft SRSP Framework has been endorsed and published, supplement it with detailed operational guideline for guiding the SRSP response by both the RGC and development partners.

Governance and coordination: Accompany the SRSP Framework with a strengthened coordination mechanism that can enable the different SRSP parties, i.e. the RGC, the Cambodian Red Cross, and development partners, to facilitate SRSP preparedness and response.

Capacity: Strengthen capacity across programme design, delivery system, data and information systems, and policy and institutions. To this end, SRSP operational guidance should outline key areas for capacity development and financing.

Finances: Develop a risk financing portfolio for SRSP, including national budget contributions and pooled funds for donor contributions. Over time, the predictable annual floods could be accounted for under the regular social protection financing.

Table of contents

Acknowledgements	v
Executive summary	vi
Table of contents	vii
List of tables and figures	viii
List of abbreviations	ix
1. Introduction	1
1.1 Background	2
1.2 Objective of the research	3
1.3 Structure of the report	4
2. Social protection in Cambodia and in response to shocks and emergencies	7
2.1 Overview of social protection in Cambodia	7
2.2 Responding to shocks and emergencies in Cambodia	10
3. Research methodology	13
3.1 Document review	13
3.2 Coverage of the research	14
3.3 Primary qualitative data	15
3.4 Secondary qualitative and quantitative data	17
3.5 Data management and analysis	17
3.6 Limitations and assumptions	19
4. Alignment of the WFP cash transfer programme with the government’s social assistance system	21
5. Findings	29
5.1 Programme design	30
5.2 Programme delivery systems	35
5.3 Programme data and information systems	50
5.4 Policy and institutions	55
5.5 Financing	59
6. Recommendations	63
Bibliography	68
Annex A Terms of reference	70
Annex B Selected cash transfer programmes in Cambodia	74
Annex C Summary of key building blocks of the SRSP Framework	76
Annex D List of interviewed stakeholders	79
Annex E Transfer values	80
Annex F WFP registration results	81
Annex G Case study on commune council role	82
Annex H WFP cash transfer programme flyers	84
Annex I Summary of WFP complaints and feedback mechanism reports	85
Annex J Other data and information systems	86
Annex K IDPoor implementation in rural and urban areas	88
Annex L Rapid identification of affected households during lockdown	89

List of tables and figures

Tables

Table 1.	Government ministries and institutions involved in the delivery of social assistance programmes	9
Table 2.	Comparison of key features of the WFP cash transfer programme with two RGC cash transfer programmes	14
Table 3.	List of research communes	15
Table 4.	Number of respondents of KIIs and FGDs	16
Table 5.	Links between the WFP cash transfer programme and the government's social assistance system	23
Table 6.	Duration and transfer value of the three cash transfer programmes	33
Table 7.	Schedule of the WFP cash transfer for three groups	34
Table 8.	Registration and enrolment processes of the WFP cash transfer programme and the two RGC cash transfer programmes	36
Table 9.	Benefit delivery processes of the three cash transfer programmes	39
Table 10.	Communication channel in each cash transfer programme	42
Table 11.	Complaints and feedback mechanism channel and process	45
Table 12.	WFP cash transfer programme monitoring processes	48
Table 13.	A snapshot of the RGC's in-kind assistance following the 2020 and 2021 floods	60

Figures

Figure 1.	The Cambodian social protection framework	8
Figure 2.	A continuum of delivery options	18
Figure 3.	Use of the WFP cash transfer	33
Figure 4.	Coordination bodies on social protection/assistance programmes	57

List of abbreviations

AO	Area Office
BMZ	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
CBT	Cash-Based Transfer
CFM	Complaints and Feedback Mechanism
CSES	Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey
CRVS	Civil Registration and Vital Statistics
EWS	Early Warning System
FAO	UN Food and Agriculture Organization
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FSN	Food Security and Nutrition
FSP	Financial Service Provider
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
HEF	Health Equity Fund
HRF	Humanitarian Response Forum
IDPoor	Identification of Poor Households
ILO	International Labour Organization
INGO	International Non-Government Organisation
KII	Key Informant Interview
LWD	Life With Dignity
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEB	Minimum Expenditure Basket
MIS	Management Information System
MoEF	Ministry of Economy and Finance
MoH	Ministry of Health
Mol	Ministry of Interior
MoLVT	Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training
MoP	Ministry of Planning
MoSVY	Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NCDM	National Committee for Disaster Management
NCP	National Contingency Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation

NSPI	National Strategic Plan of Identification
NSSF	National Social Security Fund
NSPC	National Social Protection Council
NSPPF	National Social Protection Policy Framework
OD IDPoor	On-demand Identification of Poor Households
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OPM	Oxford Policy Management
PDM	Post-Distribution Monitoring
PDoP	Provincial Department of Planning
PDoSVY	Provincial Department of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation
PMT	Proxy Means Test
PRISM	Platform for Real-time Impact and Situation Monitoring
PWDs	People With Disabilities
PWYC	Pregnant Women and Young Children (under two)
RGC	Royal Government of Cambodia
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
SRSP	Shock Responsive Social Protection
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VRG	Village Representative Group
WFP	World Food Programme

1. Introduction

Oxford Policy Management (OPM) was commissioned by the World Food Programme (WFP) to conduct operational research on the WFP cash transfer programme. GIZ, on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), provided financial support for this research and publication.

This report presents the findings from the operational research, which draws on qualitative and quantitative data to generate and document key learnings from this cash assistance programme and to provide recommendations that can guide the design and implementation of future shock responsive social protection (SRSP) programmes implemented by the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC), and complementary assistance programmes implemented by its partners as part of the operationalisation of the Shock Responsive Social Protection Framework.¹

¹ NSPC (2020) 'Shock Responsive Social Protection Framework', Draft.

1.1 Background

Cambodia's economic development has shown significant improvement due to supportive government policies, which caused the poverty head count to decrease from close to 50% in 2007 to 13.5% in 2014.² These economic improvements are expected to continue, but the COVID-19 pandemic has had a negative impact on the incomes of a large proportion of the population. Based on the latest poverty line definition from the Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey for 2019/20, it is estimated that 17.8% of the population falls below the poverty line, the majority of whom live in rural areas. The poverty rate in urban areas is 12.6%, while in rural areas it is 22.8%.³

However, human capital development in Cambodia still faces challenges in terms of high multi-dimensional poverty. Stunting in children under five years of age is high, with a prevalence rate of 32.4%. The literacy rate of the population aged six years and above is 80.7%, with lower literacy in rural areas (76.8%).⁴

Poverty is also related to the population's job opportunities. Cambodia had a labour force (the population aged 15–64 years) of nine million people in 2019, and most of them (85%) are employed. However, of the 85% employed people, less than half are paid employees (47%); the others are employers (0.4%), self-employed (38%), and unpaid family workers (14.6%).

Cambodia is prone to climate-related shocks and is among the countries most exposed to natural disasters worldwide. It is ranked 16th out of 181 countries on the 2020 World Risk Index, and 15th in the global comparison measuring the average

occurrences of disasters per million people and per 1,000 km² land area.⁵ The country is exposed to nearly all types of hydrometeorological hazards, including floods, droughts, heavy storms, typhoons, and lightning strikes, with floods and droughts being the most frequently occurring.⁶ Although poverty and inequality in Cambodia have decreased significantly since 2009, a majority of non-poor households are in danger of returning to poverty if an income shock occurs. This is shown by analysis of the Identification of Poor Households (IDPoor) system,⁷ which reveals large movements in 2011 and 2014 in and out of poverty. From 2010/11 to 2013/14, about 36% of poor households transitioned out of poverty, while 36% remained poor, and another 27% fell into extreme poverty.⁸

The regularity of natural hazards, in conjunction with high levels of vulnerability and limited coping capacity (e.g. lack of adequate food and income sources, permanent houses, resilient infrastructure, knowledge on disaster mitigation, etc.) – especially in rural populations – exacerbates the impact of these events. The monsoon rains from May to October bring 80% of the annual rainfall and are followed by the dry season, from November to April. Dry spells can also occur in the middle of the rainy season, typically for two to three weeks between July and August, during which droughts may occur in some regions.² The worst drought in 50 years in Cambodia occurred in 2015, and severely impacted 2.5 million people across 25 provinces.⁹ This shock had grave consequences for the 90% of the population engaged in agricultural activities and the 80% that rely on subsistence crops,¹⁰ as reduced agricultural production affected households' ability to meet their food needs.

2 UNDP (2019) 'Human Development Report Cambodia 2019: Sustaining natural resources for all'. UNDP, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

3 World Bank (2021) 'Cambodia Economic Update: Living with COVID'. World Bank, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

4 NIS-MoP (2020) 'Report of Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey (CSES) 2019/2020'. National Institute of Statistics, Ministry of Planning, Cambodia

5 UNESCAP (2015) Overview of Natural Disasters and their Impacts in Asia and the Pacific. ESCAP Technical Paper.

6 United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (2019) Disaster Risk Reduction in Cambodia: Status Report 2019. Regional Office for Asia and Pacific, Bangkok, Thailand.

7 The IDPoor system/database is part of the RGC's ongoing efforts to reduce poverty and support socioeconomic development throughout the country. The system/database provides regularly updated information on poor households to various ministries and other institutions to help them target services and assistance to the poorest and most vulnerable households in Cambodia.

8 OECD (2017) 'Social Protection System Review of Cambodia'. OECD Development Pathways, OECD Publishing, Paris.

In the past two years, Cambodia has been affected by several overlapping and reinforcing shocks. Flash floods in October 2020 affected more than 792,000 people (or around 172,000 households) in 19 provinces, including an estimated 388,000 people (or around 84,300 households) registered as poor and vulnerable.¹¹ This flood event further intensified the severe effects of the economic shock resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

There were no major local outbreaks of COVID-19 in Cambodia until February 2021; however, subsequently cases rose significantly and localised lockdowns were put in place to curb the spread. This action is likely to further exacerbate the already adverse economic impacts experienced by many households and key industries, including garment manufacturing, tourism, construction, and agriculture. Several large influxes of migrants returned from Thailand in 2020 and 2021, and most of these returnees lack work in their hometown. Floods hit Cambodia again in September 2021, after heavy rainfall across much of the country. Nearly 30,000 households in five provinces were reported to be affected by flash floods and river floods. In these areas, houses, infrastructure (roads, schools, health centres), and agricultural land were inundated.

In October 2020, the General Secretariat of the National Social Protection Council (NSPC), with support from WFP, embarked on the process of developing a draft SRSP framework, to guide the RGC and its partners to leverage elements of the social protection system, and to provide more systematic, predictable, timely, and effective protection of the poor and vulnerable, during and after shocks. This framework sets out a number of programmatic options for shock response, primarily through the cash-based social assistance system. It also highlights entry points for how humanitarian partners can leverage elements of the social protection system and enhance coordination with government-led responses, for a more effective and inclusive response. It sets out priority actions for the RGC and its partners, to strengthen elements of the system and prepare for SRSP, across all the building blocks of the SRSP system.

1.2 Objective of the research

Within the above context, WFP implemented a cash transfer programme to support households impacted by both COVID-19 and floods in Cambodia. This was done in consultation with the General Secretariat for the National Social Protection Council (NSPC), the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (MoSVY), the Ministry of Planning (MoP), the National Committee for Disaster Management (NCDM), and relevant partners, including Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and Save the Children. GIZ, on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), provided financial support to the implementation of the cash transfer programme as part of the WFP Cambodia Country Strategic Plan (2019–2023). The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) also provided financial support for this programme.

The objective of this cash assistance was to increase beneficiaries' access to essential needs and support their recovery in the face of these shocks. Beneficiary households thus received, via mobile money, up to three rounds of cash disbursements and a fourth transfer to cover cash transfer-related expenses (e.g. to purchase a SIM card and to cover transport costs), transferred between September 2021 and February 2022.

In the spirit of contributing to advancing the direction and implementation of the SRSP framework in Cambodia, WFP commissioned this operational research. It seeks to generate learning to inform the design of future shock responsive social protection programmes of the RGC and its partners.

The main research question was as follows:

To what extent did the design and implementation of the WFP cash transfer programme align with and support the building blocks for shock responsive social protection in Cambodia (programme design,

9 UNDP (2019) Cambodia, looking to the horizon, prepares for drought. UNDP, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

10 USAID (2019) Climate Risk Profile: Cambodia, USAID, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

11 ReliefWeb (n.d.). 'Cambodia: Floods – Oct 2020', OCHA. <<https://reliefweb.int/disaster/fi-2020-000212-khm>>

delivery systems, data and information systems), and what recommendations do WFP, the Government, and social protection actors need to take into account when designing and implementing future cash (and other) programmes to further strengthen the shock responsiveness of the social protection system in Cambodia?

From this main research question, we can further break down the objectives of the research, as follows:

- to investigate the design and implementation features of the WFP cash transfer programme that are the same or similar to the RGC social assistance programmes and other RGC sources;
- to distil lessons learned from the design and implementation of the WFP cash transfer programme;
- to document any elements unique to the WFP cash transfer programme;
- to provide recommendations to guide the RGC and supporting partners in the design and implementation of future shock responsive social assistance schemes, and guide humanitarian partners in the design and implementation of complementary and coordinated assistance; and
- to inform disaster contingency planning for humanitarian cash assistance among humanitarian actors.

1.3 Structure of the report

The report is structured as follows. Section 2 provides a brief analysis of the social protection landscape in Cambodia, including assistance and programmes that have been provided for emergency support. Section 3 describes the methodology used for the research. Section 4 summarises the alignment of the WFP cash transfer programme with the government system and social assistance programmes. Section 5 presents the findings from the qualitative and quantitative data collection. Section 6 sets out key recommendations from the research.

2 Social protection in Cambodia and in response to shocks and emergencies

2.1 Overview of social protection in Cambodia

The vision of the RGC is for Cambodia to become an upper-middle-income country by 2030 and a high-income country by 2050. In this regard, the RGC strongly acknowledges that social protection is a major contributor to economic growth based on equity and inclusiveness. The RGC has defined its long-term vision for the development of the social protection system based on inclusiveness, effectiveness, and financial sustainability as tools to reduce and prevent poverty, vulnerability, and inequality, and which will contribute to the development and protection of human resources and stimulate economic growth.

To realise this vision, in 2016, the RGC developed the National Social Protection Policy Framework (NSPPF) for the period 2016–2025, which aims to be the basis for ensuring income security and reducing the economic and financial vulnerability of the Cambodian population. The NSPPF aims at harmonising, integrating, and strengthening existing schemes, and expanding the social protection floor to respond to all contingencies throughout the lifecycle. The NSPPF also hopes to reform the existing system and build the infrastructure needed so that the implementation of the social protection system can be more efficient and sustainable. The two pillars of social protection, as recognised in the NSPPF, are social assistance and social security (see Figure 1).¹²

¹² RGC (2017) 'National Social Protection Policy Framework 2016–2025', Unofficial translation, The Royal Government of Cambodia. Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

Figure 1. The Cambodian social protection framework



Source: NSPPF 2016–2025

2.1.1 Social assistance programmes

Of particular relevance to this research is social assistance (as non-contributory social protection), which the RGC sees as an increasingly important and recognised means for supporting economic growth in a country where the informal economy represented 88% of the total labour force in 2019. The main goal of social assistance under the NSPPF is to ensure decent living standards for poor and vulnerable citizens, while strengthening the capacity of all citizens to retain their jobs in an increasingly competitive economic environment.

There are three main groups targeted in the provision of social assistance under the NSPPF:

- those living below the poverty line;
- those living just above the poverty line with high vulnerability to crises; and
- infants, children, pregnant women, families facing food insecurity, people with disabilities (PWDs), and the elderly.

The NSPPF noted that there were still many challenges to be faced in providing decent living standards for these groups, including: the relative nascency of social protection in Cambodia; the limited coverage of existing programmes, which means that there is little impact in terms of reducing poverty or inequality at a national

level; the ineffective management of various programmes, which leads to inconsistency of benefits for various target groups; and the lack of integrated data to identify the poor and vulnerable for social assistance programming. Consequently, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) underlines that the coverage of social assistance in Cambodia is very low and fragmented, with a high dependence on external humanitarian aid.¹³ Furthermore, there have been coordination challenges between humanitarian aid and social assistance actors when seeking to identify the most vulnerable people during a crisis or shock.

To give an overview of the social assistance implemented in Cambodia, Annex B summarises selected cash transfer programmes implemented by the RGC, development partners, and non-government organisations. When designing these social assistance programmes, expansion for emergency response was not considered.¹⁴ This study focuses on the provision of cash-based social assistance due to its common usage during emergency response, including during COVID-19.¹⁵

A number of ministries are involved in the delivery of the social assistance programmes in Cambodia, as shown in Table 1.

¹³ OECD (2017), 'Social Protection System Review of Cambodia', OECD Development Pathways, OECD Publishing, Paris.

¹⁴ FAO, UNICEF, and WFP (2019) Roadmap: Developing a Risk-Informed and Shock-Responsive Social Protection System in Cambodia, FAO, Bangkok, Thailand.

¹⁵ Gentilini et al. (2021) 'Social Protection and Jobs Responses to COVID-19: A real-time review of country measures', Living paper version 15.

Table 1. Government ministries and institutions involved in the delivery of social assistance programmes

Ministry	Role	Social assistance programme under ministry
Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation	Mandate to implement some social assistance and social security programmes, including for civil servants, veterans, and PWDs, in accordance with their own functions and duties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID-19 cash transfer • Pregnant Women and Young Children (PWYC) cash transfer • Disability allowance • Family Package (under development)
Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training	Focuses on social security for workers and employees under the provisions of the Labour Law, as well as some social assistance schemes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocational training programmes to promote skills to meet labour market demand • Cash transfer for workers in manufacturing and tourism sectors who have had their employment contracts suspended
Ministry of Health	Oversees the Health Equity Fund, which provides health protection to poor and vulnerable people and promotes the health of mothers and children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Equity Fund (fee waivers) • Vouchers for reproductive health
Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports	Focuses on supporting school feeding programmes and providing scholarships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School feeding programme (food) • Primary school take-home ration (food) • Home-grown school feeding • Scholarships programmes for primary and secondary schools
Ministry of Economy and Finance	Oversees a food reserve	Food Reserve Programme, which targets food-insecure households affected by natural disasters (in-kind transfer)
Ministry of Planning	Responsible for socio-economic planning and statistic management; in charge of managing and updating the IDPoor system to identify people eligible to receive social assistance benefits	This ministry does not implement social assistance programmes but rather manages the IDPoor programme, and ensures that this data is available for other ministries in determining programme target beneficiaries
Ministry of Interior	Mandate of identification and civil registration of the general population	-
National Social Protection Council	Independent body, established in 2017, responsible for overall coordination of and steering the development of various social protection strategies and policies	-
National Committee for Disaster Management	An inter-ministerial body mandated for disaster management and emergency response; established in 1995, its role was formalised by the Law on Disaster Management (2015)	-

In addition to these government institutions, there are a number of other key actors with roles in supporting social protection programmes, including development partners and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), such as the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the International Labour Organization, WFP, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), GIZ, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, Oxfam, Save the Children, DanChurchAid, and People in Need, among others.

The NSPPF also noted the importance of coordination and co-operation between national and international institutions. The current lack of this causes inconsistencies, gaps, and overlaps in programmes or activities, in turn leading to inefficiency and ineffectiveness (see Section 5.4 for more details).

2.2 Responding to shocks and emergencies in Cambodia

Emergency response is a key NSPPF component. Cambodia is exposed to nearly all types of climate hazards, from floods to droughts, heavy storms, typhoons, and lightning strikes.¹⁶ Climate change has further compounded these risks by increasing the frequency and severity of climate hazards and their associated economic shocks.

Climate hazards disproportionately affect poor and vulnerable households, who need support to be able to manage the risks. The social protection system can help mitigate the impact of shocks, particularly for the poor and vulnerable. Social protection has increasingly been considered an effective intervention for reducing vulnerability and extreme poverty, including poverty due to the impact of crises and climate hazards.

With the issuance of the Law on Disaster Management in 2015, there was a significant change in disaster management in Cambodia,

including in resource allocation and coordination between various institutions. Through this law, the position of the NCDM was formalised to lead, administer, and coordinate all disaster management activities.¹⁷

International organisations are also keen to support the government in this regard. The Humanitarian Response Forum (HRF) was formed in 2011 when there was an increasing demand for coordination between the RGC and various development partners. This forum aims to strengthen coordination and communication for emergency preparedness and response. While initially focused on three climate hazards – tropical storms, floods, and drought – the HRF has more recently also been mobilised for other shocks, including the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated consequences, such as the mass return of migrants.

Prior to 2020, the assistance provided to victims of climate hazards was mostly in-kind; cash-based assistance in emergencies was not commonly or widely used. This research will document WFP’s experience in providing cash assistance in response to the floods in 2020 and 2021, which is one of the largest known examples of a development partner providing cash-based assistance during a climate shock/emergency. Of the four components of social assistance in the NSPPF, this operational research will primarily examine the types of assistance related to the emergency response. The NSPC has recently developed a national SRSP framework with the support of WFP, FAO, and other development partners in order to strengthen the shock responsiveness of Cambodia’s social protection system.¹⁸ The framework outlines five building blocks for an SRSP system (see the summary in Annex C): a) policy and institutions; b) programme design; c) delivery systems; d) data and information systems; and e) financing. The RGC is committed to realising the NSPPF and recognises the essential role that social assistance – particularly SRSP in the aftermath of the recent floods and COVID-19 – has in alleviating poverty, raising living standards, and ensuring the country’s future prosperity.

16 UNDDR (2019) Disaster Risk Reduction in Cambodia: Status Report 2019, Regional Office for Asia and Pacific, Bangkok, Thailand.

17 IFRC and UNDP (2017) ‘Implementing the Law on Disaster Management in Cambodia: Developing subsidiary legislation’, IFRC and UNDP, Cambodia.

18 FAO, UNICEF, and WFP (2019) Roadmap: Developing a Risk-Informed and Shock-Responsive Social Protection System in Cambodia, FAO, Bangkok, Thailand.

3 Research methodology

3.1 Document review

The assignment commenced with a short literature review on the current Cambodia context and relevant policies and legislation, alongside key issues and challenges in terms of the delivery of emergency response for poor and vulnerable households during shocks as part of the social protection system in Cambodia. The review informed the qualitative and quantitative data analysis and helped identify relevant stakeholders for the key informant interviews (KIIs). The initial review of key documents has been presented in Section 2 above; this is followed by a further review of the relevant programme documents, together with findings on the implementation of these programmes in the field, which are found in Section 4.



3.2 Coverage of the research

To conduct this research, OPM compared the WFP cash transfer programme, where relevant and for the purposes of analysing its alignment with the RGC social assistance systems, with the RGC’s COVID-19 cash transfer programme and the PWYC cash transfer programme. These two RGC programmes were selected based on discussions with WFP during the inception phase, and are the most important cash transfer programmes currently being implemented by MoSVY, the main line ministry responsible for the delivery of social assistance in Cambodia. The COVID-19 cash transfer programme is the first cash-based assistance programme implemented as a response to shocks and emergencies with coverage throughout the country. The PWYC cash transfer programme is the first conditional cash transfer programme in Cambodia, and will be part of a comprehensive lifecycle programme to be rolled out by MoSVY

under the Family Package programme. The systems and approaches used by the PWYC cash transfer programme form the foundation for MoSVY in delivering other social assistance programmes, including the COVID-19 cash transfer programme.

The depth of the review employed for the WFP cash transfer programme and the RGC COVID-19 and PWYC cash transfer programmes is slightly different, depending on their relevance to the building block elements being studied (with the purposes as discussed above). In this regard, the PWYC, as a routine RGC social assistance programme, remains relevant as a comparator, especially when looking at the existing government system. However, because the PWYC cash transfer programme is not an SRSP programme, not all elements in the PWYC cash transfer programme (e.g. programme objective and transfer value) can be compared with other programmes.

