



World Food Programme

SAVING
LIVES
CHANGING
LIVES

WFP Cambodia

Country Brief

February-May 2025



Students at Toul Leap Primary School in Pursat province share a hot, nutritious breakfast together, starting their school day with energy and smiles. ©WFP/Darapec Chha

Operational Context

Cambodia has achieved remarkable economic growth in the last two decades. The poverty rate has decreased from 47.8 percent in 2007 to 17.8 percent in 2019-20. The Government is committed to reaching upper middle-income status by 2030 and high-income status by 2050—by sustaining growth and accelerating structural transformation. However, a significant portion of the population remains 'near poor' and still at high risk of falling back into poverty following a shock. Undernutrition remains a public health concern: 22 percent of children under 5 years are stunted, 16 percent are underweight, and 10 percent wasted. Micronutrient deficiencies are widespread and overweight/obesity is on the rise. Cambodia is highly vulnerable to natural disasters, with regular monsoon flooding in the Mekong and Tonle Sap basin and localised droughts in the plains. These climate-related disasters can undo years of developmental gains.



Population: **16.8 million**

2023 Human Development Index: **146 out of 191**

Income Level: **Lower middle**

Chronic malnutrition: **22 percent of children under five**

Contact info: Chou CHEA (chou.chea@wfp.org)

Country Director: Claire CONAN

Further information: www.wfp.org/countries/cambodia.

Highlights

In April 2025, Cambodia launched the Third National Strategy for Food Security and Nutrition (2024–2028)—a landmark framework developed by the Council for Agricultural and Rural Development, with support from WFP, UNICEF, the Food and Agriculture Organization, and the World Health Organization. The strategy sets the direction for coordinated, multisectoral action to combat food insecurity and malnutrition, aligning efforts across agriculture, industry, commerce, health, and education. It introduces five cross-cutting priorities integrating food, health, social protection, and water, sanitation, and health systems.

Operational Updates

Nutrition

- Cambodia advances its food fortification agenda as a key strategy to improve dietary quality. With WFP's support, the Ministry of Planning finalized the National Strategy for Food Fortification 2025–2030, which is set to launch in July. Progress is also being made toward commercialization through workplace nutrition platforms, particularly targeting factory workers. A new four-year project, funded by the Government of Japan and implemented by WFP, aims to strengthen both supply and demand for fortified rice, with a focus on reaching women of reproductive age. To support this, a marketing firm has been engaged to develop a consumer-facing fortified rice brand.

Support to Nationally Determined Contributions 3.0

- As part of Cambodia's Nationally Determined Contribution Phase 3 (NDC 3.0) formulation process— Cambodia's national roadmap to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and strengthen climate resilience under the Paris Agreement—WFP led the development of the disaster risk management component, in close collaboration with the National Committee for Disaster Management and the Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology. This included conducting sectoral policy reviews, organizing consultations, and facilitating technical discussions to identify updated measures such as the expansion of early warning systems, and scaling up shock-responsive social protection. These efforts culminated in a national workshop to review and validate proposed actions, with final inputs to be submitted to the Ministry of Environment by mid-June.

Country Strategic Plan (2024-2028)		
Total Requirement (in USD)	