Table 2. Comparison of key features of the WFP cash transfer programme with two RGC cash transfer programmes

Feature	WFP cash transfer programme	COVID-19 cash transfer programme	PWYC cash transfer programme
Objective of the programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To support poor and vulnerable households affected by COVID-19 and flooding in 2020 and 2021 To support the design and institutionalisation of a SRSP scheme with the RGC 	To maintain poor and vulnerable households’ living conditions during the pandemic	To improve the wellbeing of mothers and children (from conception until two years old) and to contribute to reducing child malnutrition in poor households
Programme duration	Disbursed in batches, divided into three groups of beneficiaries receiving the cash in four rounds from September 2021 to February 2022	From June 2020 to date	From June 2019 to date; the programme was initially administered by the Ministry of Health up until February 2020, and was then handed over to MoSVY
Objective of reviewing the programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These two programmes aim at addressing the impact of the shock/emergency To examine similarities and differences in the two approaches used, considering the above point To identify potential emerging good practices, as well as difficulties faced, which can then inform priority actions for system strengthening across building blocks 		As a routine cash transfer programme, which has become the foundation of the development of other social assistance programmes in Cambodia

3.3 Primary qualitative data

This research draws mainly on the qualitative data obtained through primary data collection via interviews and group discussions at national, sub-national, and commune/sangkat levels.

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were the main form of primary data collection and most qualitative interviews took a semi-structured form. Based on consultation with WFP, we conducted interviews with four categories of stakeholder:

- **The RGC staff from relevant ministries and departments** at national and sub-national level. The interviews with stakeholders in this category helped us to capture information related to the history, design, and implementation of the cash transfer programmes managed by the RGC, and how they relate to the WFP cash transfer programme design and implementation.
- **Other development partners and NGOs** who are also closely involved in supporting social assistance programmes for poor and vulnerable households. They provided us with inputs on issues and challenges in the design and implementation of such programmes.
- **Implementing partners supporting the WFP cash transfer programme**, including Life With Dignity (LWD) and the financial service provider WING (both at the central office and agents in the field). Stakeholders in this group helped us to understand activities on the ground, including the issues and challenges faced.

- **Commune council/leaders, beneficiaries, and non-beneficiaries.** Through these interviews, we explored which parts of the cash transfer implementation worked well and which did not and why, as well as the type of challenges faced and how they were resolved.

Focus group discussions (FDGs) were conducted at commune level, with both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries.

Four of the five provinces where the WFP cash transfer programme was implemented were chosen as study sites. Pursat province was not included due to time and resource constraints. The criteria for selecting the communes were as follows:

- Five communes were selected in Banteay Meanchey province to increase the coverage of the locations affected by the floods in 2020 and 2021. Communes in this province represented 40.3% of all communes where the WFP cash transfer programme was implemented.
- Five other communes in three other provinces were selected based on their distance from the provincial capital, on the assumption that there would be different characteristics between these locations, in terms of access to information, coordination with provincial government, quality of public services, etc. However, in the analysis, we did not find in fact significant differences here.

Table 3 below provides the names of communes that were visited for primary qualitative data collection.



Table 3. List of research communes

Province	Number of districts	Number of communes	Selected communes for data collection
Banteay Meanchey (original list for 2020 floods)	1	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ruessei Kraok (Mongkol Borei) Banteay Neang (Mongkol Borei)
Banteay Meanchey (newly affected by 2021 floods)	9	26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paoy Paet (Krong Paoy Paet) Ta Kong (Malai) Ou Ambel (Serei Saophoan)
Battambang	8	17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ta Loas (Moung Ruessei)
Kampong Thom	7	17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Damrei Choan Khla (Krong Stueng Saen) Samprouch (Stoung)
Siem Reap	4	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chong Knies (Krong Siem Reap) Yeang (Puok)

Primary data collection was carried out during the period of October to December 2021. Data collection at the commune level was carried out twice; the second round of data collection was mainly to gather more complete information from the results of the first round and to find out whether there has been a change in the implementation of the WFP cash transfer programme after one or two disbursements/transfers to the beneficiaries. Table 4 summarises the number of respondents (in numbers of people), while Annex D provides details of the names of each respondent (except for commune-level respondents).

Table 4. Number of respondents of KIIs and FGDs

Stakeholders		Number of communes		Female	Male
		KII	FGD		
Interview with national stakeholders	MoSVY	1			1
	MoP	2			2
	NSPC	4		1	3
	NCDM	1			1
	UNICEF	2		2	
	GIZ	2		1	1
	Save the Children	3		1	2
	LWD	7		1	6
	WING central office	3		2	1
Interviews with provincial stakeholders	Provincial Department of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (DoSVY) Kampong Thom	1			1
	DoSVY Battambang	1			1
	DoSVY Banteay Meanchey	1		1	
	Provincial Department of Planning (DoP) Kampong Thom	1			1
	DoP Banteay Meanchey	1		1	
Data collection at commune level	Beneficiary	33	51	68	4
	Non-beneficiary	33	49	61	21
	Commune council	19		8	11
	Village leader	20		2	18
	WING agent	10		10	
Total		145	100	159	86

The main criterion for selecting beneficiaries detailed in the table above was that they were all beneficiaries of the WFP cash transfer programme (all of them were poor households registered in the IDPoor database). All of the selected WFP cash transfer programme beneficiaries were also beneficiaries of the COVID-19 cash transfer programme, but not all of them were beneficiaries of the PWYC cash transfer programme.

Our findings include some percentage figures from KIs and FGDs at the commune level. It is important to understand how we draw figures from the results of these qualitative interviews and discussions. The percentage is taken from the number of respondents who mention a certain topic/issue compared to the total number of respondents who were asked about the same topic/issue. For example, in total we interviewed 84 WFP cash transfer programme beneficiaries; 42 of them confirmed that the registration process of the WFP cash transfer programme was fast as it took only a few days to complete. Thus, the finding was that 50% of the WFP cash transfer programme beneficiaries confirmed that the registration process of the WFP cash transfer programme was fast. **Note that the percentages in this report are not generalisable to all beneficiaries of the WFP cash transfer programme or to all IDPoor households receiving RGC social assistance.**

3.4 Secondary qualitative and quantitative data

In addition to collecting the primary data, as explained above, we also take advantage of the available secondary data, both qualitative and quantitative, which were taken from secondary sources to enhance the analysis. These include:

- the standard operating procedures (SOPs) of the three programmes, including the SOPs of the WFP cash transfer programme, the operational manual of the COVID-19 cash transfer programme, and the operational manual of the PWYC cash transfer programme;
- the baseline survey report conducted by the WFP monitoring and evaluation (M&E) team, as well as the monthly process monitoring updates;

- the performance assessment of the cash transfer programme for poor and vulnerable households during the COVID-19 pandemic;
- beneficiary verification and registration results;
- WFP beneficiary management system outputs; and
- weekly reports from the complaints and feedback mechanism.

The selection of the above data was based on consultation with WFP on the available data to describe the implementation of cash transfer programme in more detail, and also from our own research into relevant documents. A complete list of the documents we referred to in this research can be found in the Bibliography.

3.5 Data management and analysis

All interview and group discussion notes prepared by field researchers in Khmer were translated into English and transferred to Microsoft Excel for coding. The coding matrix was part of the data analysis, and corresponded to the research questions and sub-research questions from the inception report. During analysis, we disaggregated the findings as much as possible for different types of respondents, and we triangulated the data to allow the reader to assess the strength of the findings.

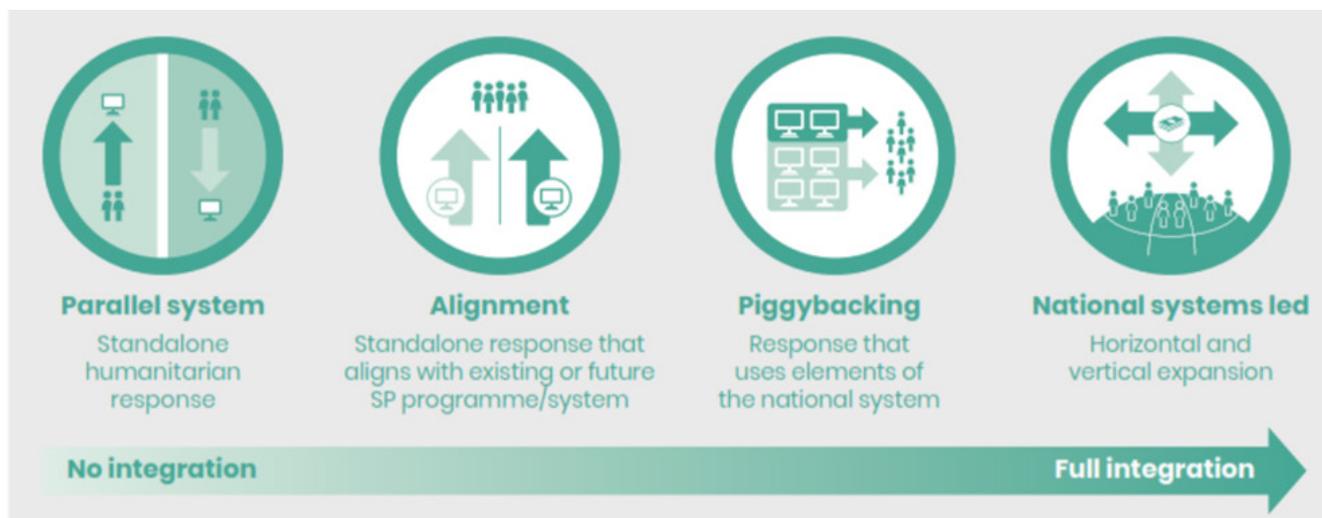
The analysis applied for this operational research uses the following steps:

1. **Describing the design and implementation of the WFP cash transfer programme.** To complete this, we also describe the design and implementation of the COVID-19 cash transfer programme, as well as the PWYC cash transfer programme in several relevant sections. There are two purposes in describing the process:
 - First, the description will help with the analysis of the alignment of the programme with the SRSP framework, and its subsequent convergence with the social protection system.

- Second, the description will document learning for future improvement and adoption.
2. **Assessing the alignment of the WFP cash transfer programme with the SRSP framework**, as well as its convergence with the social protection system in Cambodia.
 3. **Documenting the key lessons learned** to understand what worked well and what worked less well.
 4. **Providing recommendations** that can guide the design and implementation of future SRSP mechanisms implemented by the government and partners as part of the operationalisation of the SRSP framework.
1. parallel systems: if the delivery of the WFP cash transfer programme stands apart from national systems;
 2. shadow alignment: if the standalone WFP cash transfer programme aligns with some elements of existing or future social assistance programmes;
 3. piggybacking: if the WFP cash transfer programme uses some elements of the social assistance systems; and
 4. national system-led: if the WFP cash transfer programme is provided through nationally led systems or is entirely run through national systems.

In conducting the assessment on the second point above, we refer to a continuum of delivery options, ranging from completely parallel systems to options fully led by national social protection systems. Following O'Brien et al. (2018)¹⁹, the following four broad approaches can be observed in this type of assessment:

Figure 2. A continuum of delivery options



19 O'Brien, C., Scott, Z., Smith, G., Barca, V., Kardan, A., Holmes, R., Watson, C., and Congrave, J. (2018) Shock-responsive social protection systems research: Synthesis report. Oxford Policy Management, Oxford, UK.

3.6 Limitations and assumptions

This study took place while the WFP cash transfer programme was in its implementation phase, during which WFP made several adjustments during the process. The findings that we present in this report are the results of the data collection that took place from 8 November to 25 December 2021. Changes or adjustments occurring after that date are not captured in this report.

We conducted research activities with a total of 215 respondents in four provinces and 10 communes. This sample is not statistically representative of the full coverage area of the WFP cash transfer programme, the COVID-19 cash transfer programme, or the PWYC cash transfer programme, although it should be noted that such coverage is not the purpose of this qualitative research. Nevertheless, we do have a rich dataset to use as the basis for presenting the findings.

All the research activities were conducted in Khmer. Inevitably, translation between languages leads to losses of meaning and problems with mistranslation, and translation is frequently unable to convey the richness of words that have historical, cultural, and social connotations. We therefore concede that the findings presented here are limited in this way.

4 Alignment of the WFP cash transfer programme with the government's social assistance system

By referring to the continuum of design and delivery options as described in the analytical plan in Section 3.5, we mapped each existing element according to the SRSP building blocks and made a comparison between the approach and system used in the WFP cash transfer programme and the two RGC cash transfer programmes, i.e. the COVID-19 cash transfer programme and the PWYC cash transfer programme:

1. parallel systems: if the delivery of the WFP cash transfer programme stands apart from national systems;
2. shadow alignment: if the standalone WFP cash transfer programme aligns with some elements of the existing or future social assistance programmes;
3. piggybacking: if the WFP cash transfer programme uses some elements of the government's social assistance systems; and
4. national system-led: if the WFP cash transfer programme is provided through nationally led systems or is entirely run through national systems.

Our findings, which are summarised in Table 5, demonstrate that although there is some alignment with the national cash transfer programmes, there is still a degree of parallel programming for the WFP cash transfer programme:

- **No element of the WFP cash transfer programme was truly national system-led.**

This because each of the elements in the WFP cash transfer programme was predominantly led and carried out by WFP itself using WFP's systems, which are separate from the government's system.

- **Some programme elements could be categorised as piggybacking,**

particularly the targeting, benefit delivery, and social protection data and information system used in the WFP cash transfer programme. WFP adopted the same targeting design as in the RGC programmes, in terms of using the same poverty status as defined in IDPoor. Piggybacking was observed too in the selection of WING, as this financial service provider was also used by the RGC programmes. A key difference, however, was in the fact that WFP decided to choose a beneficiary-owned bank account, compared to a simpler type of delivery mechanism (using a WING card or WING wallet, activated by MoSVY). WFP also used the same data and information system, i.e. the RGC's IDPoor database.

- **Shadow alignment could be found in some programme elements,**

including in the defining of objectives, the amount of assistance, the registration and enrolment procedures, communication, and the use of Platform for Real-time Impact and Situation Monitoring (PRISM) data. The objective of the WFP cash transfer programme was defined as being to support the COVID-19 cash transfer programme with a benefit designed to top up or complement the COVID-19 transfer amount. There was also some degree of alignment in the registration process, in terms of the requirement to present the equity card and national identity card, as well as the fact that enrolment was automatic as long as households were registered on the IDPoor system and could present the required documents. The

WFP cash transfer programme communication used the same channel as that used in the RGC programmes in terms of seeking support from the commune and village authorities to disseminate information to beneficiaries. In the RGC programmes, communication also involved the use of Buddhist monks as agents to deliver information to communities.

- **For the rest of the elements, WFP utilised its own systems** (i.e. to define programme duration and the timing of the transfer and to manage the complaints and feedback mechanism, and for M&E of programme implementation).

Additionally, it is important to note that communication and the complaints and feedback mechanism were tightly linked, because the knowledge of the commune and village authorities about the programme influenced their ability to clearly communicate programme procedures and to respond to beneficiaries' complaints regarding programme implementation. However, because the WFP complaints and feedback mechanism was managed by WFP, with limited involvement from the commune and village authorities, there seemed to be no mechanism to ensure that communes and village authorities received updated information regarding the resolutions given to beneficiaries. As a result, the commune and village authorities may not have had full knowledge about WFP cash transfer programme processes, and thus found themselves unable to clearly communicate and respond to complaints and feedback in the field.

Table 5. Links between the WFP cash transfer programme and the government’s social assistance system

Blocks		Cash transfer programmes			Alignment of the WFP cash assistance programme with the government system		
		PWYC	COVID-19	WFP	Parallell system	Shadow alignment	Piggybacking
Programme design							
Objective	Regular conditional cash transfer for the health/nutrition-related needs of pregnant women and children under two years of age	Emergency response during COVID-19 pandemic to support poor and vulnerable households	Emergency response to 2020 and 2021 flooding and to complement the COVID-19 cash transfer programme in order to support poor and vulnerable households affected by multiple shocks	✓	There is some alignment of the WFP cash transfer programme as it was designed to top up (or complement) the COVID-19 cash transfer programme		
Targeting	Using IDPoor data as the basis for targeting, updated with the on-demand (OD) IDPoor mechanism, to identify people affected by shocks and pushed into the poor household category	Using IDPoor data as the basis for targeting, updated with the OD IDPoor mechanism, to identify people affected by shocks and pushed into the poor household category	Using IDPoor data as the basis for targeting, received by WFP in May 2021 and October 2021 which included newly poor household identified through the OD mechanism.	✓	WFP adopted the same targeting design as for the RGC scheme, in terms of using the same poverty status as defined in IDPoor		
Benefit package							
Type of assistance	Cash transfer	Cash transfer	Cash transfer				
Amount of assistance	Not more than US\$ 190 in total, disbursed in three rounds: pre-natal visit, delivery, post-natal visit (including vaccination)	Between US\$ 40 and US\$ 83 per month for households with five members	A total of US\$ 40 for households with five members x three transfers Plus, additional transfer of US\$ 25 as the fourth transfer to cover cash transfer-related expenses	✓	There is some degree of alignment in that the benefit was designed to complement the COVID-19 cash transfer programme benefit		

Blocks		Cash transfer programmes		Alignment of the WFP cash assistance programme with the government system			
		PWYC	COVID-19	WFP	Parallel system	Shadow alignment	Piggy-backing
Benefit package							
Duration	June 2019–present	June 2020, extended until September 2022	October–December 2021	✓ Duration was designed to reduce negative coping mechanisms, but it is unclear if this was achieved as no endline report is yet available to support this			
Timing		Five months after first COVID-19 positive case (detected in January 2020)	One year after the 2020 flooding occurred	✓ Timing was meant to be related to October 2020 flooding, although it was markedly delayed			
Delivery system							
Registration/enrolment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requirement: equity or priority card and health record to register at commune office Focal point at commune carried out registration by entering beneficiaries' data into the management information system (MIS) Commune chief approves the first disbursement in the MIS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requirement: equity card verified at commune office Commune officer entered equity card number and phone number (if available) into the MIS and took photos of recipient Commune chief approved the first disbursement in the MIS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requirement: equity card, national ID card, and phone number to register at registration location WFP or LWD staff entered data into the Kobo data collection system to be verified and validated by WFP staff Cleaned data are sent to WING for account creation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Some degree of alignment is present as an equity card is required. As with the RGC's programmes, enrolment was automatic as long as households were IDPoor households and could present the required documents 			

Blocks	Cash transfer programmes			Alignment of the WFP cash assistance programme with the government system			
	PWYC	COVID-19	WFP	Parallel system	Shadow alignment	Piggybacking	National system led
Benefit delivery	<p>WING created the WING card account (which was then activated by MoSVY) and issued the WING cards. WING cards were then delivered to MoSVY, which distributed them to PDoSVY and then to communes to be distributed to beneficiaries. Beneficiaries visited any WING agent to withdraw cash upon verification of health check-up compliance by the local health centres. Beneficiaries had to bring their WING card to be verified by the WING agent</p>	<p>WING created a wallet account that was activated by MoSVY. Beneficiaries visited any WING agent to withdraw cash. Beneficiaries had to bring their equity card and change the temporary four-digit PIN code to be used for subsequent disbursement; the WING agent verified this with a photo</p>	<p>WING created a bank account and sent a temporary four-digit PIN code to each beneficiary (to be changed to a permanent one). Beneficiaries received notification that cash had been transferred via SMS and then visited a WING agent to withdraw the cash. Beneficiaries had to bring their equity card, phone number, the amount transferred, and the PIN code</p>			<p>✓ A degree of piggybacking is present as WFP used the same financial service provider (WING) as used by the RGC programmes, but with a different account type (for financial inclusion purposes)</p>	
Communication	<p>MoSVY disseminated information to sub-national structures (i.e. provincial governor and PDoSVY) to be further disseminated to health facilities and communes, which then instructed village chiefs to inform poor households in villages. The programme also created flyers and advertisements through social media, mass media, and Telegram</p>	<p>MoSVY disseminated information to sub-national structures (i.e. provincial governor and PDoSVY) to be further disseminated to communes, which then instructed village chiefs to inform poor households in villages. The programme also created flyers and advertisement through social media, mass media, and Telegram</p> <p>MoSVY also works with Buddhist monks to deliver information to communities in remote or hard-to-reach locations during religious events/meetings</p>	<p>WFP disseminated information to communes, which then instructed village chiefs to inform poor households in villages. The programme also created flyers</p>		<p>✓ WFP relied on commune and village authorities as 'liaisons' to beneficiaries, as do the RGC programmes, but no monks were involved in spreading the information to remote or hard-to-reach communities</p>		

Blocks	Cash transfer programmes			Alignment with WFP programme			
	PWYC	COVID-19	WFP	Parallel system	Shadow alignment	Piggybacking	National system led
Complaints/ feedback mechanisms	Used the government vertical command line where complaints from the ground are collected by communes. Cases were referred, in order, to PDOsVY, MoSVY, and then the General Secretariat of the NSPC, if they were not resolved at each prior level	Used the government vertical command line where complaints from the ground are collected by the communes. Cases were referred, in order, to PDOsVY and then MoSVY, if they were not resolved at each prior level	All relevant stakeholders could raise complaints about the programme, including the local authorities. Complaints from field were collected through three channels: the WFP Area Office (AO), LWD, and the hotline. Both on-the-spot resolution and referral cases were recorded in the complaints and feedback mechanism intake form and then referred to the WFP complaints and feedback mechanism focal person	✓ WFP's mechanism was not in line with the government used separate complaints and feedback channels			
Monitoring and evaluation	MoSVY, PDOsVY, and communes conducted periodic monitoring of programme implementation, progress, and beneficiary participation. The RGC received support from development partners in implementing their M&E system for overall monitoring, assessment, and evaluation of the programme	MoSVY, PDOsVY, and communes conduct periodic monitoring of programme implementation, progress, and beneficiaries' participation. The RGC received support from DPs in implementing their M&E system for overall monitoring, assessment and evaluation of the programme	Process monitoring, outcome monitoring, and output monitoring are conducted periodically by WFP with support from LWD and GeoPoll	✓ WFP carried out its own monitoring and impact assessment and did not follow the RGC procedures			

Blocks	Cash transfer programmes			Alignment with WFP programme			
	PWYC	COVID-19	WFP	Parallel system	Shadow alignment	Piggybacking	National system led
Data and information systems							
Social protection data and information system	IDPoor database as the basis for targeting	IDPoor database as the basis for targeting	IDPoor data as the basis for targeting			✓ Using the same IDPoor database for targeting could be considered piggybacking on the government system	
Early warning systems and data			PRISM satellite-based data on flood-affected areas		✓ WFP utilised PRISM satellite data, developed in coordination with NCDM, to verify the geographic locations of flood hazards		

5 Findings

This section will describe the findings of the operational research that we identified from the data and information collected. The findings are organised by the elements of the building blocks of SRSP, grouped into five main categories: Section 5.1, on programme design; Section 5.2, on the programme delivery systems; Section 5.3, on programme data and information systems; Section 5.4, on policy and institutions; and Section 5.5, on financing social protection. Each section will consist of a description of the findings and brief key lessons learned to guide the research in defining its recommendations.

The depth of explanation and analysis for each building block will be slightly different. We focus our analysis on areas where there is alignment or piggybacking of the systems and procedures used by WFP with existing systems/procedures in the government. Based on the analysis presented in Section 4, areas of alignment or piggybacking with the national system include objective, targeting, amount of assistance, registration, benefit delivery, communication, and the data and information system.

5.1 Programme design

In designing its cash assistance programme, WFP made several adjustments according to the changing situation in Cambodia and the availability of the financial support.

The original intention of WFP was to provide cash support to households affected by the flash floods in October 2020. WFP, with support from USAID, initially planned for the programme to start registration in December 2020 for around 3,000 flood-affected households. At that time, COVID-19 cases were relatively small compared to the situation in other countries.²⁰ Only 291 confirmed cases had been found by the end of October 2020 and the RGC had just started providing assistance for those affected, through the COVID-19 cash transfer programme in June 2020.

The planned registration process in December 2020 was delayed in part due to COVID-19, including a major outbreak in February 2021, which led to restrictions on movement, curfews, and lockdowns, meaning that the preparation and implementation of registration could not be initiated until July 2021. Subsequently, WFP received additional contributions from GIZ in April 2021 and July 2021, which allowed it to expand the coverage of the programme to a further 36,000 households. At this time, COVID-19 cases were more apparent in Cambodia, so the objective of the cash assistance was also to respond to the impact of COVID-19 and not solely to the impact of the 2020 flooding. As the RGC had been providing assistance for COVID-19 for around a year, WFP intended its programme to be a top-up of the RGC COVID-19 cash transfer programme. Registration for this (larger) cohort of the beneficiaries also began in July 2021.

The first disbursement to beneficiaries could not be delivered immediately, as planned, because of the challenges encountered during the registration process (see Section 5.2.1) and the lengthy process required to contract WING as the financial service provider. The first transfer finally took place in September 2021.

As the result of a further flood in September 2021, WFP saw the importance of increasing the coverage areas, specifically in Banteay Meanchey province as it had been severely affected in 2021. WFP was able to shift the balance from the operational side of the programme to target extra communes affected by the 2021 flooding. The balance was a consequence of a lower number of registered households and household members compared to the numbers WFP had initially planned for. Another 26 communes in this province were added to the list of targeted locations.

5.1.1 Targeting

Determining the target beneficiaries. WFP adopted the same targeting design as the two RGC cash transfer programmes, using poverty status defined in the IDPoor database as the starting point to determine the target beneficiaries. This database has been updated using the OD mechanism (discussed further in Section 5.3). The COVID-19 cash transfer programme provides assistance to all poor households (Poor Level 1 and Level 2) listed in this database. The PWYC cash transfer programme has a more specific categorical targeting, namely pregnant women and children under two, from poor households registered in the IDPoor database.

In addition to using IDPoor database, geographical data considerations were also used by WFP to focus the assistance to flood-affected locations, so that assistance was provided only for five provinces affected by floods. For this geographic targeting, WFP used satellite-derived flood extent information made available through the PRISM system, which was combined with IDPoor data, an approach that had not been used before. This allowed WFP to identify communes that had a high concentration of IDPoor households exposed to flooding for consideration for selection to the programme.

Poverty criteria used in the targeting design. The IDPoor system uses several proxy indicators (differing slightly between rural and urban identification) to score and classify the poverty

²⁰ <https://covid19.who.int/region/wpro/country/kh>

status of households, including easily observable and verifiable assets owned by the households, as well as non-asset criteria, such as share of dependents and a household's special circumstances²¹ (the latter is not for scoring but may be used by the village representative group – VRG – to modify the score and poverty classification of a household). Currently, a comprehensive review is being carried out by the Ministry of Planning regarding these criteria, including adding consumption per capita as a new proxy indicator, and thus broadening the welfare measurement, in addition to other asset-focused and non-asset indicators for defining the poverty status of a household during the implementation of the OD mechanism going forwards. It is still not clear the extent to which the current proxy means test model was a good method to identify the new poor who have suffered an income shock.

With the introduction of the OD mechanism, by which vulnerable households can request to be interviewed, it provides a starting point to identify the near-poor, i.e. those that live close to the poverty line and are vulnerable to becoming poor when a shock/crisis occurs (see Section 5.3 for more details). However, it may not be adequate to take poverty status as the sole targeting design as there are other vulnerable groups that should be supported regardless of poverty status, such as PWDs or the elderly.

Lessons learned on targeting

- The poverty status in the IDPoor system, determined based on the assets owned by the household, as well as other non-asset criteria, needs to be examined further to find out whether these criteria can identify newly poor households during shocks. The reform of IDPoor through the OD mechanism makes it more dynamic and more up to date, so there is potential for the system to underpin social protection and SRSP going forwards. The proposed changes to make a unified questionnaire and add consumption per capita as another proxy indicator broaden the welfare measurement and have the potential to help improve it further. There is greater potential for further use of IDPoor data for various programmes targeting poor and vulnerable households implemented by various organisations, with an agreement on data sharing between government and non-government organisations (to address data protection concerns).
- In terms of the use of PRISM as a pilot in the WFP cash transfer programme, it would be very useful if further assessments could be conducted, including on whether there are other data sources that can be utilised to enhance geographic targeting.

²¹ A household's specific circumstances include situations causing the household livelihood to decline (such as unexpected problems or serious crises and being a vulnerable household) and factors improving the household livelihood or decreasing household vulnerability (such as financial assistance or social assistance from others, or the sale of property).

5.1.2 Benefit package

The discussion regarding the benefit package focuses on four aspects: type of assistance; amount of assistance; duration; and timing.

Type of assistance. The cash-based transfer is the delivery method used by both the WFP cash transfer programme and the RGC COVID-19 and PWYC cash transfer programmes. In interviews with beneficiaries in this research, the majority (67%) demonstrated a strong preference for cash. Around 26% mentioned that they preferred in-kind assistance because it was easier for them, rather than finding/buying food or other necessities on their own, as they had disabilities or because they were elderly and preferred to receive goods directly at their homes. The other 7% did not want to express an opinion.

Amount of assistance. The transfer size for the WFP cash transfer programme took the 2020 Expenditure Gap Analysis and Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB) calculation as a starting point as WFP aimed to cover the food needs of households.²² The decision on the transfer value was made in consultation with partners. Each household member supported by the WFP cash transfer programme received US\$ 8 per month in three transfers. WFP also covered expenses to purchase a SIM card, transport, and other programme-related expenses at US\$ 5 per person.²³ In total, a household of five received US\$ 145 over the life of the programme.

For the COVID-19 cash transfer programme, each household receives a basic transfer of US\$ 20 (in rural areas) or US\$ 30 (in urban areas) per month. In addition to this, each household member receives between US\$ 4 and US\$ 13 per month (depending on the type of household member, whether there are children, PWDs, elderly, Poor Level 1, or Poor Level 2). With this variation, a household (with five household members) could receive between US\$ 40 and US\$ 83 per month.

As the purpose of the WFP cash transfer

programme was to top up the COVID-19 cash transfer programme, this would mean that, in total, a household of five people would receive US\$ 80 to US\$ 123 per month from the combined transfer (see the detailed calculation on transfer values in Annex E). As the gap analysis identified a gap of food and non-food expenses at US\$ 104.25, this would mean that the combined cash transfers met 77–118% of the identified gap in a household's expenditure.

It is not clear whether this adequacy level was also discussed during WFP consultation meetings with its partners; however, it is important for relevant stakeholders to agree on the adequacy level of the transfer value for any social assistance going forwards.

²² An MEB is defined as the cost of meeting a household's essential needs.

²³ SIM cards are free in urban areas or US\$ 1 in rural areas, and transport for one trip by boat costs around US\$ 2.50.

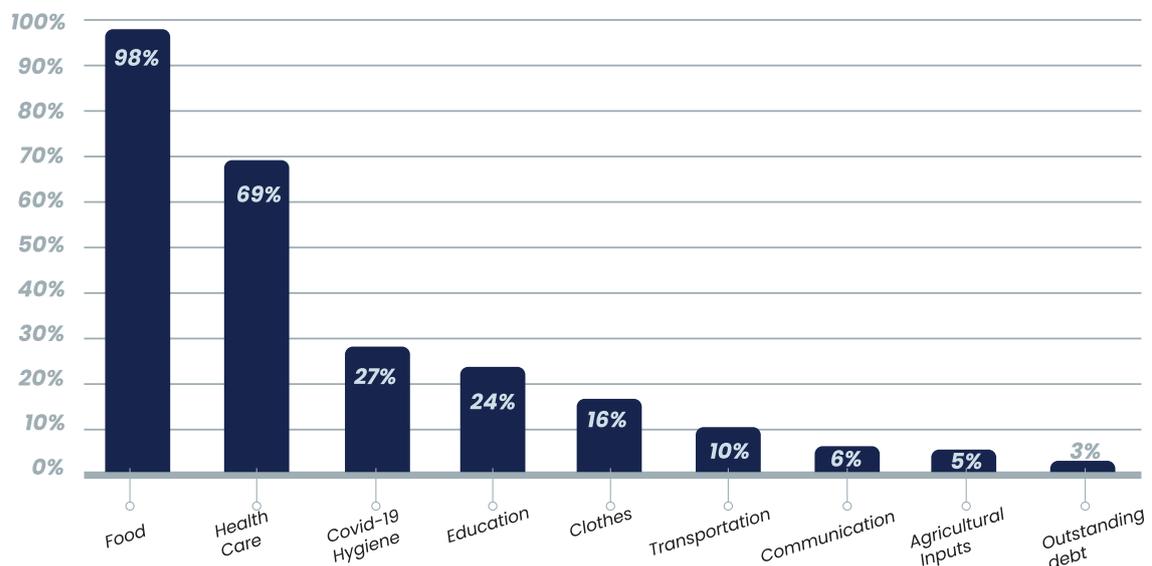
Table 6. Duration and transfer value of the three cash transfer programmes

	WFP cash transfer programme	COVID-19 cash transfer programme	PWYC cash transfer programme
Duration	Disbursed in a staggered manner, divided into three groups of beneficiaries receiving the cash in four rounds, from September 2021 to February 2022	From June 2020 to date	From July 2019 to date
Amount	KHR 32,000/member (US\$ 8) x three transfers Plus, a one-time transfer of KHR 20,000/member (US\$ 5) for other cash transfer-related expenses	Basic transfer of KHR 120,000/household/month in urban area or KHR 80,000/household/month in rural area. Additional transfer for each member of household, ranges between KHR 16,000 and KHR 52,000 per member	Not more than KHR 760,000 in total
Total amount for a household with five members	KHR 160,000 per household (US\$ 40) x three transfers Plus, KHR 100,000 per household (US\$ 25) as the fourth transfer for other cash transfer-related expenses	Minimum KHR 160,000 per household per month (US\$ 40) and maximum KHR 332,000 per household per month (US\$ 83)	N/A

Source: OPM analysis

The cash transfer, both from the WFP cash transfer programme and the COVID-19 cash transfer programme, was used for a variety of different purposes according to the needs of each household, but the majority used the transfer to cover immediate needs, such as food and groceries. Others used it for medical needs, electricity, children's education, and to pay debts.

The results of the process monitoring carried out by WFP through interviews with 341 beneficiaries showed that the cash transfers were primarily used to cover the immediate needs for food (mentioned by 98% of respondents) and health care (mentioned by 69% of respondents). Figure 3 presents the use of the WFP cash transfer in more detail.

Figure 3. Use of the WFP cash transfer

Source: WFP process monitoring, December 2021

Table 7. Schedule of the WFP cash transfer for three groups

Group	# households	Sep 21	Oct 21	Nov 21	Dec 21	Jan 22	Feb 22
September	12,000	US\$ 6	US\$ 8	US\$ 10	US\$ 5		
October	20,000		US\$ 8	US\$ 8	US\$ 8	US\$ 5	
December	7,000			US\$ 8	US\$ 8	US\$ 8	US\$ 5

Duration. The WFP cash transfer programme was a short programme lasting around four months for each household, depending on when they completed the registration process to receive the first transfer. WFP divided the beneficiaries into three groups, called the ‘September group’, the ‘October group’, and the ‘November group’. See Table 7 for the details.

At the time this report was written, the impact of the assistance provided during this period was unknown. As the WFP transfer finished only in February 2022, post-distribution monitoring data are not yet available to demonstrate a reduction in negative coping mechanisms.

Timing. As explained above, several challenges in the preparation of the programme implementation, i.e. registration challenges (see also Section 5.2.1) and the lengthy process to reach an agreement with the financial service provider, caused the first transfer, which was originally planned for December 2020, to be moved to September 2021. Several commune councils and village leaders interviewed regretted the delays in the initial flood assistance from WFP:

‘I think it did not achieve its objective as the cash transfer was too late to respond to the villagers’ urgent need during the (October 2020) flood.’ Village Chief, Kampong Thom

However, we found an important difference to note for the additional 26 communes in Banteay Meanchey which received assistance after the floods in September–October 2021. For poor people in this area, assistance was

provided immediately. Beneficiary registration was completed quickly with clearer procedures and the financial service provider was ready to distribute the cash (see Section 5.2.1 for more details).

‘Yes, I think it has met its objective because it has helped the flood victims [the flood happened a month before] and the families received the cash transfer.’ Beneficiary, Commune Paoy Peat, Banteay Mancheay

In the case of the COVID-19 cash transfer programme, the timing was appropriate given that the programme commenced in June 2020. This shows that the RGC is particularly agile and can immediately prepare a new shock responsive social assistance programme in a relatively short period of time, around five months, with the first COVID-19 positive case being detected in Cambodia on 27 January 2020. This could be done by the RGC because they adopted procedures developed in the PWYC cash transfer programme for the implementation of the COVID-19 cash transfer programme. For example, for the registration process of beneficiaries, IDPoor Level 1 and Level 2 households were required only to go to the closest commune to verify their equity card data in the MIS (see the registration process in Section 5.2.1). The RGC also has an agreement with WING for the existing programme, so that account creation and disbursement could be carried out immediately.

Lessons learned on the benefit package

- **Type of assistance:** In this research, the choice of assistance in the form of cash transfers does not always match the needs of some interviewed beneficiaries, when there are issues in accessing cash, especially by vulnerable groups such as PWDs, the elderly, and beneficiaries in remote locations. The majority of households (67%) stated that they preferred cash to in-kind assistance, while 26% preferred in-kind assistance, as they have disability issues or because they were elderly and preferred to receive goods directly at their homes.
- **Amount of assistance:** The transfer value of shock responsive programmes is often related to the objectives of the assistance, whether to save lives, protect livelihoods, or meet basic needs, such as food. In most cases, the transfer values are based on a MEB, as used by WFP as a starting point, which were calculated according to market prices, household expenditures and local context. However, there has been no evaluation to show that the transfer value was adequate, including a recalculation of the value during the programme implementation.
- **Duration:** Humanitarian cash transfers are generally short term in nature, as the WFP cash transfer programme was – it lasted for three months. It is still unknown whether the three-month duration was sufficient for the beneficiaries to cope with the impact of the shocks they experienced. WFP will analyse the impact of its assistance using a post-distribution monitoring survey.
- **Timing:** System preparedness is important for timely SRSP. The RGC's ability to leverage its existing relationship with a financial service provider was crucial to the timely disbursement of funds for the COVID-19 cash transfer programme. Once WFP's agreement with the financial service provider was established, this too enhanced the timeliness of its assistance for communes that were flooded in September–October 2021, but having these negotiations for the first time ex post inevitably led to some delays. There are procedures, systems, and other preparedness measures that need to be done in advance and should be ready immediately when the programme starts. This is to ensure that future SRSP programmes do not experience similar delays.

5.2 Programme delivery systems

This section provides a review of whether the programme delivery mechanisms – in terms of registration and enrolment (Section 5.2.1), benefit delivery (Section 5.2.2), communication (Section 5.2.3), complaints and feedback mechanism (Section 5.2.4), and M&E (Section 5.2.5) – worked well based on interviews with national-, provincial-, and commune-level stakeholders. It also explores issues and challenges related to each building block and provides some comparisons with the existing RGC COVID-19 and PWYC cash transfer programmes.

5.2.1 Registration and enrolment

The system and procedure of registration processes of the three programmes. Each programme began the registration process by using the IDPoor database as the data source for the potential beneficiaries. The COVID-19 cash transfer programme employs the existing system and mechanisms of the routine PWYC cash transfer programme, in terms of utilising the commune focal points to implement the process and using the same MIS.

Meanwhile, the registration of beneficiaries of the WFP cash transfer programme was conducted by the programme partner, LWD, and the WFP Area Office. WFP AO and LWD field staff coordinated with the commune council and village authorities for information dissemination and decisions on the registration location and time.

Table 8. Registration and enrolment processes of the WFP cash transfer programme and the two RGC cash transfer programmes

Steps	WFP cash transfer programme	COVID-19 cash transfer programme	PWYC cash transfer programme
Data source	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IDPoor database received from the Ministry of Planning in May 2021 and October 2021 Satellite data from PRISM 	IDPoor database, updated using the OD mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IDPoor database, updated using the OD mechanism Post-ID to identify newly poor pregnant women (to be mainstreamed to the OD mechanism)
Administered by	WFP AO and LWD, with support from the village chief and commune council to inform the target beneficiaries	Commune council focal points who manage the beneficiaries' data digitally	Commune council focal points with support from health facilities
Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equity card, national ID card, and phone number Lost or damaged ID cards can be replaced with other documents, such as a family book with photo of household head, driving licence, employment workbook, or passport If none of these are available, a letter of residence from the commune and village chief can be used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equity card Equity card without photo must be complemented with national identity card, family book, or residence book 	Equity card or priority card, and health record
System	Data entry through Kobo Toolbox and data cleaning through the Beneficiary Management System	Data entry through MIS by focal points	Data entry through MIS by focal points
Enrolment result	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IDPoor data of beneficiary verified WING account created 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IDPoor data of beneficiary verified Commune chief approves first disbursement through MIS and beneficiary receives information on the benefit package 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IDPoor data of beneficiary verified Commune chief approves first disbursement through MIS Beneficiaries to fulfil the programme conditionality

Source: SOPs of the WFP cash transfer programme, operational manual of the COVID-19 cash transfer programme, operational manual of the PWYC cash transfer programme, and OPM analysis

Challenges in registration and verification processes. There were several challenges faced during the registration processes, which were experienced by those involved in the programmes, including beneficiaries, LWD, WFP AO, and commune and village authorities. These challenges at best only delayed the registration processes; at worst, they caused unsuccessful registration. As a result, some poor households which were entitled to receive assistance were unable to be registered into the programme. Each of these challenges is described below.

A. The quality of the data used as the basis for registration. Based on the results of WFP registration process, out of 53,168 households in five provinces listed in the IDPoor database, WFP was able to successfully register and create WING accounts for only 86% of them. Among the 14% of unregistered households, more than half of them were households which had migrated to Thailand or other provinces and could not be contacted (see Annex F on WFP registration result). It was not known whether the households had migrated permanently or just temporarily, which required a status update in the IDPoor database.

B. Reaching households in remote and hard-to-reach locations. Another challenge experienced by the programme was difficulties in coming to the registration locations for beneficiaries who live in remote areas. An interview with a village leader in Banteay Meanchey noted that some poor households had to undertake a significant journey to the commune office to register for the COVID-19 cash transfer programme. For the WFP cash transfer programme, this challenge meant that around 1.4% of households failed to register. Although the PWYC cash transfer programme has a dedicated procedure to register beneficiaries in remote areas,²⁴ in practice women are still required to travel to the commune office to register, as a commissioned evaluation of the programme found in 2021.

C. Requirement issues for the creation of bank account. This is particularly relevant to the WFP cash transfer programme, where there was a challenge to create bank accounts for beneficiaries due to requirements that could not be met. This was in relation to WFP's aim of supporting financial inclusion by providing beneficiary-owned bank accounts, which differ from the accounts provided by the two RGC cash transfer programmes (further discussion in Section 5.2.2). To open a bank account, beneficiaries were requested to provide more documents, including a phone number with a recognised SIM system to receive an SMS message with further instructions. Around 8% of the registered households could not open a bank account, partly because of a lack of the required phone number.

D. Limited knowledge and capacity of commune council. The registration process for the RGC cash transfer programmes is carried out mainly by the commune council, and this faced several challenges related to unstable internet connections, limited supporting infrastructure, and capacity to utilise information and communication technology. Commune officials interviewed noted that unstable internet connections slowed down the registration processes or even required them to repeat the process if the internet connection was lost. A performance assessment of the COVID-19 cash transfer programme in 2021²⁵ noted that senior members of the commune council in remote areas have limited knowledge of information and communication technology, making it difficult for them to use tablets and understand an online system. Moreover, supporting infrastructure, such as tablets, mobile internet top-up fees, and transport, were not sufficient in some areas, as confirmed by both the assessment and evaluation of the COVID-19 and PWYC cash transfer programmes (see Annex G giving a case study of commune council capacity).

24 According to the PWYC SOPs, the registration of eligible pregnant women and children in remote areas more than 20 km from the commune office is done by the commune programme's focal point, who visits the target villages for registration. The procedures for registration then follow the normal steps.

25 Nuppun Research and Consulting Co. (2021) 'Performance assessment of the cash transfer program for poor and vulnerable households during COVID-19', Policy Brief, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

Other factors for further consideration in SRSP programming. From the registration process above, there are several aspects that are important to note for further consideration.

A. The potential of IDPoor as a registration platform. In an attempt to speed up the delivery of assistance, the COVID-19 cash transfer programme did not have a separate registration process; the programme automatically enrolled IDPoor households following a brief verification of IDPoor data in the MIS.²⁶ This shows that the IDPoor database and social protection registry of MoSVY are already linked. IDPoor therefore has the potential to become a registration platform for SRSP.

B. Necessary preparedness measures. Apart from the challenges faced above, it should also be noted that the registration process can be carried out more quickly if procedures and mechanisms are in place before

registration begins, which is an important aspect of the prompt provision of assistance during shocks and emergencies. When WFP expanded the programme to include new communes in Banteay Meanchey affected by the flash flooding in 2021, the programme was able to carry out very rapid registration. A total of 8,700 beneficiaries, who were also selected based on the IDPoor database, were successfully registered within five days. This was confirmed via interviews with beneficiaries in the newly affected communes (i.e. Ou Ambel, Paoy Paet, and Ta Kong), who stated that the process was fast and took only a few days to complete. One beneficiary in Ta Kong informed that the process took him only one day to complete:

'It was fast. It took only one day to register – I just had to bring my IDPoor card, identity card, and copy my phone number.' Beneficiary, Banteay Meanchey

Lessons learned on the registration and enrolment

- The IDPoor system may not be sufficiently dynamic to capture the change in situation and movement of households, including frequent changes of phone numbers or contact details. The WFP cash transfer programme experienced unsuccessful registration for a number of beneficiaries due to this issue.
- Special attention also needs to be given to poor households who live in remote locations, because 1.4% of households failed to register with the WFP cash transfer programme as they were absent during registration. This indicates a need to improve the systems and procedures to ensure that these poor households are not excluded.
- Implementing additional requirements in the registration process leads to delays in providing the response. A key advantage of having IDPoor registration as one of the foundations for SRSP registration is the timeliness, to the extent that IDPoor status equals automatic eligibility and no additional screening is required to enrol households into the programme. WFP's aim of supporting financial inclusion was constrained by requirements that could not be fulfilled by some households, which caused them to be excluded from the programme. It is necessary to review the application of this more 'advanced' feature in a shock responsive programme.
- As for the RGC programmes, given that the verification/registration processes rely on commune councils, there is a need to strengthen the capacity of commune councils in terms of human resources and equipment to enable them to implement rapid registrations when shocks occur.

²⁶ Verification includes equity card number and beneficiary name, poverty level, and geographical assignment (urban or rural), members, names and age, the cash benefit for each member and whole household, address, and photo on the equity card (which may be unavailable).

5.2.2 Benefit delivery

The procedures and requirements of the delivery processes. WFP used the same financial service provider as the two RGC cash transfer programmes, i.e. WING, to transfer cash to beneficiaries' accounts. The WFP cash transfer programme created a cardless account for each beneficiary household, while the COVID-19 and PWYC cash transfer programmes use a wallet

and WING card account, respectively. Unlike the accounts created for the RGC programmes, WFP's account was a bank account that allowed beneficiaries to perform other transactions beyond receiving or withdrawing cash, even after the programme had concluded. Table 9 highlights the key steps in delivery processes and compares the three programmes.

Table 9. Benefit delivery processes of the three cash transfer programmes

Steps	WFP cash transfer programme	COVID-19 cash transfer programme	PWYC cash transfer programme
Step 1: WING account creation and activation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WING created the virtual account (or Beneficiary Wallet) using the phone number as the account number • Beneficiaries received a four-digit temporary PIN code via SMS message • Beneficiaries were required to visit a WING agent to update their information and change the temporary PIN code to a permanent one to complete account creation and activation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WING creates a wallet account using the 14-digit equity card number as the wallet account • The account is activated by MoSVY 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WING creates the WING card account and issues the WING cards • WING cards are delivered to MoSVY, who then distributes them to PDoSVY and then to communes to be distributed to beneficiaries • The account is activated by MoSVY
Step 2: Cash withdrawal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requirement: PIN code, phone number, and the amount received • The first cash withdrawal could be done after receiving a second SMS (the first SMS was to provide the temporary PIN code), indicating the benefit amount that had been credited to the beneficiary account • WING agent verified beneficiaries' information and then provided the cash • Subsequent withdrawal could be done following SMS notification that the benefit had been credited to beneficiaries' account 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requirement: equity card number • First cash withdrawal can be done immediately after registration is completed • WING agent verifies beneficiaries' information, along with the photo, and then provides the cash • Beneficiaries must change the temporary four-digit PIN code to be used for subsequent disbursement • The first disbursement is approved and released by the commune chief; subsequent disbursements are released by the MoSVY focal person • Subsequent withdrawals can be done around the end of each month 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requirement: WING account card • Beneficiaries receive a WING card from commune focal point and the first disbursement is approved by the commune chief through the MIS after registration is completed • WING agent verifies the beneficiaries' information and then provides the cash • Beneficiaries attend scheduled health check-up and subsequent withdrawals can be done after local public health facility staff verify health check-up compliance through the MIS and MoSVY sends the information to the WING agent for disbursement
Step 3: Additional security measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process monitoring • Post-distribution monitoring • Reconciliation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photos of beneficiaries holding equity card taken and entered into the MIS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photos of beneficiaries holding equity card taken and entered into the MIS

Source: SOPs of the WFP cash transfer programme, Manual of the RGC COVID-19 cash transfer and PWYC cash transfer programmes, OPM analysis

Challenges in delivering the assistance.

A number of challenges were noted by all stakeholders interviewed, including commune staff, village chiefs, and beneficiaries, as well as LWD staff.

- A. **Problems related to the use of mobile phones** in the cash delivery process of the WFP cash transfer programme were reported, including: (i) limited knowledge/understanding of some beneficiaries of mobile phone operation and of instructions sent by SMS message in English; and (ii) limited cellular coverage and smartphone ownership in rural areas. According to the commune and village authorities interviewed, a number of households experienced difficulties with receiving the SMS message because they did not know how to use their phone or how to clear their SMS inbox when it was full, or there was insufficient signal/connection in their location. Moreover, the fact that the SMS messages with important information and instructions were in English compounded the problem for those who could not read or speak English. These challenges eventually contributed to delays in cash withdrawal and, in a few cases, failure to deliver assistance entirely.
- B. **Common problems with cashing out the assistance.** While many beneficiaries and implementing authorities interviewed for this research noted little/no hassle and quick cash disbursement processes for the two RGC programmes, some beneficiaries faced difficulties travelling to withdraw cash, particularly PWDs and those living farther from WING agents, as WING agents are not present in all communes across Cambodia. Frequent reports of errors involving the money transfer system (e.g. the machine was out of order) were also noted by some WING agents. This was especially problematic during hectic withdrawal days where many transactions were taking place simultaneously. This was further compounded by the fact that some WING agents did not have sufficient cash for beneficiaries to withdraw, especially during periods where multiple cash transfer programmes were being implemented in the same locations.

- C. **Families receiving cash transfers from separate interventions and through similar (but separate) delivery mechanisms faced confusion.** Some beneficiaries used the PIN code from the COVID-19 cash transfer programme to try to cash out their assistance from the WFP cash transfer programme (or vice versa) for three attempts or more, and got their accounts blocked or suspended. This confusion was seen between beneficiaries and WING agents, whereby beneficiaries were unclear about which transfer they wanted to cash out, while WING agents were not familiar with all of the programmes being implemented locally. There does not appear to have been clear (or joint) coordination between the programme implementers and the financial service provider to periodically share information about the programmes.

Features for further consideration. From the implementation of the programmes that use the cash-based approach, there are several aspects that are important to note for further consideration.

- A. **Selection of financial service provider and the delivery mechanism.** Despite the strengths of WING (e.g. a wide network of 10,000 WING agents, a presence in many communes, a reliable partner for the RGC programmes, and a shared vision on financial inclusion and the digitalisation of Cambodia), development partners recognised that there remains a need to diversify financial service providers to better serve beneficiaries in rural villages where WING agents are not present and to provide more accessible options to beneficiaries for cash withdrawal. As new technology solutions continue to appear in the mobile banking market, the National Bank of Cambodia has recently launched 'Bakong', an all-in-one mobile payment and banking application that uses blockchain technology and allows mobile payments between different banks. This type of technology could help ease mobile banking and payment transactions in the future, and could potentially become a payment mechanism for cash assistance programmes.

- B. Security measurements.** In contrast to the type of account provided by the RGC in their two programmes, WFP introduced a more advanced account, namely a bank account or mobile money, with the goal to support financial inclusion. While there were several obstacles in its implementation, the account type chosen by WFP provided a more secure system to cash out and minimised the likelihood that the money would be disbursed to unauthorised individuals. This was because, in the WFP cash transfer programme, the PIN code was sent only to beneficiaries' phone numbers, and beneficiaries were required to present their PIN code and phone number when cashing out. This additional security could provide long-term benefits as it minimises the occurrence of fraud, ensures that cash is received only by eligible households, and provides procedures or mechanisms that the RGC could adopt to enhance the security of cash delivery.
- '[For the WFP cash transfer programme] it is difficult to set up a WING account, but it is easy and secure for disbursement. [For the COVID-19 and PWYC cash transfer programmes] it is easy to set up a WING account, but it is difficult and unsecured for disbursement.'* WING agent, Kampong Thom
- C. Fast delivery processes of the COVID-19 cash transfer programme.** The programme did not go through a linear process of account registration, account activation, and fund transfer when the programme started. In fact, the programme started with virtual accounts (mobile wallets) that had already been created using the IDPoor number for identification and a temporary PIN code. After verification at the commune office, the first disbursement was released; the subsequent disbursements were released on a precise schedule to beneficiaries. The decision to go with this type of account was also reached quickly and it took WING about four weeks to integrate the readily available information (i.e. 14-digit equity card number based on IDPoor data) to process the accounts. No additional personal information from beneficiaries was collected for the account creation.
- D. Financial inclusion purposes.** More than half (57%) of all respondents interviewed (i.e. beneficiaries, commune staff, and village chiefs combined) considered that having the account was useful, because they could use it to transfer money to another account, safely deposit their money for future expenses, and withdraw cash at any time. This supports WFP's goal of promoting financial inclusion. However, some other respondents still thought that there was no benefit to having a bank account, because they did not have the money to deposit, had limited familiarity with banks, and encountered difficulties with the long journeys required to reach the banks.
- E. Reconciliation of cash transfer that has been disbursed.** WFP routinely conducted transfer reconciliations with the aim of verifying that each benefit transfer had been received by the intended beneficiaries. This process helps decrease WFP's exposure to risks and enhances WFP accountability to donors and beneficiaries. In terms of the management in the RGC programmes, it is not known whether the RGC is also carrying out the same reconciliation process with the financial service provider.

Lessons learned on the benefit delivery

- The noted limitation on WING agent availability and transaction capacity could pose issues for the ability of beneficiaries to access the benefits rapidly. Diversifying financial service providers and improving the service may be able to address this issue. The existing delivery system underpinning the social assistance system has both strengths and limitations for SRSP, and these limitations are things that also undermine delivery on routine social assistance.
- The noted confusion between beneficiaries and WING agents due to the implementation of multiple cash transfer programmes at the same time indicates that there is a need for clear coordination between the programme implementer and the financial service providers, as well as between the RGC programmes and partner-led programmes, so that information about the programmes is periodically shared, especially if SRSP is provided by various organisations.
- The duplication of systems and processes is onerous and confusing for affected populations and should be avoided. It highlights the advantage of having a single well-understood delivery process underpinning routine social assistance and SRSP.
- While financial inclusion of unbanked populations is desirable, it is a complex issue that is not necessarily most effectively addressed through a SRSP intervention ex post. There is the greater complexity of registration and the accessibility issues. Bank account provision does not equate to utilisation, which depends on many other factors, such as convenience, trust, and ability to save, and can require additional efforts to change attitudes/practices and understand incentives. The short-term nature of (most) SRSP makes it hard to do these things effectively. If these things were embedded in the long-term social protection system development, with time and effort put into addressing the bottlenecks, this would provide a sound basis for effective SRSP.

5.2.3 Communication

Method of communication and actors involved in the process. The main channel for information dissemination for all programmes under review is through direct communication from the village chief. After the highest level of government announced the roll-out of the two RGC programmes, commune and village authorities then had substantial roles in the overall dissemination of the programmes, supported by the relevant sub-national and national actors. WFP also utilised this channel.

Almost all beneficiaries interviewed (99%) confirmed that they received information from the village chief or commune officers through in-person communication. Two common approaches were used: (1) door-to-door visits to eligible households; and (2) meetings set up in a pagoda or other location.

Table 10. Communication channel in each cash transfer programme

Programme	Communication method and tools
WFP programme	Direct communication by village chief, flyers
COVID-19 programme	Direct communication by village chief, flyers, television, radio, YouTube, Facebook, Telegram, billboards, press, and support from Buddhist monks to spread information about the programme to communities in remote or hard-to-reach locations
PWYC programme	Direct communication by village chief and health centres, flyers, television, radio, YouTube, Facebook, Telegram

Challenges in providing information to beneficiaries. Although each programme has prepared communication tools and channels to provide information to beneficiaries, there are several obstacles, which will be explained below.

- A. **Communication is not widespread to everyone.** Limited information regarding the programmes and procedures for obtaining assistance is experienced especially by people living in remote locations. Although communication efforts at commune and village levels are found to have matured and increased in the COVID-19 cash transfer programme and the PWYC cash transfer programme, reaching those living in remote communities and those migrating for work is still challenging. And with the limited available information dissemination activities, communication about the three programmes seems mainly to be focused on IDPoor households, leaving non-beneficiaries uninformed. This has led to some non-beneficiaries assuming that the information was not disseminated widely on purpose to avoid annoying people who were not able to receive the benefit.
- B. **Not all channels are known by beneficiaries.** On the other hand, although there are already several tools and channels provided, not all of these tools and channels are utilised by the community. Although the WFP cash transfer programme provided flyers with more complete information (see Annex H), less than a third of beneficiaries (31%) stated they had received or seen the flyers. Similar results have also been found in both RGC programmes, which underlines how direct communication by the village chief has been the main and preferred method of communication. Several other tools also cannot be used by the illiterate and PWDs. Those who are illiterate rely on direct communication by the village chief. To ensure that PWDs are also informed, commune authorities coordinated with village chiefs to visit the household or asked one of the household members to attend a meeting.
- C. **Not all commune councils have important information.** This is mainly related to the complaints expressed by the beneficiaries. As already noted, the commune council was not involved in some processes in the

implementation of the WFP cash transfer programme, so they could not provide a complete explanation to the beneficiaries when the beneficiaries approached them with various questions. As for the RGC programme, the council commune was more confident in providing explanations to beneficiaries because they received clear information from programme training sessions. Also, these programmes are more longstanding than the WFP cash transfer programme, which could be the reason why commune and village authorities have clearer information about the RGC programmes. Commune staff in Kampong Thom expressed their concerns about their limited knowledge of the WFP cash transfer programme registration and benefit delivery processes, while at the same time having to deal with the issues that arose in the process:

‘The commune authority did not know about the registration process and the creating of the WING account, but when there is a problem in withdrawing/cashing out the money, they asked us to assist and solve the problem for them. How can we deal with the problem if we did not know the process from the beginning?’ Commune staff, Kampong Thom

Preferences of beneficiaries for further consideration. Interviews with beneficiaries revealed that they preferred to receive information directly from the village chief because they felt the information was more trustworthy, they could directly ask questions, and it was easier for elderly or illiterate people to understand than reading flyers or watching TV. Similar responses were given by all communes and village authorities interviewed, where they noted that households preferred face-to-face communication through the village chief or village meeting.

At the ministerial level, to access rural, hard-to-reach communities, MoSVY sought support from the Ministry of Culture and Religion to ask Buddhist monks to spread information about the programme during religious ceremonies in rural communities. The communication method applied here is also direct communication, so it is easier for the people to understand.

Lessons learned on communication

- The preferred method of communication among households is through direct communication because it is deemed clearer and allows them to ask questions easily and immediately when the information is not clear. Poor households may have difficulties understanding information from flyers, TV, or other channels, mainly because some of their members are illiterate. Maintaining support from village chief and commune councils to verbally disseminate programme information to households can therefore be an appropriate approach.
- Commune/sangkat councils are centrally important to the effective roll-out of SRSP but their current capacities are limited (in terms of human resources and supporting equipment), and thus need to be enhanced.
- Additional attention is also needed on the elderly, households where there are PWDs, and those living in remote locations to ensure that programme information is accessible to them. Maintaining inter-ministerial support can strengthen information dissemination.

5.2.4 Complaints and feedback mechanism

The method for managing the complaints and feedback mechanism. WFP established three channels for complaints and feedback (a hotline, WFP AO, and LWD staff) to ensure that beneficiaries (and non-beneficiaries) and other stakeholders had easy and accessible ways to submit their complaints and/or feedback. While the RGC programmes employ the formal procedures and specific roles of each stakeholder

involved – the commune, PDoSVY, and MoSVY, as well as the NSPC General Secretariat, in the case of the PWYC cash transfer programme. However, in practice, complaints submissions and resolution in the RGC programmes are often, if not always, conducted through Telegram. Table 11 provides a description of the complaints and feedback mechanism channels and processes for the programmes under review.

Table 11. Complaints and feedback mechanism channel and process

	WFP cash transfer programme	RGC cash transfer programmes
Channel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WFP area office • LWD staff • Hotline through number 1800 203 183, for 15 hours per day (7 am–10 pm) and seven days per week • Complaints could also be submitted through process monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beneficiaries/caller can submit complaints or feedback directly to commune administration, PDoSVY, or MoSVY • In practice, complaints are also submitted through Telegram
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All complaints and feedback received from the three channels were registered on a complaints and feedback mechanism intake form, which recorded details such as date, time, channel, details of complainant, description of case, case category,²⁷ and actions taken • All complaints and feedback received were analysed and reported on a monthly and weekly basis for WFP's internal CBT working group to review the status of each case (i.e. resolved, pending, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints/feedback are recorded in MIS • Commune chief is the first to review, investigate, and mediate the complaints • If not resolved at the commune level, the case is referred to PDoSVY, and then to MoSVY, if necessary • In the PWYC cash transfer programme, unsolved cases at the MoSVY level are referred to the NSPC General Secretariat
Resolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of on-the-spot resolution or follow-up action • Resolution communicated to callers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resolution communicated to commune chief and notified to caller

Source: OPM analysis

Utilisation of the complaints and feedback mechanism. Through prepared channels, the programme then receives calls for questions, clarifications, complaints, and feedback.

A. **The need to file a complaint.** From the interviews conducted in this study, it seems that filing a complaint is not something that is considered important by many respondents (beneficiaries, commune councils, and village authorities). Despite the difficulties and challenges noted by WFP's beneficiaries regarding the registration and cash withdrawal processes, only 21% of beneficiaries claimed to have ever registered a complaint about the programme. Of those

that had complained, most communicated their complaints to the commune and village chief; they then called the WFP hotline after being told by the village chief to do so. For the RGC programmes, almost all respondents stated that they had no complaint to be filed, possibly because the implementation of the programme was clearer and more controlled.

B. **Provision of a response to the complaints/feedback submitted.** Although there were not many beneficiaries who felt the need to file a complaint, almost half of the commune council and village authorities interviewed stated that they had filed a complaint to

27 The WFP CFM divides the type of complaints and feedback into seven classifications: A-1 – information/assistance request with on-the-spot resolution (by FAQ); A-2 – information/assistance request with follow-up action from CFM focal point; B-1 – positive feedback, to be referred to CFM focal point; B-2 – negative feedback, to be referred to CFM focal point; C-1 – non-sensitive complaint, to be referred to CFM focal point; C-2 – sensitive complaint (sexual harassment, fraud, etc.), to be reported to CFM focal point immediately; and D – rumour or any other types of feedback/complaints, to be referred to CFM focal point.

the WFP cash transfer programme. Most of these complaints were answered; for those who received a response, most of them (81%) were not happy with it because the response was only obtained after waiting a long time or because the answer given was not clear enough for them. From further discussions with the interviewed beneficiaries, it seems that the reluctance to file a complaint, as mentioned above, was caused by this unsatisfactory response.

- C. **The most common method of filing complaints in the RGC programmes is via Telegram.** PDoSVY staff in both Kampong Thom and Banteay Meanchey noted that there is a Telegram group that contains all of the programme focal points for the COVID-19 and PWYC cash transfer programmes in the province, together with staff from PDoSVY. Any complaints from beneficiaries can be raised in this group with the directors monitoring and supporting liaison with other stakeholders, if needed, for resolution. Any unresolved issues at the provincial level can also be quickly raised to MoSVY via Telegram. Given the speed and ease that the programme implementer experienced, the commune staff in Kampong Thom suggested that WFP set up a 'Telegram group to provide quick assistance' as this is 'easy and fast to submit complaints/feedback'. However, relying mostly on Telegram groups may not be sufficient, and it is necessary to consider using other channels more extensively, including ensuring that responses are available for incoming complaints. There was also a lack of consultation with the beneficiary regarding incoming complaints. Moreover, complaints were not collected in a structured way and there was no clear classification and referral pathway for complaints. In this sense, the complaints and feedback mechanism could have been enhanced to better respond to beneficiary complaints and to ensure a clearer picture of what the main complaints were, which could inform programmatic decisions.

Features and practices for future programming.

From the procedure developed by WFP for the grievance mechanism, there are some elements that can be considered further for the implementation of the similar programmes in the future.

- A. **Utilisation of complaints and feedback mechanism results/reports for programme improvement.** The WFP complaints and feedback mechanism report is brief, but provides regular and useful updates on complaints and feedback related to programme implementation. It gives a summary of the number of complaints received, the nature of the complaints raised, and the status of the cases (see Annex I). In the first two months of programme implementation, most cases were related to a need for follow-up action (e.g. asking for the WING temporary PIN code, a request to change phone number, unblocking an account, or re-sending a new temporary PIN code, etc.). There were still some cases in this category reported in the following month, but the number had dropped significantly and more frequent cases were those that could be resolved on the spot. This indicates an improvement in the implementation of the programme. The management of complaints and feedback mechanism reporting in the RGC programmes is not clearly understood, but it would be very useful if the same system/procedure could be implemented in these programmes to improve programme implementation.
- B. **Provision of hotline in the WFP cash transfer programme.** Most cases in the WFP complaints and feedback mechanism were reported through the hotline (e.g. close to 70% in the November report). A hotline is an alternative option if other channels cannot be used, as it usually operates most of the time (e.g. 15 hours a day for the WFP cash transfer programme).

Lessons learned on the complaints and feedback mechanism

- The under-utilisation of the complaints and feedback mechanism channels was generally due to concerns that complaints would not receive a response. Given that households seem to prefer and tend to submit complaints through the local authorities, maintaining this channel for complaints and feedback is necessary. However, there is a need to incorporate a formal mechanism to record and review all complaints and feedback received, such as the use of the complaints and feedback mechanism intake form in WFP's cash transfer programme, to inform programme implementation and for the programme implementer to reflect on programme improvement.
- Moreover, establishing an alternative channel for complaints and feedback, such as the hotline, remains important to provide alternative options for those who are not comfortable to express complaints or feedback directly to the local authorities.
- The RGC programmes have also established an SOP for complaints and feedback mechanism processes. While the SOP provides a formal process for resolution and follow-up actions, the common approach adopted in practice is the use of Telegram. This has been the preferred approach among the local authorities as it is deemed faster. It is, however, not clear whether the incoming complaints and feedback are used to improve programme implementation. It seems that the complaints and feedback mechanism process lacks procedures to record and review all submitted complaints and/or feedback; rectifying this could improve programme operations.
- Since capacity constraints among the local authorities can be difficult, ensuring that the local authorities are well equipped with programme information and have the capacity (in terms of human resources and tools) to investigate and mediate complaints are important. Working with an external institution to provide a complaints and feedback mechanism platform, as was done by the WFP cash transfer programme with the hotline, can be an option to reduce the burdens on local authorities.

5.2.5 Monitoring and evaluation

Types of M&E in the WFP cash transfer programme. WFP implemented three types of monitoring in regard to the progress and quality of programme implementation: process monitoring; output monitoring; and outcome monitoring. The responsibilities for monitoring were distributed between WFP and two external partners – LWD and GeoPoll. GeoPoll collected baseline data, such as on the livelihoods and coping strategies of beneficiaries (see more detail in Table 12), and at the end of the programme collected post-distribution monitoring data. Meanwhile, LWD conducted beneficiary contact monitoring, involving data related to cash withdrawals and utilisation, including the related problems. WFP M&E monitoring activities and indicators were designed and defined by WFP themselves following their business processes and the results were presented internally on dashboards.

These monitoring results are very useful during programme implementation. For example, in the process monitoring, information was collected about the use of cash transfers, issues in receiving assistance, and so on (see Table 12), where the collected data was used for delivery improvement as needed. According to the first process monitoring results, food (98%), healthcare (69%), and COVID-19 hygiene (27%) were the top three priorities that beneficiaries spent the WFP cash assistance on. Almost all beneficiaries (97%) seemed to experience no issues with cash withdrawal, while those who experienced challenges faced problems such as a need to travel distances, overcrowded withdrawal location, lost phones, or never receiving an SMS notification.

This various information, if collected regularly, will provide feedback/input for improvement throughout the implementation of the programme.

Table 12. WFP cash transfer programme monitoring processes

Type of monitoring	Tools	Organisation in charge	Coverage and sample size	Frequency	Metrics
Outcome monitoring: to assess the main outcome indicators among the target population of the programme in terms of food security and vulnerability	Phone survey to collect baseline and post-distribution monitoring data	GeoPoll	400 households, randomly selected and weighted according to the WFP cash transfer programme beneficiary caseload in each province	Comprises two data collections: baseline and post-distribution monitoring	Baseline: food consumption score, livelihood and consumption-based coping strategies, food and non-food expenditures, household debt, household income and assistance sources, and access to food and markets
Output monitoring: to track the main project outputs	Phone interviews	WFP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular caseload: 400 beneficiary households and 200 non-beneficiary households randomly selected from the five targeted provinces Additional caseload: 800 beneficiary households consisting of 400 IDPoor Level 1 households and 400 IDPoor Level 2 households from Banteay Meanchey 	Comprises two data collections: baseline and endline	Number of beneficiaries (with relevant disaggregation) and amount of cash disbursed
Process monitoring: (i) beneficiary contact monitoring; (ii) spot checks; and (iii) WING agent monitoring	Phone interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beneficiary contact monitoring: LWD Spot checks: WFP WING agent monitoring: WFP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact monitoring: 381 households per round, the sample geographically distributed proportional to the number of beneficiaries in each province Spot checks: 40 households per round WING monitoring: 30 WING agents per round 	One monitoring round after each transfer (four rounds in total)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beneficiary contact monitoring: cash withdrawal, utilisation, satisfaction, problems with receiving entitlement, safety, knowledge of targeting criteria, entitlement amount, cash withdrawal processes, and programme complaints and feedback mechanism Spot checks: awareness about WFP cash transfer programme, beneficiary access to WING agents, issues in the programme implementation, and overall satisfaction WING agent monitoring: awareness about WFP cash transfer programme, knowledge about the number of WING agents in the area, training received by WING agents, amount of cash available to respond to customer needs, other jobs besides acting as WING agents, issues in the programme implementation, and overall satisfaction

Source: WFP (2021) 'Cash-Based Transfer Programme (CBT) Monitoring Planning'

RGC M&E elements. An M&E mechanism for the RGC's social protection system has been developed by the General Secretariat for the NSPC. The mechanism identifies the social protection input, output, outcome, and impact indicators needed to monitor, assess, and evaluate the progress of the programme in terms of financial resources (inputs), the immediate results due to the services provided (outputs), benefits and targets against achievement (outcome), and the cumulative effects of programmes over time (impacts). The M&E mechanism requires quarterly monitoring and periodic evaluation during programme implementation.

The RGC receives considerable support from development partners for programme M&E. According to the development partners and INGOs interviewed, the General Secretariat for the NSPC has prepared a plan to build the M&E

capacity under the institution. This is anticipated in particular for the Family Package programme (to be endorsed), which will lay out outputs and capacity building plans for programme improvement, including on M&E.

Utilisation of M&E results. With a detailed M&E mechanism implemented by WFP, the programme will benefit greatly in terms of future development and improvement. This is something that will also be useful in the RGC programme; given that the RGC still needs support from development partners, collaboration for this needs to be prepared more strategically. KIs highlighted that it is important for development partners to design mechanisms that are simple and cost-effective for the government to adopt, so that these can be easily incorporated into the government's existing system.

Lessons learned on M&E

- A combination of three types of monitoring in the WFP cash transfer programme provided useful information and tools to monitor the progress of the programme, inform programme implementation for improvement, and assess the impacts of the programme itself.
- The RGC also implements periodic programme M&E. However, the design of indicators for monitoring and the implementation of M&E itself remains heavily supported by development partners. If the technical capacity of development partners can be transferred to the RGC team through a strategic capacity building programme for the RGC to develop a simple and cost-effective mechanism, M&E activities in the RGC programme could be potentially improved.

5.3 Programme data and information systems



This section summarises the development of the IDPoor programme before and after the COVID-19 pandemic, showing how it can be transformed into a data system for SRSP programmes. By capturing lessons learned from the implementation experience of the WFP cash transfer programme on using IDPoor data to target beneficiaries for emergency cash transfer programmes supporting households affected by flooding and COVID-19, the section also discusses the limitations of IDPoor data and key considerations for improvement so that IDPoor can become a more useful targeting instrument for future SRSP programmes. There are other data and information that can potentially be used for targeting, listed in Annex J.

IDPoor programme. The RGC launched the IDPoor programme in 2006 with an initial focus on identifying poor households in rural areas; by 2017, the programme was scaled up to all urban areas. Due to limited government resources, IDPoor was implemented in eight of the 24 provinces every year on a rotating basis,²⁸ resulting in a three-year waiting period before households that missed the previous data collection round could be assessed in the next round of data collection in their province. IDPoor assessment uses a proxy means test from structured questionnaires and a community-based validation process, to assign household poverty levels. Households with

interviewed scores between 59 and 68 points are categorised as Poor Level 1 (very poor or extremely poor); those between 45 and 58 points are categorised as Poor Level 2 (poor) (see also Annex K). An equity card is issued to each poor household with a three-year validity. IDPoor household data are stored in a central database governed by the Ministry of Planning.

A. Adjustments/adaptation in utilising the IDPoor database as the main data source for targeting during shocks. When a crisis or shock occurs, the impact experienced by the population affected is primarily related to their livelihoods and income. Where livelihoods are damaged and household income disturbed, near-poor households can fall into poverty. In other words, newly poor households can emerge after the shock occurs, and it is therefore important to consider targeting assistance to both existing poor and vulnerable households and newly emerged poor households. Given that the IDPoor data collected from traditional round-based data collection are updated only every three years, reliance on IDPoor data for the targeting of social protection programmes is likely to create exclusion and inclusion errors. This became a particular concern for the RGC as they prepared the COVID-19 cash transfer programme. When confirmed COVID-19 cases were increasing and movement restrictions were implemented, many poor and near-poor households were economically affected. The Ministry of Planning immediately accelerated the use of the on-demand (OD) mechanism in May 2020 (initially in urban areas, and then rolled out to the whole country), which was expected to improve the updating process of the IDPoor database and to identify newly poor households affected by the pandemic.

The OD IDPoor process is triggered by a household's request (or the request of other stakeholders on their behalf) to be interviewed, and, if eligible, registered in the database; this is done on a monthly basis. The Ministry of Planning indicated that, on average, around 4,000 households across 25 provinces

28 GIZ IDPoor (2018) 'How digital solutions facilitate the identification of poor households in Cambodia', GIZ Cambodia, <https://giz-cambodia.com/how-digital-solutions-facilitate-the-identification-of-poor-households-in-cambodia/>.

requested to be interviewed for the OD process every month since the implementation. The World Bank recorded that in June 2020 (before the COVID-19 cash transfer programme was introduced), IDPoor contained 560,000 poor and vulnerable households, and that up to October 2021 as many as 678,000 households had received the COVID-19 cash transfer programme.²⁹ This means that more than 100,000 newly poor households were added to the IDPoor database.

B. Potential of IDPoor (particularly OD) to guide targeting of SRSP programme.

WFP's use of the IDPoor database as the basis for its emergency cash transfer programme targeting (piggybacking) was one element that was consistent with the use of the system by the government in the COVID-19 cash transfer programme and the PWYC cash transfer programme. The rapid registration of affected households to receive assistance is necessary for an SRSP programme to be effective. Using updated IDPoor data (received from the Ministry of Planning) on poor households known to be some of the most vulnerable to shocks, WFP was able to proceed with registering flood-affected households in the five provinces to receive the cash transfer as a top-up to the COVID-19 cash transfer programme. This meant a huge reduction of time and cost over identifying households from scratch, which is an important consideration for a short and temporary emergency social assistance programme that prioritises the rapid provision of benefits to affected households. In addition, with the nationwide roll-out of the OD IDPoor mechanism, the IDPoor database has seen the rapid expansion of potential beneficiaries for future SRSP programmes. For WFP, an additional 36,000 households were registered as beneficiaries for the programme which might otherwise have not been targeted if they were not identified through IDPoor. The potential of IDPoor to become a registration platform (or not) for a future SRSP programme is discussed in Section 5.2.1.

According to the results of primary data collection for this study, the use of the OD IDPoor mechanism was perceived to be strongly beneficial in the implementation of the WFP cash transfer programme and the RGC COVID-19 and PWYC cash transfer programmes. There is good potential for exclusion errors to be minimised as households can request an interview allowing them to be considered for inclusion in the database. This has also potentially improved its use for identifying households affected by shocks. Almost half (43%) of commune and village authorities thought OD IDPoor to be effective in capturing newly poor households. One commune council member in Banteay Meanchey said that during the pandemic, they had registered 125 new households on the database to receive the COVID-19 cash transfer programme using the OD IDPoor mechanism. The commune council official in Kampong Thom similarly mentioned an additional 395 newly poor households registered on the IDPoor database.

'Yes, OD IDPoor has been able to capture poor households that deserve assistance but are not listed in the IDPoor database because those new IDPoor households which had been interviewed previously and did not pass the criteria, but now the livelihood in the household is poor so they can pass the criteria to get the cash transfer. This means that if any household now faces a poor livelihood in the household and after interview and the household passes the criteria, that household is selected for the programme to get a cash transfer.'
Commune council member, Kampong Thom

With the decision to use the OD IDPoor mechanism as the regular approach, replacing the three-year round-based identification of poor households from May 2020 onwards, the Ministry of Planning commented that the OD mechanism is the ministry's contribution

29 World Bank (2021) 'Cambodia Economic Update: Living with COVID'. Phnom Penh, World Bank. Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

to SRSP in terms of the data system. This is supported by GIZ, which considers this new approach to be an important input for SRSP.

C. Current issues with IDPoor data quality in realising its potential for SRSP programmes.

Like many other countries that use the proxy means test approach to identify poor households, Cambodia's IDPoor system has also experienced some performance issues related to inclusion and exclusion errors. Previous studies have tested for these errors in the IDPoor data from round-based data collection.³⁰ This research, along with WFP's existing operational experience,³¹ found that there remain a small number of data quality challenges and factors that may compound the issues; further assessment may be helpful to understand how prevalent these issues are. Each is described below.

(1) **Exclusion errors are still a concern.** Many stakeholders interviewed for the research suggested that there remain other poor households not yet meeting the poverty classification thresholds to be included in IDPoor database, and hence not eligible for either the COVID-19 cash transfer programme or the WFP cash transfer programme: 30% of commune and village authorities interviewed said some poor households failed the interview, did not match the selection criteria, or could not be interviewed because they had migrated to Thailand. They also suggested that because the OD mechanism was relatively new and was not widely disseminated, so not all villagers were aware of it; in other locations, a large proportion of poor households in one commune requested an interview but commune and village authorities had heavy workloads that prevented them from carrying out the interviews immediately. It seems a common household type believed to be missed is the returning migrants from

Thailand; these migrants were impacted by the loss of their jobs and lockdown measures during the pandemic. This warrants further in-depth study, especially since Cambodia has a high rate of outward migration.

'Yes, however, some poor households who had gone to work in Thailand were absent during the OD IDPoor registration process that was intensively implemented for the rollout of the COVID-19 assistance. Given our other work priorities as the councillor, the OD IDPoor is conducted intermittently now. If those migrants came back to the village, we expect they could join the next phase of OD IDPoor process, but the exact date for the interview depends on availability of our other councillors and certain number of requests in order to start the process.'
Commune council member,
Banteay Meanchey

(2) **Inclusion errors may still persist.** An observation shared by PDoP and PDoSVY in Banteay Meanchey, WFP AO, and WFP's local partner (LWD) was that there were well-off households riding an expensive motorbike or car to cash out the COVID-19 cash transfer programme during the initial phase of the implementation. It was not known how prevalent this issue was; according to the PDoSVY interviewed, in the subsequent months of the programme implementation, actions to remove well-off households were performed sporadically. However, some commune council members commented that they were reluctant to remove these households from the database because they had been the authority approving it in the previous

30 Analysis of the performance of IDPoor can be found in: 1) the unpublished report by Levy (2019) 'Diagnostic of Cambodia ID Poor Identification System Efficiency for the Design of Piloting Aiming at Measuring Impact and Benefits of Graduation-based Interventions', UNDP Cambodia; and 2) an unpublished report by World Bank (n.d.) 'An assessment of the ID Poor System', World Bank Group, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

31 Before the programme registration took place, WFP conducted two household spot checks targeting 10% of beneficiaries in two provinces (Battambang and Pursat in April and May 2021, respectively) and another validation activity in the IDPoor database.

process. PDoP officials acknowledged that it was a hard decision to make because households would protest as it meant they also lost their eligibility for government social assistance, such as the COVID-19 cash transfer programme. The performance assessment of the COVID-19 cash transfer programme in May 2021 also acknowledged the difficulty faced by commune councils to remove better-off households from the IDPoor data system. This was, in part, due to fears of a potential loss of popularity, in the light of the upcoming elections. To ensure systematic action across the country, the Ministry of Planning has instructed that procedures to remove well-off households should be implemented by commune councils carefully. Commune councils are requested to review the households to be removed in their monthly meeting and the decision needs to be agreed upon by all council members. However, precautions must be exercised to ensure that a fair and justified decision is reached before a household is removed. If households are not happy, they are encouraged to file a request for another interview. Based on the interviewed result, they either keep their equity card or have to return it.

'There are also many challenges: commune focal points are emotionally motivated in registering poor households. They can be biased towards some households. So far there are also some accusations of families driving a car and motorbike who are eligible to receive the COVID-19 programme.'
PDoP representative, Kampong Thom

Recognising possible inclusion errors in the IDPoor data, WFP utilised measures to reduce the error by verifying the IDPoor data with the commune councils concerned. Households that had been removed at the commune level were also removed from the WFP cash transfer programme's beneficiary list. However, the newly registered households approved at commune were not enrolled in the WFP cash transfer programme if they had not yet been recorded in the IDPoor data retrieved from the central database.

- (3) **Commune councils' workload and capacities are key factors.** Putting the responsibility for important decisions and a heavy workload onto commune councils created several challenges, given the need for a swift roll-out nationwide. The capacity and confidence to manage tablets for data collection and to connect tablets to the internet for transferring data to the central database was commented to be low among senior commune council members and those from remote commune offices. Errors during data transfer due to poor internet connection and low knowledge of internet use among commune-level implementers were reported to happen quite frequently during the initial implementation of the OD mechanism, causing delays in issuing equity cards. Capacity strengthening on this digital tool and the new approach is reported to have been conducted using the cascading approach. Direct and continuous coaching and support to solve implementation challenges from PDoP officials is deemed necessary in this regard. In addition, fast-tracking the implementation of the OD mechanism means increased demand for tablets. Currently, each commune has two tablets (one for registering beneficiaries into the PWYC cash transfer and COVID-19 programmes, and another for implementing OD IDPoor). Tablets are also needed by district- and provincial-level authorities to support implementation and the monitoring of progress.

'Communes were used to filling a paper-based questionnaire [...] When OD started to implement, officials caused the tablets to be malfunction - they forgot passwords, etc. In the first two months of implementation, commune focal points called [us] day and night. In the third month, the PDoP had to visit communes twice a month and be oriented directly. The PDoP team was quite exhausted during the COVID-19 registration. Our faces turned dark because we travelled to communes to support them.' PDoP representative, Banteay Meanchey

(4) **IDPoor database quality assurance is a challenge.** During field-level registration and verification, WFP observed there was a different number of household members recorded in the database as compared to real-time spot checks (this was the case for 32% of households spot-checked in Battambang and 18% in Pursat). Households either increased in size (e.g. with the arrival of new born baby, or with children-in-law or other relatives joining the households) or decreased in size (i.e. as the result of a death, or with a member migrating for work or moving out to start a new family). This has an immediate effect on cash assistance, which targets individual household members as beneficiaries, as the case in the WFP cash transfer programme and the COVID-19 cash transfer programme. The issue could be minimised with the implementation of a newly designed IDPoor IT system function allowing households to request the updating/editing of their household information (e.g. the number of members increasing or decreasing).

There was duplicate, missing, or wrong information in more than 5,300 records of IDPoor data which WFP received from the Ministry of Planning in May 2021 (e.g. households with two valid equity cards, households without a head of household, households with duplicate members, and members without names, gender, or year of birth). This problem would also affect the amount of the transfer to be received by vulnerable individuals, for example a child or an elderly person. This issue could be minimised by a data review and by cleaning and implementing the IDPoor IT system function to update household information or remove duplicate members or households.

D. **IDPoor going forward.** At the time of writing, with the support of GIZ and other development partners, the Ministry of Planning is conducting a comprehensive review and revision of the

IDPoor questionnaire to unify procedures for urban and rural areas and to add consumption per capita as a new welfare measure. A revised version is planned to be tested and rolled out in 2022. This is an opportunity to take stock of evidence of data quality issues and other factors that may pose a challenge to the integrity of the IDPoor data system. Beyond improving the efficiency of the IDPoor system, the NSPPF highlights the need to further expand coverage to include near-poor and vulnerable people, and to transform the IDPoor system into a social registry.³² As part of the review of the IDPoor system, the Ministry of Planning is currently considering a new, third category for households that are vulnerable but above the threshold for IDPoor 1 or 2 eligibility at the time of interview. Development partners perceive the IDPoor system to be a solid foundation that could be linked to a unique identity number and be made interoperable with other data systems managed by other government ministries, such as the National Social Security Fund registry run by the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training.

32 A social registry is 'a data management tool and can comprise of one single database or multiple harmonized and integrated databases. It is a repository of information about potential beneficiaries for multiple social assistance programs that share a common population of interest, but not necessarily the same eligibility/targeting approach' (World Bank, n.d.).

Lessons learned on the data and information system

- With the nationwide roll-out of OD IDPoor approach to replace the round-based identification from May 2020, more newly poor households resulting from the pandemic have been identified, thus expanding horizontally the number of eligible households for the COVID-19 and the WFP cash transfer programmes. Once the key data quality challenges are addressed, the continuously expanding IDPoor database could become a more appropriate targeting instrument for future social protection programmes, including for emergencies/shocks.
- The COVID-19 cash transfer programme gave an incentive for fast-tracking the OD IDPoor mechanism nationwide to reduce the exclusion error of round-based identification, as households can request interviews to be considered for inclusion in the database. Other issues, such as inclusion error and data accuracy, have not been fully tackled.
- The need for a swift roll-out of the OD IDPoor approach nationwide led to significant challenges, particularly related to the capacity of commune councils, especially those senior and in remote locations, in managing tablet-based data collection and transferral. Capacity strengthening on this digital tool and the new approach was provided through cascading approach; however, it seems that direct, continuous coaching and support when problems arise is deemed helpful. Supporting infrastructure, such as tablets, particularly for district- and provincial-level authorities, is still insufficient.
- The need for keeping data up to date for IDPoor households indicates the need to think through possible mechanisms to do this beyond just the use of the OD IDPoor process. OD IDPoor is good for ex post registration, but if there is going to be value in investing in a more inclusive social registry, the data that has been captured needs to remain up to date so that it is ready to use and can be easily validated for SRSP.

5.4 Policy and institutions

This section briefly summarises some of the relevant legal and regulatory frameworks in the provision of social protection programmes in Cambodia, especially in response to shocks and emergencies.

Legal and regulatory frameworks

The Cambodian Constitution specifically recognises certain vulnerable groups as requiring state support, including mothers, children, PWDs, and the families of deceased soldiers. It also commits the state to supporting the access of women, especially those in rural areas, to employment and medical care, to help them to send their children to school, and to enjoy a decent standard of living. Article 52 of the 1993 Cambodia Constitution stipulates that the state is obliged to prioritise improving the welfare and standard of living of its citizens.

To address the poverty and vulnerability of the Cambodian population, the RGC in 2016 approved the NSPPF 2016–2025, which was developed under the leadership and coordination of the Ministry of Economy and Finance. The framework lays out an ambitious agenda for reforming and expanding social protection with the goal of realising Cambodia's constitutional right to social protection. As shown in Figure 1 (Section 2.1), the NSPPF stipulates emergency response as one of the components in its social assistance pillar, focusing mostly on food security programmes under the Ministry of Economy and Finance to prevent food insecurity.

The RGC is currently conducting a midterm review of the NSPPF, including learning from the implementation of social assistance during the pandemic. While key informants acknowledge the breadth and comprehensiveness of the NSPPF, they also recognise the need for more detailed guidance to support operationalisation. There have been discussions between development

partners, INGOs, and MoSVY about the current social protection programmes and operational guidelines, and how to make those more shock responsive.

With regard to the delivery of social assistance in times of shock and emergency, in 2020, the NSPC, with support from WFP, developed a separate framework, the SRSP Framework. This framework was formulated in consultation with stakeholders, and is due to be submitted to the Executive Committee of the NSPC for endorsement. Once it has been endorsed, key informants are keen to support the development of associated guidance required for the implementation of this framework, in terms of target groups, scope, delivery systems, etc.

Prior to the endorsement of the SRSP Framework and its associated guidance, emergency programmes are currently run on an ad hoc basis by government decisions and sub-decrees. Each ministry has duties and functions (see Section 2.1.1) in accordance with the sub-decree issued by the RGC. To date, policy on social protection programming has been set by various ministries and departments according to their respective functions and responsibilities. For example, the COVID-19 cash transfer programme administered by MoSVY produced its own programme manual. NCDM also prepared a National Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction. The programme manual and action plan do not necessarily link up with each other.

A recent positive development worth noting is the formulation of the Family Package as part of the implementation of the NSPPF, which is the consolidation of the four existing RGC cash transfer programmes, including the PWYC, disability allowance, school age scholarship, and old age allowance. The Family Package is considered a significant step towards systematising social protection in Cambodia, bringing various social assistance programmes under one umbrella.

Governance and coordination mechanisms

The RGC established the NSPC in 2017 to strengthen coordination between the ministries

involved. The social protection system guidelines under the NSPC govern the coordination of social protection activities across various programmes at various levels of government, as well as between local communities and development partners and their implementing agencies. In Cambodia, a well-structured operation with a joined-up strategy to engage with national government, as well as between the province and community levels and development partners, could be promoted further. In 2021, the General Secretariat of the NSPC began the process of finalising a mechanism for the coordination of social protection strategies and activities between the NSPC and development partners. As a result, a memorandum of understanding has been drafted and is under discussion.³³

Following the drafting of the NSPPF, the RGC established the NSPC with the task of coordinating the relevant ministries on policy development and implementation, providing policy and strategic direction, facilitating budget discussion, and monitoring and evaluating social protection programme implementation. With members that include representatives from various ministries and institutions, the NSPC is expected to be able to carry out the mandated tasks, in particular to ensure that relevant ministries are able to coordinate and cooperate in the implementation of social protection programmes.

Another important committee is the long-established NCDM, which has an important role in providing emergency/humanitarian response and disaster risk management. NCDM is further decentralised through the Provincial Committee for Disaster Management at the provincial level, the District Committee for Disaster Management at the district level, and the Commune Committee for Disaster Management at the commune level. NCDM also works closely with the Cambodian Red Cross in terms of joint resources at national and sub-national level to support households affected by disasters. Some responses have been taken over by the Provincial Committee for Disaster Management using their own resources and by mobilising local government, development partners, and NGOs (i.e. water, sanitation and hygiene materials provided by UNICEF and managed by provincial departments). One of

33 NSPC (2020) 'Shock Responsive Social Protection Framework', draft.

the challenges mentioned by NCDM is that each organisation has different standards for triggering a response, with a different focus and objective.

Stakeholders interviewed noted that although there is no overlap, there is no clear policy and design link between NSPC and NCDM, and then with line ministries. NCDM, for disaster risk management, includes all line ministries and the mandates they must follow. This means including MoSVY, which leads the implementation of social assistance and emergency response as one component under the social assistance pillar of the NSPPF. Some efforts have also been initiated on the dialogue between these committees, as well as with MoSVY, to clarify the roles and responsibilities and also the coordination that needs to be carried out in implementing them.

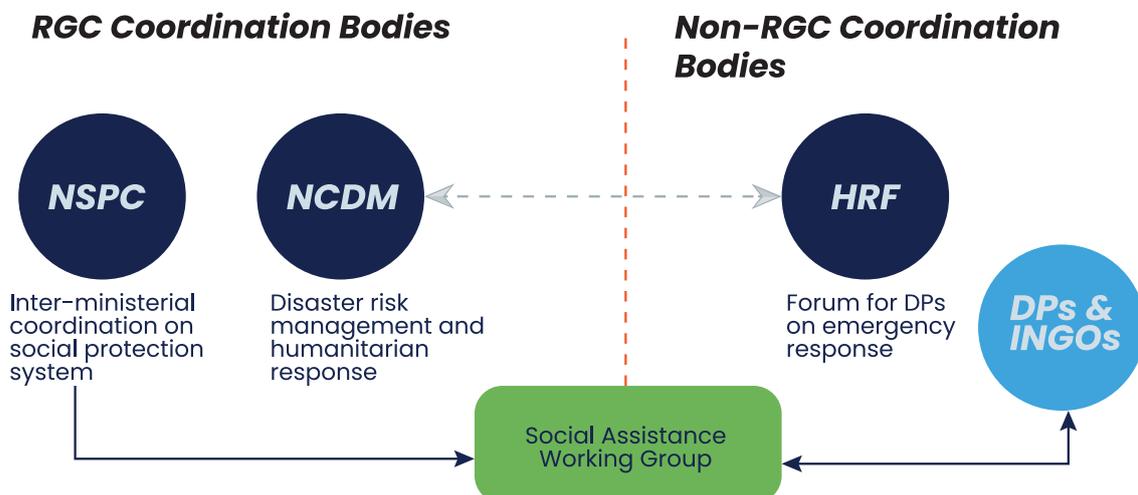
Under NCDM, the government has been encouraging the development of emergency preparedness and response plans. At the national level, NCDM has produced the National Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction 2019–2023, which identifies four priority issues to be addressed: a) developing an awareness-raising campaign for communities to increase their knowledge of risks and how to respond to those risks; b) preparing legal instruments to reflect policy and strategy; c) undertaking less expensive and more efficient measures to strengthen resilience; and d) establishing a direct and effective early warning system.

In parallel to the NSPC/NCDM, the HRF coordinates UN agencies and INGOs to put a humanitarian response into action. The Humanitarian Response Forum (HRF), which has been in place since 2011, is structured around six sectors, corresponding to the national structures: a) food security and nutrition; b) water, sanitation, and hygiene; c) shelter; d) health; e) education; and f) protection. A HRF Cash Working Group was established in 2021. The HRF is co-chaired by a UN organisation (currently, WFP) and an INGO (currently, DanChurchAid), and has in place a contingency plan for droughts, floods, and tropical storms.

The linkages and lines of coordination between the various coordinating bodies and forums are not precisely clear. Figure 4 illustrates links between the different coordination bodies that relate to SRSP. The HRF coordinates closely with NCDM to provide emergency response and preparedness for predictable disasters and natural hazards. NCDM acknowledged the good joint partnerships it has with UN agencies, particularly WFP, to mitigate risks, including for capacity strengthening, resources, and technical equipment. NCDM also supported WFP to access disaster-affected areas by linking them to local authorities (from province, to district, commune, and village) to identify affected households.

The Development Partner’s Social Assistance Working Group, chaired by UNICEF, has been running informally for a number of years, and functions as a dialogue platform for the RGC

Figure 4. Coordination bodies on social protection/assistance programme



Source: OPM analysis

and development partners (UN agencies, INGOs, donors, and other international organisations) on social assistance programmes in the country. In the past, it met on a quarterly basis but is in the process of being aligned with the new government–development partner coordination mechanisms approved in 2021.

Capacity

Based on the nascent policies and regulatory framework drawn up in the last five years, the RGC continues to increase its capacity, especially in terms of human resources and technical expertise. In the implementation of social assistance programmes, the RGC has received significant support from development partners and INGOs. For example, when preparing the PWYC cash transfer programme in 2019, the RGC received substantial support from UNICEF, in collaboration with Save the Children, to strengthen the capacity of MoSVY to implement the programme.

There is a need for capacity building at all levels, from the national level to the community/village level. This research identified capacity gaps in the identification process of poor and vulnerable households as part of the IDPoor system, as described in Section 5.1.1, as well as in M&E for the implementation of the programme (see Section 5.2.5) and in the complaints and feedback mechanism (see Section 5.2.4).

However, despite the limitations affecting MoSVY, the stakeholders interviewed saw the potential of MoSVY, which was proven to be capable of implementing the COVID-19 cash transfer programme, which was carried out at the same time with another routine social protection programme (the PWYC cash transfer programme).

Lessons learned on policy and institutions

Legal and regulatory framework

- The SRSP Framework developed by the General Secretariat of the NSPC with support from WFP is a positive first step in formalising SRSP within the legal and regulatory frameworks. However, there will be a need for a related operational plan to support this work going forwards.
- Without this systematic approach, SRSP work will continue to be ad hoc.
- The midterm review of the NSPPF, and the development of the Family Package, will provide an opportunity to review the linkages with SRSP policy and programming.

Governance and coordination mechanism

- Coordination mechanisms exist for the RGC social protection and emergency response, and development partner emergency response, but these are not yet clearly linked to SRSP.
- The nascency of the systems mean that vertical and horizontal coordination requires stronger linkages between social protection and emergency response to better support SRSP.

Capacity

- The COVID-19 response, as well as the implementation of routine social protection programmes, have tested MoSVY's capacity to respond to shocks, and there are lessons learned that can be built upon for future SRSP programming.

5.5 Financing

Public spending on social protection has historically been low and not pro-poor. The OECD in 2017 found that in 2016 transfers to the National Social Security Fund for Civil Servants and National Fund for Veterans accounted for 88.8% of MoSVY's budget, with only 2% of the budget going to emergency support to vulnerable groups; a further 3.4% was spent on regular social assistance mechanisms.³⁴ Although regional spending on social protection across the region is 5.3% of gross domestic product, Cambodia spent less than 1% of gross domestic product.³⁵

While the NSPPF 2016–2025 was approved in 2017, funding still needs to be identified and channelled towards these programmes. Over recent years, official development assistance has been declining in Cambodia as a result of the country's transition to lower-middle income status. The country has significantly reduced its dependence on aid.³⁶ Designated funding for disaster management in Cambodia is also limited. The national budget also includes some contingency budgets controlled by the Office of the Council of Ministers, for any unplanned expenses, including for disaster and emergencies. Due to the shortage of financial support for line ministries/institutions to engage in meaningful disaster management, there is a much greater concentration on responding to shocks than on preparing for them.

In the wake of COVID-19, the Council of Ministers approved a 2021 national budget of US\$ 7.62 billion; however, this represented a significant reduction from the 2020 budget (more than US\$ 8.2 billion). Of the planned budget, US\$ 2.58 billion was allocated for emergency relief, unexpected spending, the reimbursement of foreign debts, and others.³⁷ The 2022 national budget has been approved at US\$ 8 billion. It aims to power economic growth and improve people's livelihoods, continue the introduction

of key reforms in the public and private sectors, and strengthen preparedness and response capacity for similar public emergencies in the future, including building comprehensive health and social protection systems.³⁸

Since June 2020, the RGC has implemented a nationwide emergency cash assistance programme – the COVID-19 cash transfer programme – and by January 2022 had spent more than US\$ 562.22 million of the national budget.³⁹ The programme has supported more than 686,000 IDPoor households and will continue to do so until September 2022. Another cash assistance programme being implemented despite the pandemic – the PWYC cash transfer programme – has cost the RGC nearly US\$ 15 million as of December 2021, and has benefited 240,000 pregnant women and children under two years old.⁴⁰

The RGC's expenditure on emergency responses to October 2020 and 2021 floods is unclear, partly because the responsibility and therefore the proportion of national budget to implement disaster risk reduction activities is embedded in the budget package of the line ministries and institutions, according to the National Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction 2019–2023. An NCDM spokesman indicated that every year after the floods subside, the finance ministry cooperates with NCDM and relevant ministries to prepare an intervention budget package to provide rice and other crop seeds to poor farmers affected by disasters.⁴¹

Based on published records, the RGC was reported to have spent US\$ 10 million by November 2020 helping families affected by the October 2020 floods. The Ministry of Rural Development had an approved budget of US\$ 15 million to rehabilitate roads and critical infrastructure in three priority provinces badly affected (Banteay Meanchey, Pursat, and Battambang).⁴² For the 2021 floods, which affected Banteay Meanchey the most, there

34 OECD (2017) Social protection system review of Cambodia, OECD Development Pathways, OECD Publishing, Paris.

35 ADB (2017) 'The Social Protection Indicator for Asia: Assessing Progress', ADB Publishing, Metro Manila, Philippines.

36 UNDP (2020) 'Meeting the Costs and Maximizing the Impact of Social Protection in Cambodia', Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

37 www.khmertimeskh.com/50776654/2021-draft-budget-sees-a-half-billion-reduction/

38 www.phnompenhpost.com/business/cabinet-okays-8b-2022-govt-spending

39 This is according to the latest announcement on the results of the programme implementation from 24 June 2020 to 24 January 2022 (19 transfers) (Social Protection in Cambodia FB page, retrieved on 27 January 2022).

40 www.khmertimeskh.com/50989376/government-cash-programmes-spend-almost-500-million-so-far/

41 www.phnompenhpost.com/national/ministries-preparing-assistance-poor-farmers-affected-disasters

42 <https://cambodianess.com/article/cambodia-counting-the-cost-of-recovery-from-flooding>

Table 13. A snapshot of the RGC’s in-kind assistance following the 2020 and 2021 floods

	Province	Assistance	Beneficiaries
2020 flood	Battambang	More than 1,000 tonnes of rice seeds ⁴³	10,210 families
	Pursat	Rice seeds	17,000 farmer families
	Prey Veng	350 tonnes of rice seeds	3,500 families
Total	10 provinces including Pursat, Battambang, Banteay Meanchey, Kratie, Kampot, Kampong Thom, Tbong Khmum, Prey Veng, Kampong Cham and Stung Treng	More than 6,000 tonnes of rice seeds and vegetable seeds	N/A
2021 flood	N/A	2,000 tonnes of rice seeds and 25 tonnes of vegetable seeds ⁴⁴	N/A

was no public record of the exact expenditure. For both floods, the RGC provided rice seed, bags of rice, and money and groceries to poor families affected by the flooding. It was reported that each poor farmer affected by the floods would receive 100 kg of rice seed and 25 kg of rice per family. Depending on certain circumstances, six types of vegetable seeds, groceries, and other materials may have been provisioned as well. Table 13 gives a snapshot of the government’s response to flooding.

Development partners contributed significantly to the emergency response and recovery efforts during both floods. To complement the wider response efforts of the RGC, in November 2020, the UN in Cambodia and its humanitarian partners announced the Cambodia Flood Response Plan 2020, which sought funding of US\$ 9.43 million to assist approximately 237,000 of the most vulnerable people affected by the October flood and COVID-19.⁴⁵ USAID provided a total of US\$ 700,000 in humanitarian aid to WFP to provide emergency food and cash assistance to poor families affected by the 2020 flood in the hardest-hit provinces, including

Pursat, Battambang, and Banteay Meanchey.⁴⁶ In addition, USAID contributed towards strengthening national disaster management information systems (i.e. PRISM and EWS 1294) and the humanitarian coordination platform HRF by providing an additional US\$ 875,000 to WFP.⁴⁷

GIZ, on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), provided financial support of US\$ 6 million to implement the WFP cash transfer programme described in this report.

Beyond funding directly attributable to the October 2020 and 2021 flood response efforts, other development partners have made relevant efforts. For example, the Asian Development Bank has provided US\$ 588 million to help combat climate change in Cambodia.⁴⁸ This investment included US\$ 11 million for technical assistance programmes supporting the government to integrate climate resilience into development plans. There are also other development partners supporting emergency and relief assistance during COVID-19 and floods more generally under the NSSPF.⁴⁹

43 www.phnompenhpost.com/national/rice-seed-distributed-flooding-victims

44 www.phnompenhpost.com/national/ministries-preparing-assistance-poor-farmers-affected-disasters

45 <https://phnompenhpost.com/national/un-seeks-9m-aid-cambodian-flood-victims#:~:text=The%20UN%20in%20Cambodia%20and,by%20the%20floods%20in%20October>

46 www.phnompenhpost.com/national/us-gives-aid-flood-victims

47 www.phnompenhpost.com/national/us-donates-flood-relief-aid

48 www.adb.org/results/rural-cambodians-benefit-investments-combat-climate-change

49 http://odacambodia.com/reports/reports_by_cnpf_list.asp?subNSPPFID=1&otherSubNSPPF=11

http://odacambodia.com/reports/reports_by_TypeOA_list.asp?initPage=1&OtherTypeOA=7&OtherSubTypeOA=11&status=0

6 Recommendations

This section outlines recommendations to guide the design and implementation of future shock responsive social assistance implemented by the RGC and its partners as part of the operationalisation of the SRSP Framework.

Programme design

Targeting. By taking advantage of the reforms currently taking place in the application of the OD approach in the IDPoor system, it is important for the RGC and development partners to collect evidence on the utility of the new approach for shock response targeting. There should be collective discussion on the feasibility of setting a different poverty threshold/score for targeting SRSP, which could help to capture the near-poor. There should also be discussion on how else the IDPoor data (beyond the score) could also inform targeting, e.g. through vulnerability criteria or livelihood information. For this purpose, the RGC and development partners should continue to utilise the OD IDPoor system, as well as supporting mechanisms to strengthen the quality of this database and streamline this system.

The use of the WFP-supported NCDM system, PRISM, for layering and geospatial analysis of data sources on climate hazards and vulnerability (i.e. IDPoor) can be a useful basis to prioritise the geographic targeting of SRSP. This pilot has provided some proof of concept, but further assessment needs to be conducted to enhance it, for example using additional data sources besides the number of IDPoor households and setting of rules/thresholds for triggering a response.

Benefit package. For the type of assistance, cash is widely accepted and welcomed in Cambodia for a majority of beneficiaries, but still a number of beneficiaries in this research did not favour cash due to a combination of distance and convenience to reach the cash out points, especially for those who struggle with mobility. The RGC and development partners should work together to: a) strengthen the existing payment system reach and any additional support requirements for vulnerable groups reached under the forthcoming Family Package; and b) consider any additional surge support during crises where a scale-up of payments is needed with SRSP. It is also important to conduct a rapid needs assessment of whether cash is a feasible response for all when a shock hits, such as in areas where financial service provider infrastructure has been affected and areas where households will have reduced access to markets.

On the amount of assistance, the RGC and development partners could utilise ex ante SRSP M&E data (including the planned updating of the 2020 MEB calculation) to facilitate discussion, consensus, and guidance on the amount of assistance that is optimal for SRSP, while staying aligned with the existing RGC guidelines on cash transfer programmes, and taking into consideration budget limitations. The RGC could also use the available MEB produced by development partners and validate it to be used in their programmes. The transfer rate needs to be clearly tied to the programme objective to ensure that programme goals are achievable in the timeframe allocated. Currently, the transfer amount is determined at the beginning of the programme and although ongoing market monitoring allows the adequacy of the transfer to be reassessed, to date there have been no examples of the transfer rate being adjusted.

There may be a need to adjust the transfer amount during programme implementation, depending on the duration of the programme and the changing context in which the programme operates. For example, inflation in the price of basic goods as a result of a shock or other stimulus can have implications for the adequacy of the transfer rate. In this case, market price monitoring and inflation data can be a useful tool to make an informed decision on the sufficient amount of the transfer and any adjustment needed by taking into account the price of basic goods and their impact on a household's ability to meet its essential needs.

In terms of duration of assistance, the RGC and development partners could join forces to analyse SRSP data ex ante with the goal of agreeing SRSP programme duration adequacy to guide future responses. There is a need to conduct periodic reviews to identify whether or not the programme duration is sufficient to meet the programme objectives for a particular shock. The availability of funding would certainly influence the determination of programme duration. However, periodically reviewing the appropriate programme duration would allow the RGC and development partners to start looking for or tapping into other funding sources should an extension of the programme duration be deemed necessary. The results of these reviews could then help to clearly define programme duration and exit, including the indicators to be monitored.

And on the timing of assistance, the existing RGC systems have proven their ability to enable a timely response and at scale, even in the absence of preparedness. This can be further supported going forwards by developing SOPs for which processes should be adapted and followed, as well as agreeing triggers for SRSP. Development partners should support the government to roll out timely and effective SRSP itself as far as possible, rather than investing in parallel systems. Development partners could preserve the pre-agreements set-up and enhance data sharing protocols with the Ministry of Planning, so that a prompt response can be made in the event of a crisis requiring development partners to respond.

Programme delivery

Registration and enrolment. The RGC and development partners need to ensure agile and flexible registration and enrolment mechanisms, especially in remote rural locations, to prevent the exclusion of potential beneficiaries from enrolment in an SRSP programme. Reducing or simplifying registration/enrolment procedures for rapid SRSP responses would better enable a more time-sensitive process. This includes establishing proxy verification (e.g. a letter from the commune chief and village leaders – including measures to reduce the risk of corruption – instead of an identity card as this might have been lost during a shock) to allow for a rapid registration process, facilitating additional capacity for commune and village authorities to better support affected households, ensuring a more robust outreach to households in remote locations which do not have adequate access to information, and using methods/systems that are already commonly utilised in the community (e.g. the most widely used mobile networks). The success of the registration process is also influenced by the quality of the data used as the basis for the process. In this case, the data quality of IDPoor needs to be strengthened. Once the quality of the IDPoor database has been improved, other programmes/institutions can utilise the existing database and registration results, rather than implementing a separate registration process, allowing their programmes to be delivered more quickly.

Benefit delivery. The RGC and development partners need to be cognisant of the nascency of financial operating systems, such as WING and the associated mobile phone companies, particularly in remote rural areas. The RGC could also liaise with the National Bank of Cambodia to explore future digital payment solutions compatible with all mobile operators and banks. In the future, feasibility assessments should identify modalities that are easily utilised by the community and take into consideration literacy (including electronic and financial literacy), age, gender, and disability, while minimising the risk of fraud by applying the necessary security measures. In terms of minimising the risk, the RGC could also explore a more structured reconciliation of transfers by conducting a two-level reconciliation – one by WING (which should be shared with MoSVY) and one by MoSVY – to

check that the amounts and accounts instructed coincide with the amounts and accounts delivered. Feasibility assessments should also identify whether the financial service provider has the capacity to maintain business as usual in times of shocks to avoid the issue of system errors or limited transaction capacity, especially when a large number of beneficiaries want to cash out at the same time, and should ensure that beneficiaries are able to utilise the cash when needed. Benefit delivery systems need to ensure that beneficiaries (and by extension commune leaders) are not unnecessarily excluded or disadvantaged due to overly rigorous security restrictions; where possible, the benefit delivery mechanism should be aligned with those used by the RGC, while also moving towards utilising national systems themselves.

Communication. The RGC and development partners could strengthen the outreach and sensitisation of programme information to ensure a clear understanding of SRSP programmes by the national and local government, communes, village authorities, and poor households. This is especially important when there are multiple cash transfer programmes being implemented by the RGC and development partners. Considering that verbal and direct communication is still the preferred method of communities and that the channels for this are commune councils and village leaders, it is very important to strengthen the capacity of these two groups. In this case, apart from strengthening their capacity, commune councils and village leaders also need to be equipped with all the information related to the implementation of the programme, so that they can both facilitate the communication and limit the possibility that miscommunication will negatively affect the relationship between the commune/sangkat authorities and targeted households. Training from implementers to commune/sangkat councils needs to be as simple and clear as possible.

Complaints/feedback mechanisms. The availability of a specific channel for complaints and feedback, such as a dedicated hotline, is a positive element and can be promoted further by the RGC and development partners, especially given that the existence of the hotline is not widely known by the community. It is necessary to prepare adequate resources in this regard, including preparing FAQs (using the complaints and feedback mechanism intake form) for hotline

operators; these need to be updated regularly following the development of problems and incoming complaints. To ensure rapid responses, the RGC and development partners should also aim to adopt a mechanism that is timely and efficient, while at the same time can easily be accessed by households, such as using Telegram to communicate cases and resolution between the village chief, commune staff, PDoSVY, and MoSVY. Although it is deemed quicker and easier by many respondents, making other channels available could be useful to ensure that all stakeholders have an easily accessible option to submit complaints, particularly for households uncomfortable expressing their complaints to local authorities. The RGC and development partners can maintain the use of Telegram, while at the same time considering the adoption of a dedicated hotline with trained and adequate number of staff to ensure that resolutions are rapid.

Monitoring & Evaluation. The RGC and development partners' M&E frameworks provide useful tools to monitor programme progress and achievements, and allow early identification of problems that, if resolved, would entail programme improvement. Agreeing and adopting some standard monitoring indicators and similar M&E frameworks across cash transfer programmes implemented by the RGC and development partners would provide a useful tool to continuously assess SRSP operations. Given the limited M&E activities in the RGC programmes, due to capacity issues, there is a need to consider improving the capacity of the government, in terms of human resource capacities and supporting tools, while at the same time establishing a simple and cost-effective M&E system that the RGC can easily adopt and incorporate into its existing system. Once resource and capacity issues are addressed, the RGC and development partners can collaborate on incorporating more systematic M&E in the RGC programmes. This could be achieved, for example, by following the RGC's reporting schedule and by involving government personnel in the implementation of output, outcome, and process monitoring. It is important to agree on standardised approaches and guidance on M&E frameworks, indicators, reporting, and the use of mobile applications for data collection (such as the Kobo Toolbox or a similar open-source application).

Data and information system

Social protection data and information systems. The RGC and development partners should further develop and refine the IDPoor system and the OD approach to enable rapid registration and the verification of existing poor and new poor households in the event of a shock. It is also important to conduct data analysis to limit the inclusion and exclusion errors of the OD IDPoor database, as well as to support local system strengthening (financing and capacity building) to enable commune and village leaders to fulfil their support functions in an unbiased way when supporting SRSP responses. There is also a need to conduct a learning review on the effectiveness and accuracy of OD IDPoor at identifying poor households, including on the IDPoor scoring mechanism to identify near-poor and vulnerable households. In this case, making improvements to the IDPoor questionnaire, using the questions used to identify beneficiaries for the COVID-19 cash transfer during lockdown, can also be explored as a possibility to allow for the identification of affected populations in other shock situations. Exploring the possible integration of social protection data with other available data, such as civil registration data, can potentially improve the accuracy of targeting.

Poverty and vulnerability data. The RGC and development partners could also consider another approach to using simplified PRISM and other data to support early warning and poverty and vulnerability data verification. Using these available data could be a positive approach to focus the geographic targeting prior to using the OD IDPoor verification. However, it is important that any such systems can be financed, supported with capacity building, and integrated into the RGC's national systems in the medium to long term.

Early warning systems and data. The RGC and development partners could support further integration of the PRISM data into the national EWS, ensuring that data are disaggregated by geographic or climatic zones to support the prioritisation of SRSP responses. As above, this approach could be explored further as long as it is sustainably financed and implemented using available RGC resources.

Policy and institutions

Legal and regulatory frameworks. Once the draft SRSP Framework has been endorsed, this could be supplemented with a detailed operational guideline that could be used as a joint reference by both the RGC and development partners for guiding SRSP responses.

Governance and coordination. The SRSP Framework should be accompanied by a strengthened coordination mechanism that can enable different entities to facilitate SRSP preparedness and response, including the SRSP programme pilots as need be.

Capacity. Due to the nascency of the social protection system, there are a number of areas that require system strengthening, including capacity that cuts across programme design, delivery systems, data and information systems, and policy and institutions. SRSP operational guidance could outline key areas for capacity development and financing options.

Finances. The RGC and development partners need to prioritise developing a risk financing portfolio for SRSP, including national budget contributions, and pooled funds for donor contributions. Over time, the predictable annual floods could be accounted for under the regular social protection financing.

Bibliography

- European Union, Australia Aid, and World Bank (2021) 'COVID-19 relief transfers: Results from a high frequency phone survey of IDPoor households' [PowerPoint Presentation]. World Bank Group.
- EWS 1294 (n.d.). *Early Warning System*, People in Need, Cambodia <<http://ews1294.info/>>
- FAO, UNICEF, and WFP (2019) Roadmap: Developing a Risk-Informed and Shock-Responsive Social Protection System in Cambodia. FAO, Bangkok, Thailand.
- Gally, C. (2021) [CVA program post-distribution documentation: Documenting of feedback, best practices & lessons learned](#). DanChurchAid. Phnom Penh, Cambodia.
- Gentilini, U., Almenfi, M., Blomquist, J., Dale, P., De la Flor Giuffra, L., Desai, V. et al. (2021) Social protection and jobs responses to COVID-19: A real-time review of country measures Living paper version 15, < <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/281531621024684216/pdf/Social-Protection-and-Jobs-Responses-to-COVID-19-A-Real-Time-Review-of-Country-Measures-May-14-2021.pdf>>
- GIZ IDPoor (2018) How digital solutions facilitate the identification of poor households in Cambodia, GIZ Cambodia, <<https://giz-cambodia.com/how-digital-solutions-facilitate-the-identification-of-poor-households-in-cambodia/>>
- Humanitarian Response (n.d.) HRF: Humanitarian response forum – Cambodia, OCHA, < <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/cambodia>>
- IFRC and UNDP (2017) Implementing the Law on Disaster Management in Cambodia: Developing subsidiary legislation, IFRC and UNDP, Cambodia.
- Levy, S. (2019) Diagnostic of Cambodia ID Poor Identification System Efficiency for the Design of Piloting Aiming at Measuring Impact and Benefits of Graduation-based Interventions. UNDP, Cambodia.
- MoEF (2021) *Decision on Mechanisms and Procedures for Implementing Post-Lockdown Social Assistance Program for citizens and households facing livelihood difficulties, citizens and households having member(s) infected with or died of COVID in the event of February 20, 2021*, MoEF. Cambodia.
- Montrose (2021) 'Country-led process evaluation of the cash transfer programme for pregnant women and children under 2', Draft final report, Cambodia.
- MoP (2020) 'Report of Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2019/20', National Institute of Statistics. Cambodia.
- MoP (2021) 'Consultative Workshop to Review the Draft of New Proposed Implementation Manual to Identify Poor Households and Vulnerable People' [PowerPoint presentation]. MoP, Cambodia.
- MoP (2021) 'IDPoor 2022 Ways Forward and Contributions of IDPoor to Shock-Responsive Social Protection in Cambodia' [PowerPoint presentation], Unofficial translation, MoP, Cambodia.
- MoSVY (2018) 'Strategic plan on sectorial development of social affairs, veterans and youth rehabilitation 2019–2023'. MoSVY, Cambodia.
- MoSVY (2021) 'Facebook Page'. October 2021. MoSVY.
- MoSVY (2019) Operational Manual on Cash Transfer for Pregnant Women and Children Programme, MoSVY. Phnom Penh, Cambodia.
- MoSVY and NCSP (2020) Procedures and process for implementing the cash transfer program for poor and vulnerable households during the Covid-19 pandemic, Department of Social Welfare. Cambodia.
- NSPC (2021) 5th national dissemination workshop on 'National Social Protection Policy Framework, GS-NSPC. Cambodia. <<https://nspc.gov.kh/article/107>>
- NSPC (2020) 'Shock responsive Social Protection Framework', Draft.
- Nuppun Research and Consulting Co. (2021) 'Performance assessment of the cash transfer program for poor and vulnerable households during COVID-19', Policy Brief, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.
- O'Brien, C., Scott, Z., Smith, G., Barca, V., Kardan, A., Holmes, R., Watson, C., and Congrave, J. (2018) Shock-responsive social protection systems research: Synthesis report. Oxford Policy Management, Oxford, UK.
- OECD (2017) Social protection system review of Cambodia, OECD Development Pathways, OECD Publishing, Paris.
- OECD (2018) 'Cambodia social protection system review'. OECD Publishing, Paris.
- OPM (2017) 'Study on Shock-Responsive Social Protection in Latin America and the Caribbean', Oxford Policy Management. <<https://www.opml.co.uk/projects/study-shock-responsive-social-protection-latin-america-and-caribbean>>

- PIN (2020) 'Financial service providers assessment', PIN. Cambodia.
- PIN and WFP (n.d.) Standard Operating Procedure: Flood Triggered Cash Transfers in Cambodia, PIN and WFP, Cambodia.
- RGC (2017) 'National social protection policy framework 2016–2025', Unofficial translation, The Royal Government of Cambodia. Phnom Penh, Cambodia.
- RGC (2016) 'National Strategic Plan of Identification 2017–2026: Guide Acceleration of Government Efforts to Increase the Birth Registration Rate and Identification in Cambodia. Everyone is Identified', NSPI, Phnom Penh, Cambodia. <<https://getinthepicture.org/resource/cambodia-national-strategic-plan-identification-2017-2026>>
- They, K. (2019) 'Cambodia National ID Program Strategy' [PowerPoint presentation], presented at Fifth Meeting of the Regional Steering Group for CRVS in Asia and the Pacific on 17–19 September 2019, Bangkok. <<https://getinthepicture.org/system/files/National%20ID%20Program%20-%20Cambodia.pdf>>
- UNDP (2019) Cambodia, looking to the horizon, prepares for drought. UNDP, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.
- UNDP (2019) 'Human Development Report Cambodia 2019: Sustaining natural resources for all'. UNDP, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.
- United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (2019) Disaster Risk Reduction in Cambodia: Status Report 2019. Regional Office for Asia and Pacific, Bangkok, Thailand.
- UNESCAP (2015) Overview of Natural Disasters and their Impacts in Asia and the Pacific. ESCAP Technical Paper.
- USAID (2019) Climate Risk Profile: Cambodia, USAID, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.
- Voun, D. (2020) 'Prism warning system upgraded', The Phnom Penh Post, 22 July. <<https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/prism-warning-system-upgraded>>
- WFP (2021) 'Cash-based Transfers (CBT) Division: 2021–2022 Priorities'. WFP Cambodia, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.
- WFP (2021) 'Cash-based transfer programme (CBT) monitoring planning'. WFP Cambodia, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.
- WFP (2021) 'Cash-based transfer (CBT): Standard operating procedure. Version 3'. WFP Cambodia, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.
- WFP (2021) 'CFM guideline for CBT programme_V.I.'. WFP Cambodia, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.
- WFP (2020) 'PRISM: Real-time impact and situation monitoring'. WFP. <<https://innovation.wfp.org/project/prism>>
- WFP (2020) Technical report: Estimating Minimum Expenditure Baskets and Expenditure Gaps in Cambodia. WFP Cambodia. Phnom Penh, Cambodia.
- World Bank (2021) 'Cambodia Economic Update: Living with COVID'. World Bank Group, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.
- World Bank (n.d.) An Assessment of the ID Poor Program. World Bank Group, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

Annex A Terms of reference

WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME CAMBODIA Terms of Reference Operational research for the pilot cash assistance programme “Covid-19 and flood recovery cash assistance in Cambodia”

Background

1. Cambodia is ranked 16th of 181 countries on the 2020 World Risk Index, highlighting its high exposure and vulnerability to natural hazards with floods and droughts frequently occurring. These climatic shocks often have a direct impact on household incomes, impacting their ability to access their essential needs, such as food and basic services. The recent COVID-19 pandemic has also had a profound economic impact on the country, which is particularly severe for vulnerable groups. Until February 2021, there hadn't been a major local outbreak of COVID-19 in Cambodia, but in recent months cases have risen significantly and localised lockdowns have been put in place to curb the spread. This is likely to further exacerbate the already adverse economic impacts experienced by many households and key industries including garment manufacturing, tourism, construction and agriculture. The results of a series of social impact assessments between August 2020 and March 2021 show clear signs of households' loss of jobs and income, increased use of coping strategies, such as borrowing and selling assets, and a deterioration in food security and nutrition.
2. In addition to the impact of COVID-19, flash floods in October 2020 affected nearly 800,000 people (or 170,000 households) in 19 provinces, including an estimated 388,000 people (or 89,000 households) registered with the national poverty registry (IDPoor Programme). This flood event further intensified the severe effects of the economic shock resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Against the backdrop of a significant contraction of the economy and high levels of indebtedness, numerous households affected

by the floods reported adopting negative coping strategies including reducing food consumption, selling productive assets, and borrowing to meet basic needs. Cumulative shocks such as these risk undermining hard won development gains and perpetuating an inter-generational poverty cycle.

3. The Royal Government of Cambodia and partners have implemented social protection and disaster response interventions to respond to COVID-19 and the floods in 2020–2021. The National Social Protection Council (NSPC) recognises the significance shocks have on pushing vulnerable households in Cambodia into poverty and is currently developing a national shock responsive social protection (SRSP) framework, with the support of WFP and development partners. This framework is rooted within the National Social Protection Policy Framework (2016–2025) and will leverage existing coordination platforms and current/planned social assistance and social security programmes to ensure the national social protection system is shock responsive for future scenarios.
4. Within this context, WFP, with the support of the German federal ministry for economic cooperation and development and USAID, and in consultation with the General Secretariat for the National Social Protection Council, Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (MoSVY), Ministry of Planning, National Committee for Disaster Management (NCDM) and relevant partners, will implement a pilot cash assistance programme to support households that have been impacted by both COVID-19 and the floods. The objective is to increase their access to essential needs and support their recovery to these shocks. The programme will be implemented in five

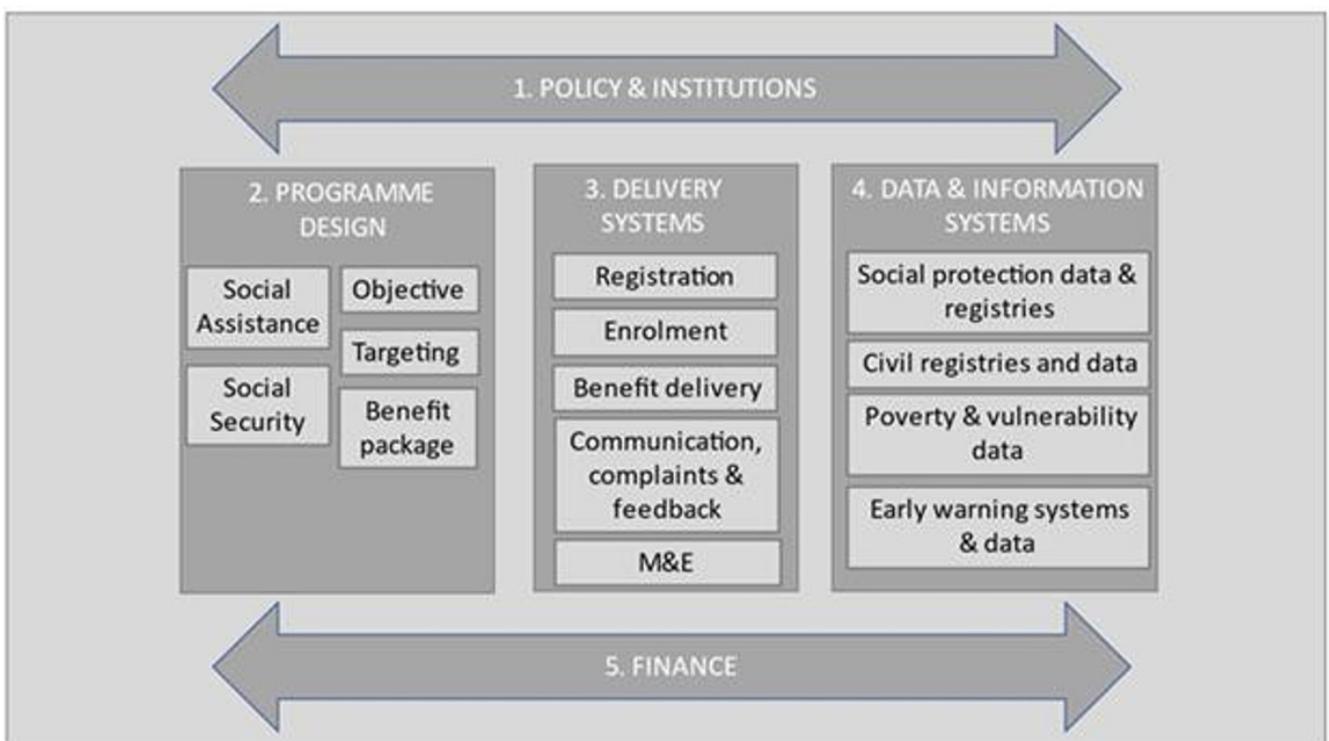
flood-affected provinces with roughly 40,000 poor households that are registered in the IDPoor Programme (see Annex). Beneficiary households will receive six USD per individual, which, with an average household size of five, would be equivalent to 30 USD per household. Beneficiary households will receive up to four rounds of cash disbursements via mobile money between August–December 2021.

Purpose/objectives

5. WFP is commissioning this operational research to generate and document key learnings on the programme design, delivery systems and data and information systems (building blocks for shock-responsive social protection in Cambodia, see diagram below) of the pilot cash assistance programme. This research will focus on and investigate the design and implementation features of this pilot that are the same/similar to those used by government social assistance programmes and other government sources to distil lessons learned and make recommendations that can guide the design and implementation of future WFP cash assistance and future shock responsive social assistance schemes implemented by the government and its partners as part of

the operationalization of the SRSP framework.
Intended users and use

- 6. The intended users of the operational research are WFP Cambodia, the Royal Government of Cambodia, development partners, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders in social protection, specifically cash-based social assistance. These include the General Secretariat of the National Social Protection Council (GS-NSPC); line ministries and government institutions including the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (MOSVY), Ministry of Planning (MOP), National Committee for Disaster Management (NCDM), and Council for Agricultural and Rural Development (CARD); UN agencies, development partners, donors and NGOs.
- 7. Furthermore, WFP will leverage existing forums, including the development partner’s group on social assistance, COVID-19 socio-economic response group, Humanitarian Response Forum’s cash working group, among others, to consult stakeholders on the operational research process and results.
- 8. The overall use of the operational research is described under the purpose/objectives section above. Of note is the forthcoming SRSP framework, which initially recommends four types of adjustments with eight specific response options for existing and proposed



interventions (see Annex). These include:

- Design tweaks to maintain relevance and effectiveness of routine programmes, including home-grown school feeding programme, family package and social health insurance.
 - Expanding the benefits of existing programmes, including the family package.
 - Expanding social protection coverage to new affected populations, including the emergency cash transfer, family package and social health insurance.
 - Linking cash programmes of humanitarian actors with social protection, including emergency cash transfer programmes by partners.
9. Furthermore, considering that the pilot cash assistance programme draws from design and operational elements of both social protection and disaster management sectors, the results will also inform disaster contingency planning, sector response plans and standard operating procedures for humanitarian cash assistance amongst humanitarian actors.

Research question(s)

10. The primary research question has two parts, as follows:

To what extent did the design and implementation of the pilot cash assistance programme align with and support the building blocks for shock responsive social protection in Cambodia (programme design, delivery systems, data and information systems) and, what recommendations do WFP, the Government, and social protection actors need to take into account when designing and implementing future cash (and other) programmes to further strengthen the shock responsiveness of the social protection system in Cambodia?

11. Proposed specific areas of inquiry along the building blocks of shock responsive social protection are presented below. During the inception phase these will be further refined and elaborated. Elements unique to the pilot cash programme will be documented as well.

- Geographic targeting based on flood hazard data (See Annex)
- Targeting of poor and vulnerable households based on the IDPoor Programme
- Benefit package (cash amount, frequency, duration)
- Beneficiary registration and enrolment by local authorities (village/commune officials) or others (WFP, NGO cooperating partner)
- Account opening, mobile cash delivery, accessibility via financial service provider
- Communications and outreach with beneficiaries (multiple channels)
- Administrative and logistics barriers, e.g., travel time and costs incurred

Methodology

12. The proposed methodology is a mixed methods design, consisting of document review, secondary quantitative and qualitative data analysis and primary qualitative data collection and analysis. Potential data sources (and tools) are listed below. Detailed methodology will be updated during the inception phase.

- *Key document review:* national policy and strategies on social protection, previous cash transfer programmes and their evaluations, assessments and analytical reports on impacts of COVID-19 and/or floods, global evidence and best practices on cash transfers in the context of shocks;
- *Secondary quantitative and qualitative data:* cash programme communication materials, baseline and endline surveys (if available), beneficiary verification and registration results, post-distribution monitoring checklists, field visit reports, WFP beneficiary management system, complaints and feedback mechanism reports, financial reports, and IDPoor database;
- *Primary qualitative data:* key informant interviews (with WFP staff, national stakeholders, cooperating partners, donors and development partners, including GIZ, USAID, EU, etc., government officials at the province, district, commune

and village levels, local agents of the financial service provider), focus group discussions (with beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries), case studies (with beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries).

13. The COVID-19 situation in Cambodia will affect the means of data collection. Options to collect data remotely should be considered. Field access to project sites may be limited.

Roles and responsibilities of different actors

14. World Food Programme Cambodia will manage the overall operational research. This includes contracting the company and liaising with in-country stakeholders.

15. A reference group will be formed consisting of WFP, key partners and interested stakeholders (TBC) for the operational research during the three phases described below.

Reporting requirements

16. The operational research consists of three phases - inception/preparation, data collection/analysis and reporting/dissemination. Reporting requirements for each phase include the following:

Phase 1: Inception/preparation

- Inception report with proposed methodology, refined research questions, research instruments/questionnaires, overall workplan, including data collection, COVID-19 risk mitigation measures, data analysis plan, and report outline
- Presentation of the inception report

Phase 2: Data collection/analysis

- Draft report with preliminary findings for review and feedback
- Presentation of the draft review (internal)

Phase 3: Reporting/dissemination

- Executive summary, including 1-2 pager with key recommendations and practical notes
- Final report
- At least 2 presentations of the final report (internal and external)

Timeline and milestones

17. The cash assistance programme will be delivered between August-December 2021. The programme will end on 31 December 2021.

18. The expected timeline and milestones are as follows. These will be updated during the inception phase based on the actual planned dates of the cash transfers.

- Inception/preparation phase (August/September)
- Data collection/analysis phase (October/November)
- Reporting/dissemination phase (November/December)

Any specific requirements

19. Steps to ensure adequate COVID-19 risk management are critical. WFP and the contracted company will closely assess and monitor risks and the public health responses of the government. The inception report should clearly outline the specific risk mitigation measures that research team members will adopt, including, for example, providing training, personal protective equipment (PPE) and hand sanitizer to enumerators; establishing specific procedures for hand hygiene, masks, cleaning and social distancing; and conducting systematic due diligence on contracted staff/service providers, including vehicles, accommodation, etc.

Annex B Selected cash transfer programmes in Cambodia

Name of programme	Implementing agency	Programme objective	Period covered	Geographic coverage	Eligibility criteria	Transfer value	Adequacy of transfer against average minimum expenditure*
COVID-19 for poor households	MoSVY	Provide social protection to maintain living conditions for poor and vulnerable households during COVID-19	June 2020 to date	Nationwide	Poor and vulnerable households (Level 1 and Level 2) with valid equity card As at October 2021, 678,459 households have received the transfer	Transfer value ranges between KHR 160,000 and KHR 332,000 per household per month (for households with five members)	Between 10.7% and 22.3% of household MEB per month (for households with five members)
COVID-19 during lockdown	MoSVY	Provide cash assistance for patients of COVID-19 and deceased people by COVID-19	Time varies in each province but one to three months in duration around July–September 2020	Nationwide	Those without an equity card (non-IDPoor) living in lockdown area As at August 2021, 121,397 households covered	KHR 2 million for funeral support and KHR 1 million for cremation	N/A
PWYC cash transfer	MoSVY	Improve wellbeing of mother and child (from conception until two years old) and contribute to reducing child malnutrition in poor households	June 2019 to date	Nationwide	Pregnant women and children under two holding a valid equity card or priority card (issued by public hospital or health centre)	Total amount received is no more than KHR 760,000 between pregnancy and the date of the child reaching two years of age (KHR 23,030/month)	Based on a calculation for a single mother and child, this would meet around 7% of the mother's MEB from conception until the end of six months' exclusive breastfeeding and around 3.5% of the MEB for the mother and her child aged 7–24 months

WFP cash transfer programme for flood response	WFP	Provide cash assistance to poor and vulnerable households (IDPoor equity card holders) affected by COVID-19 and the floods in 2020–2021	Three months between October and December 2021	Selected communes in five provinces affected by flood: Battambang, Banteay Meanchey, Kampong Thom, Pursat, and Siem Reap	Poor and vulnerable households (Level 1 and Level 2) with a valid equity card in the five provinces. As at December 2021, 45,919 households had successfully created a WING account to receive the transfer	KHR 32,000 per household member per month or KHR 160,000 per household per month (for households with five members)	10.7% of household MEB per month (for households with five members) (Note: this transfer is in addition to the RGC COVID-19 transfer for poor households)
Cash and Voucher Assistance	DanChurchAid and People in Need	To promote market recovery during and after intense flooding	2020	Four provinces: Battambang, Siem Reap, Pursat, and Kampong Speu	A total of 2,482 targeted beneficiaries	One-time transfer, between US\$ 40 and US\$ 50 per person	N/A
NOURISH	USAID/Save the Children	To promote optimal child growth and development; Cambodia NOURISH targets women and children during the first 1,000 days – from the start of pregnancy until the child reaches two years of age	2014–2019	Three provinces: Siem Reap, Battambang, and Pursat	Pregnant women and mothers of children under 2 registered as Poor Level 1 and Level 2 in the IDPoor database	Families could receive up to six payments, totalling US\$ 65 (or US\$ 21.6 per month), over the ‘first 1,000 days’ of a child’s life, after the completion of specific health and nutrition services, known as conditions	
Cash transfer for poor families with pregnant women and children	Council for Agricultural and Rural Development	Conditional cash transfer to improve childhood nutrition and health	2014	Eight communes in Prasat Bakong District	1,300 pregnant women registered as Poor Level 1 and Level 2 in the IDPoor database	US\$ 5 per month per individual women and child	

Note: Only selected programmes have been included to provide an overview.

* The last column on adequacy of transfer is calculated based on an MEB of KHR 323,614 per capita per month (approx. US\$ 79.83) for the average household size of 4.6 people (MEB of US\$ 367.20 or KHR 1,488,624).

Source: OPM analysis

Annex C Summary of key building blocks of the SRSP Framework

Building block	SRSP Framework
Programme design	<p>The SRSP Framework sets out several options for designing and providing social protection schemes based on the target population. For vulnerable populations that are enrolled in routine social protection programmes, the RGC and development partners can perform: i) a series of design tweaks to ensure resilience, accessibility, and effectiveness; or ii) 'vertical expansion' by scaling up or modifying the social protection benefit package. Meanwhile, for those that are not routinely covered by cash-based assistance (or the 'missing middle'), the options would be to: iii) implement new, temporary emergency cash transfers; and iv) 'horizontal expansion' – broadening coverage of the routine social protection programmes.</p>
Targeting	<p>The SRSP Framework acknowledges that the existing criteria to identify poor households in the IDPoor database can also be used to target households that are vulnerable to shocks. However, before the IDPoor database is used to define the targeting approach, the SRSP Framework suggests that additional assessment needs to be undertaken to ensure the accuracy of the data in the IDPoor system, including in the assessment of the poverty condition/status of households.</p>
Benefit package	<p>Type of assistance: NSPC recognises global evidence showing that one of the most effective ways to support households affected by a shock is with direct cash assistance, which can be used to meet a range of immediate basic needs, as well as recovery needs, according to a household's own priorities, and which is easily scalable.</p> <p>Amount: In the event of any SRSP expansion (vertical, horizontal, or the introduction of an emergency cash transfer programme), it will be important to set an appropriate transfer value and to define the rules for duration and exit (including what indicators will be monitored). The transfer value should, as far as possible, be adequate for the purpose of SRSP (i.e. to fill the gap households are facing in meeting basic needs or to prevent negative coping and a fall into poverty).</p> <p>Timing: To be effective, a social protection response must be mobilised quickly to provide rapid support for affected populations, using existing administrative and institutional capacities. In the interests of a rapid response, this base transfer could be rolled out 'as is' in the acute phase, for three months. Alternatively, this base transfer value could be recalibrated based on ex post market monitoring data and needs analysis, prior to any payments being made.</p> <p>Duration: Principles need to be set for the duration and exit of any SRSP. For example, whether there will be an immediate exit after a pre-defined period (i.e. exit is guided by funding limitations) or after further assessment of the needs of targeted populations (i.e. exit is defined by objectives having been met, which will require some measurement of household recovery and/or coping), or after changes in other external indicators (i.e. when monitoring shows that certain early warning indicators have reverted towards pre-crisis levels), or a combination of these.</p>

Registration and enrolment	<p>With the transformation of IDPoor to OD IDPoor, which utilises digitised processes, the SRSP Framework notes the potential for IDPoor to become a registration platform for SRSP. Registration through IDPoor using digitised processes would improve accuracy and facilitate the rapid registration of new IDPoor beneficiaries. To be effective, it requires that IDPoor's registration procedures are modified to register data on all assessed households, both poor and near-poor.</p> <p>The SRSP Framework also highlights the need for the modification or development of SOPs for temporary emergency cash transfer programmes to reach newly poor and vulnerable households during shocks.</p>
Benefit delivery	<p>For benefit delivery, the SRSP Framework highlights the need to implement the necessary preparedness measures for delivery systems at national and sub-national level, including establishing pre-agreements with financial service providers for services required. The SRSP Framework also highlights the need for the modification or development of SOPs for temporary emergency cash transfer programmes to reach newly poor and vulnerable households during shocks that considers procedures for staggering payments to minimise bottlenecks. The SRSP Framework emphasises the use of established social protection institutions and their delivery systems to implement new and temporary emergency cash transfer programmes to reach households not routinely covered by cash-based social assistance programmes. This is to ensure that the rapid identification and coverage of affected and vulnerable households are possible during shocks.</p> <p>Additionally, the framework highlights an Option 8, which states that a temporary, shock-specific cash transfer programme, funded and delivered by humanitarian partners, can make use of social protection systems and processes. This is to improve speed and efficiency and enables the development of coordination between government and humanitarian partners. Although the option emphasises humanitarian partners, this particular point is also relevant to the WFP cash transfer programme implementation where WFP is acting as a development partner.</p>
Communication	<p>In terms of communication, the SRSP Framework highlights the importance of developing a costed communication strategy, both for routine social protection programmes and for SRSP based on the lessons learned gained from experiences in adapting social protection processes to respond to shocks (e.g. the COVID-19 cash transfer programme and post-lockdown social assistance programme). This will determine the critical messages required to disseminate the information in normal times and the channels to achieve this, as well as the modifications or additional messages needed for expansion during shocks. The framework also highlights the prioritisation of using communication channels/actors that reach the grassroots level, to ensure accessibility for the most vulnerable – especially women, PWDs, and the elderly. The communication must include key messages, such as: (i) who is eligible; (ii) how to register; (iii) the value and duration of assistance; (iv) how to raise queries or complaints; and (v) the process for exit.</p> <p>Issues and bottlenecks to be addressed in this building block relate to the limited awareness of the community due to low investment in mechanisms for communication with beneficiaries. The framework notes the need to implement the necessary preparedness measures for a delivery system, which, for communication purposes, include establishing memoranda of understanding with civil society organisations for support to outreach, registration, or accountability.</p> <p>Moreover, the SRSP Framework also highlights the need for the modification or development of SOPs for temporary emergency cash transfer programmes to reach newly poor and vulnerable households during shocks that considers procedures for the following aspects (in relation to communication):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mass sensitisation in affected communities about the programme and registration, building on the means available in communes; and • for payment, greater sensitisation about how to manage PIN codes, as well as procedures for staggering payments to minimise bottlenecks.

Complaint handling	<p>The SRSP Framework highlights the need to modify or develop SOPs for temporary emergency cash transfer programmes to reach newly poor and vulnerable households during shocks that include procedures for an appropriate complaints and feedback mechanism. The procedures should also be developed to be sensitive to the realities and challenges of programming in a shock environment, such as flooding. The framework specifically points to building upon the complaints and feedback mechanism being established for the Family Package, and considers the potential for leveraging additional capacity from civil society accountability partners. Additionally, the framework pinpoints the need to build and improve the capacities of sub-national administrations (including commune councils and local authorities) in the area of feedback mechanisms, to ensure that staff at commune level are not overburdened.</p>
M&E	<p>For M&E, the SRSP Framework points to the need to build SRSP monitoring requirements (outputs and outcomes) into the M&E strategy and system, as well as adding the new instruments required. The framework also highlights the need to improve programme monitoring.</p>
Data and information	<p>The SRSP Framework highlights that there is great potential for social protection registries to guide the targeting of SRSP. Data from IDPoor can also be used to target SRSP, as was done for the COVID-19 cash transfer – based on poverty scores (including ‘near-poor’), as well as other data points included in IDPoor. Moreover, OD IDPoor provides a mechanism for further rapid expansion of the IDPoor registry, for SRSP, ex post. Another data source that could be useful for informing targeting of SRSP in a flood response is the Provincial Committee for Disaster Management-led disaster assessment. For example, the Committee assessment could be used to further verify the need for SRSP, for existing social assistance beneficiaries, and to inform targeting of vertical expansion. PRISM, as the platform collating and mapping early warning, hazard and vulnerability data, can also support contingency planning for SRSP.</p> <p>The SRSP Framework noted that the main constraints to be addressed are the exclusion of the near-poor and vulnerable from the IDPoor registry, the lack of integration of social assistance and National Social Security Fund data management systems, the lack of integration of IDPoor with all relevant ministries and departments (National Social Security Fund, Ministry of Interior) or of any ‘single registry’ linking these social protection data, and the lack of a unique identifier across programmes. It therefore recommends the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developing a strategy for reforming and integrating social protection data management registries across all implicated government departments and partners, putting SRSP requirements at the centre; • engaging with NCDM and disaster management partners to explore ways in which the disaster assessment tool of the Provincial Committee for Disaster Management could be integrated into and inform SRSP targeting; and • engaging with WFP, NCDM, and other relevant partners to develop a system of market monitoring and assessment ex post (to confirm the feasibility of a cash response).

Annex D List of interviewed stakeholders

Name of Institutions / Organisations	Date of Interview	Name of respondents
National Level		
MoSVY	21 October 2021 8 December 2021	Mr Chhour Sopannha – Director of Social Welfare Department
Ministry of Planning	21 October 2021	H.E. Keo Ouly – Director of IDPoor Department Mr Oliver Schell – Advisor to IDPoor Department
NSPC General Secretariat	20 October 2021	Ms Uy Chan Nimol – Director, Social Assistance Department Mr Khov Vatanak – Officer Social Assistance Department Mr Sreng Sophornreaksmey – Deputy Director of Social Assistance Mr Holger Thies – Senior Advisor
NCDM	8 December 2021	Mr So Socheath – Senior Project Officer
WFP Country Office*	4 October 2021	Mr Federico Barreras – CBT Officer Ms Soleab Loun – CMF Focal Point
	5 November 2021	Mr. Federico Barreras – CBT Officer Mr. Sovannarith Hang – Programme Policy Officer
	5 October 2021	Mr. Benjamin Scholz – Head of Research Analysis and Monitoring
GIZ	1 October 2021	Ms. Sophie Hermanns – Advisor for GIZ IDPoor
	21 October 2021	Mr. Ole Doetinchem – Team Leader of GIZ IDPoor Ms. Sophie Hermanns – Advisor for GIZ IDPoor
UNICEF	21 October 2021	Ms. Erna Ribar – Chief of Social Policy Ms. Keo Sovannary – Social Policy Specialist
Save the Children	28 October 2021	Ms. Gloria Donate – Director of Strategy, Program Development and Impact
WING	22 October 2021	Mr. Chhun Vattanak Phakdey – Chief Corporate Business Officer Ms. Pungputthima Phanny – Senior Corporate Solution Specialist Ms. Pich Meas Morokot – Senior Payment Disbursement Manager
Provincial Level		
PDoSVY	13 November 2021	Mr. Sophea – Director of PDoSVY Kampong Thom
	16 November 2021	Mr. Kim Teng – Director of PDoSVY Battambang
	21 November 2021	Ms. Mao Visa – Deputy Chief of Social Affairs Office and MIS focal point, PDoSVY Banteay Meanchey
PDoP	16 November 2021	H.E. Phok Chansetha – Director of PDoP, Kampong Thom
	26 November 2021	H.E. Mrs. Prum Sina – Director of PDoP, Banteay Meanchey
LWD	11 November 2021	Dr. Suon Sopheap – Executive Director Area Program teams in Battambang and Pursat Finance, Admin and CMF Focal Points in Pursat
WFP AO	16 November 2021	Mr. Um Nisith – Head of Area of Office in Siem Reap

* Claire Conan, Country Director, Kurt Burja, Programme Policy Officer, and Sovannarith Hang, Programme Policy Officer provided inputs throughout the research

Annex E Transfer values

		Urban inside Phnom Penh		Urban outside Phnom Penh		Rural	
COVID-19 cash transfer programme transfer values							
		Poor 1	Poor 2	Poor 1	Poor 2	Poor 1	Poor 2
	Basic transfer	120,000	120,000	120,000	120,000	80,000	80,000
	Extra support for a member	52,000	36,000	40,000	28,000	24,000	16,000
	Children 0–5 years old	40,000	28,000	40,000	28,000	24,000	16,000
	PWD	40,000	28,000	40,000	28,000	24,000	16,000
	Elderly	40,000	28,000	40,000	28,000	24,000	16,000
	Member with HIV	40,000	28,000	40,000	28,000	24,000	16,000
	Total for a household with five people (KHR)	332,000	268,000	320,000	260,000	200,000	160,000
A	Total for a household with five people (US\$)	83	67	80	65	50	40
WFP cash transfer programme transfer value							
	Per household member	32,000	32,000	32,000	32,000	32,000	32,000
	Total for a household with five people (KHR)	160,000	160,000	160,000	160,000	160,000	160,000
B	Total for a household with five people (US\$)	40	40	40	40	40	40
	Combined amount COVID-19 and WFP assistance = A+B (US\$)	123	107	120	105	90	80
	Adequacy against MEB of US\$ 404.5	30%	26%	30%	26%	22%	20%
	Adequacy against food needs of US\$ 199 (49.2% of MEB)	62%	54%	60%	53%	45%	40%
	Adequacy against expenditure gaps of US\$ 104.25	118%	103%	115%	101%	86%	77%
PWYC cash transfer programme, assuming each household receives KHR 23,030 for 33 months							
C	Transfer value for each household with pregnant woman and children under three years of age (KHR)	23,030	23,030	23,030	23,030	23,030	23,030
	Transfer value (US\$)	5.75	5.75	5.75	5.75	5.75	5.75
	Combined amount COVID-19, WFP and PWYC = A+B+C (US\$)	129	113	126	111	96	86
	Adequacy against MEB of US\$ 404.5	32%	28%	31%	27%	24%	21%
	Adequacy against food needs of US\$ 199 (49.2% of MEB)	65%	57%	63%	56%	48%	43%

Annex F WFP registration results

Province	Total poor households in the IDPoor data	Households registered		WING account created		
		#	% of total IDPoor data	#	% of registered households	% of total IDPoor data
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Banteay Meanchey	15,006	13,723	91%	13,044	95%	87%
Battambang	17,741	16,944	96%	14,914	88%	84%
Kampong Thom	11,657	10,850	93%	10,172	94%	87%
Pursat	2,411	2,332	97%	2,150	92%	89%
Siem Reap	6,293	5,886	94%	5,639	96%	90%
Total	53,168	49,735	94%	45,919	92%	86%

Annex G Case study on commune council role

Ms Youn Rong (not her real name) has been serving as a commune councillor in Banteay Meanchey for more than 15 years. She usually goes to the commune council office every day at 7.30 am, from Monday to Friday. She sometimes also works on Saturday morning. In addition to being a councillor, she has a small plot of land to tend and four children who still need her attention after work.

She considers her commune a large commune with 19 villages and more than 20,000 inhabitants. There are two remote villages with inadequate road access and one village can only be accessed by boat during the rainy season.

In the last two years, her duties as a commune councillor have been mostly taken up by managing and assisting the implementation of various cash transfer programmes. She estimates that at least half of her time as a councillor is focused on these programmes. There are four cash transfer programmes currently implemented in the commune – a) COVID-19; b) PWYC; and c) a World Vision programme – and one programme (WFP) that has been recently completed.

Previously, her duties were more related to family issues and public health in general, such as domestic violence, children and mothers' health, malaria prevention, and the handling of HIV cases. On average, she would visit the villages in her area one or two days a week. She remembers being not very busy at that time.

However, she feels that her activities have now increased quite a lot. In addition to continuing what she had been doing before, she also needs to ensure that the cash transfer programmes are running well. For example, when interviewing poor households who have requested to be registered in IDPoor through the OD mechanism, the commune authority needs to review all requests that have been previously sent by the village chief. Not all requests are finally approved, for several reasons, e.g. some households may be considered better off or have a regular income. She believes there to be a rumour circulating in the commune that anyone can register and get a cash transfer.

For approved requests, community councillors, including herself, must visit every house and conduct interviews. One household requires one hour of interview time. In a single day she can interview four to five households. Ms Youn herself inputs the data during the interview into the tablet provided by the Ministry of Planning. To learn how to use the tablet, she attended training for two days in the province. She was the only one from the commune who attended the training as the commune chief appointed her as the councillor responsible for the identification of poor families. She does not know why, as other communes have at least two councillors doing this.

There are several challenges that make it difficult for her to assist in the implementation of cash transfers. One of them is that the road to the remote village is not good. To work around this, the commune usually sends her to the village to work with the village chief. Sometimes when she arrives at a household, they are not at home. Another time, the telephone was not connected, so she asked the village chief to inform the neighbours and convey the message to the households later. In addition, she has also found it difficult to mobilise people to come

to commune meetings. She needs to find a way for all villagers to be informed, but there are still many obstacles.

The community council formally has quite broad roles and functions in accordance with the Law on Commune (Sangkat) Administrative Management, including maintaining commune security and public order, managing public services within the commune, promoting the social and economic development of residents, and generally responding to residents' needs.

As well as these regular tasks, their roles and duties have increased over the last two years since the PWYC cash transfer programme began to be implemented in June 2019, followed by the COVID-19 programme in June 2020, and finally the WFP cash transfer programme in June/July 2021.

It is interesting to look at the role played by the commune council in the delivery of the cash assistance programmes. In this case, the most prominent role is in identifying villagers who fit the category of poor and vulnerable households, according to the criteria set by the Ministry of Planning as the basis for registering these households onto the IDPoor database.

In this process, they have a range of roles, including disseminating information to villagers, selecting households to interview, inputting data into the tablet application (the MIS), distributing equity cards, and managing complaints from villagers.

Commune councils' capacities vary. With the introduction of tablet-based identification and data management, knowledge, and confidence in using technology has been observed to be higher among younger commune members. Of seven commune councils interviewed, 69% of council members are over 50 years old and only 17% are under 40. This shows that not all communities are able to carry out the interview process well, including assessing household conditions according to the poverty criteria prepared by the Ministry of Planning.

In supporting the implementation of the identification of poor households, some of the obstacles mentioned by commune councils include the following:

- Some poor households were absent during the OD IDPoor registration process because they had migrated to work in Thailand; when they came back, registration was finished so they were not allowed to receive a cash transfer.
- Households that did not pass the selection previously have now been selected to receive the cash transfer, especially households with elderly and disabled members.
- All council members interviewed in this research had served for a minimum of four years, with the longest having served 20 years.

Annex I Summary of WFP complaints and feedback mechanism reports

	September 2021	October 2021	November 2021
Total number of cases	2,606	11,123	4,675
Hotline	1,916	3,359	3,665
AO	630	5,765	970
LWD	60	1,999	40
Categories of cases			
A-1: Information/assistance request with on-the-spot resolution (by FAQ)	506	1,001	2,469
A-2: Information/assistance request with follow-up action	2,095	10,103	2,151
B-1: Positive feedback	-	3	4
B-2: Negative feedback	-	-	-
C-1: Non-sensitive complaint	-	-	-
C-2: Sensitive complaint	5	16	51
D: Rumour or any other type of feedback/complaints	-	-	-
O: Complaints that are not in above category	-	-	-
Status of cases			
Case closed by complaints and feedback mechanism staff	12,219		2,206
Case closed by hotline	1,510		2,469
Pending cases with actions to be taken	-		-
Location			
Siem Reap	883	2,999	817
Kampong Thom	866	1,294	1,120
Battambang	497	1,765	855
Pursat	222	2,359	534
Banteay Meanchey	138	2,706	1,349

Annex J Other data and information systems

Civil registration and vital statistics system

Cambodia has five population identification systems: the Khmer ID Card Management System; the Passport Management System; the Residential Management System; the Nationality System; and the Civil Registration and Vital Statistics System. All are managed by the Ministry of Interior. During the fifth meeting of the Regional Steering Group for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics in Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok in 2019, Cambodia's General Department of Identification presented a number of key challenges that the RGC faces with existing identification systems: most systems are paper-based; they operate as separate systems due to the lack of a primary identity system; the uniqueness of citizen records cannot be ascertained; and the systems do not support authentication.

Data sources on disaster risk management

Using ex post data on flood impacts is the norm in disaster response in Cambodia. NCDM, which is in charge of facilitating and coordinating disaster risk reduction and management, previously launched emergency responses to floods relying on ex post data. To date, there has been limited introduction of early warning systems (EWS); according to FAO, UNICEF, and WFP, the current EWS experiences a number of challenges. These include: a lack of risk and vulnerabilities analysis at particular locations that may be subject to urbanisation; rural–urban land use change, environmental degradation, and climate change;⁵⁰ a lack of linkage between EWS and social protection programmes (the WFP cash transfer programme is a prototype in this direction); no established thresholds to trigger early actions for major shocks such as floods⁵¹ and drought; and no disaggregated data at community level and by geographical or climatic zone.

Thus, Cambodia's EWS needs strengthening – an assessment shared by FAO, UNICEF, and WFP. A number of initiatives to address some of the above challenges are in motion:

- PRISM has been developed and launched under a partnership between NCDM and WFP. This is a web-based, interactive map platform used for assessing potential risk and vulnerability and estimating impacts on vulnerable communities in order to design and trigger targeted disaster response.⁵² The updated version of the system links many data streams, such as field assessment information, EWS, and Earth observation satellites with socio-economic vulnerability data to measure risk and impact.⁵³
- The EWS 1294 system is now implemented by NCDM and the Provincial Committees for Disaster Management with support from People in Need. The system utilises interactive voice response to send warnings of detected or predicted flooding to the mobile phones of registered users (after they call 1294) in areas at risk.⁵⁴ EWS 1294 contains an innovative hydrological monitoring component, through the production and installation of river gauges. These Global System for Mobile Communications-enabled devices use sonar sensors to record water surface levels at

50 FAO, UNICEF, and WFP (2019) Roadmap: Developing a Risk-Informed and Shock-Responsive Social Protection System in Cambodia, FAO, Bangkok, Thailand.

51 For flooding, the Chair of NCDM declares which of the three categories of flood applies, based on severity.

52 WFP (2020) 'PRISM: Real-time impact and situation monitoring', WFP. <https://innovation.wfp.org/project/prism>.

53 Voun, D. (2020) 'Prism warning system upgraded', The Phnom Penh Post, 22 July. <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/prism-warning-system-upgraded>.

54 EWS 1294 (n.d.) Early Warning System, People in Need, Cambodia. <http://ews1294.info/>

carefully selected locations and share the data with an online server at 15-minute intervals, providing important real-time hydrological information to local disaster management authorities to support evidence-based decision making.⁵⁵

- The Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology, with support from UNDP, is setting up 24 automatic meteorological stations and 55 automatic hydrological stations covering surface and groundwater across the country, and is developing a weather information system that is able to analyse data from the different stations and conduct hydrological modelling using the data from the weather and hydro stations, allowing for real-time warnings based on the set-up threshold and hydrological modelling. The platform is understood to link to EWS 1294, the Mekong River Commission, and other existing stations in Cambodia managed by the ministry.
- The Flood Monitoring and Impact Assessment System, which was developed by the World Bank for Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, and Myanmar combines satellite-based monitoring and historical flood losses overlaid with meteorological and hydrological data, and flood simulation modelling. The assessment system is aimed to aid government decision making during and in the aftermath of flooding using rapid and reliable data, and to link Cambodia to various disaster risk finance options, including the international reinsurance markets.

⁵⁵ PIN and WFP (n.d.) Standard Operating Procedure: Flood Triggered Cash Transfers in Cambodia, PIN and WFP, Cambodia.

Annex K IDPoor implementation in rural and urban areas

	Urban	Rural
Village representative groups (VRG)	IDPoor uses participatory and consultative approaches in which villagers participate in VRG selection and consultation meetings. VRGs comprise at least five members per village, or are equal to the total number of households divided by 30 The main responsibility of VRG members is preparing lists of households for interview	
	In the urban version of the implementation manual, it is stated clearly that village chiefs, vice village chiefs, village assistants, team leaders, and village coordinators are not allowed to conduct interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting interview with households • Developing a draft list of poor households • Consulting on the list with commune working groups and villagers
Questionnaire	Non-scoring section on special household circumstances related to household living standards as additional information to help VRGs decide on poverty category	
	Same scoring section as rural questionnaire In addition, the urban version includes additional criteria such as health (illness, injury, and disability), education, and household debt	Scoring section questionnaire includes housing conditions, main income source, size of productive land area, livestock, need to borrow food, number of dependent household members, and household assets
	The urban questionnaire does not set the same conditions.	The rural questionnaire allows a 'disqualify' response*, meaning a total score of zero to be given to the questions
Scoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 59–68 points = Poor Level 1 (very poor or extremely poor) • 45–58 points = Poor Level 2 (poor) • 0–44 points = 'Other' (living conditions are average or better than average) 	

Note: * 'Disqualify' responses are included for Q7a on a household raising more than 10 or more pigs and/or 20 or more goats and/or 10 or more cows, buffalos, or horses; Q10 on household owning a video camera or threshing machine, rice milling machine, or generator; and Q11 on a household owning a tractor or car/van/truck.

Annex L Rapid identification of affected households during lockdown

In April 2021, due to a significant spike in positive COVID-19 cases after a February 2021 community event, the RGC ordered a citywide lockdown in Phnom Penh, Takhmao municipality of Kandal province, and Preah Sihanouk municipality of Preah Sihanouk province. The impact was unprecedented for many households. The Ministry of Planning, with funding support from GIZ, UNDP, and World Bank, conducted a rapid assessment using consumption per capita in an adapted questionnaire and a simplified data collection procedure (direct interviews with people living in less high-risk zones in the lockdown areas and phone-based interviews with those living in red zones using tablets). The questionnaire asked about the possession of an IDPoor card, household members' education levels, occupations, income loss, housing condition/assets, and COVID-related shocks (new debt, COVID cases, and food security).

In just 12 days in May 2021, 61,678 affected households were identified, and in June 2021 another 59,587 households were – all eligible to receive the emergency post-lockdown social assistance in cash programme.⁵⁶ These are households not possessing IDPoor cards but newly affected by a sudden onset of a shock (a citywide lockdown) during the widening pandemic. Those who do have an equity card are already targeted for the ongoing COVID-19 cash transfer programme for poor and vulnerable households and were thus not eligible for the post-lockdown social assistance programme. According to OPM's interview with MoSVY, the identification process was sped up with support from the Union of Youth Federations of Cambodia and sub-national government structures.

The eligible households for the post-lockdown social assistance⁵⁷ were:

- those with livelihood difficulties due to low income, affected by the 20 February event, and those living in the geographical areas of Phnom Penh, Takhmao, and Preah Sihanouk that implemented large-scale lockdown measures;
- those with member(s) infected with COVID-19 from the 20 February event, and those having livelihood difficulties due to low income;
- workers/employees working in the garment, footwear, and bag factories who work in large-scale lockdown areas, infected with COVID-19 from the 20 February event, and those residing outside the lockdown areas identified by the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training's mechanism; and
- those with member(s) who died of COVID-19 who appear on the Ministry of Health's official list and have an official death certificate issued by the health facility.

According to MoSVY, households with livelihood difficulties with incomes severely affected by the lockdown and those targeted for the post-lockdown social assistance were construction workers, street vendors, tuk-tuk drivers, entertainment workers, rubbish collectors, and market staff – all workers in the informal economy.

In other provinces, the identification of eligible households for the post-lockdown social assistance was conducted by PDoP, instead of the commune authority (as was implemented in the OD identification approach) because the Ministry of Planning was concerned that 'communes know all households and would put them all poor. PDoP would not know any household closely, so we are not biased' (PDoP BMC in an interview with OPM). PDoP used the list of households with member(s) infected with or died from COVID-19 received from the Ministry of Health through the Ministry of Planning, and interviewed them via phone before sending the approved list of eligible households to MoSVY to transfer the cash.

⁵⁶ Ministry of Planning (2021) 'IDPoor 2022 Ways Forward and Contributions of IDPoor to Shock-Responsive Social Protection in Cambodia' [PowerPoint presentation], unofficial translation, Ministry of Planning, Cambodia.

⁵⁷ Ministry of Economy and Finance (2021) 'Decision on Mechanisms and Procedures for Implementing Post-Lockdown Social Assistance Program for citizens and households facing livelihood difficulties, citizens and households having member(s) infected with or died of COVID in the event of February 20, 2021', Ministry of Economy and Finance, Cambodia.

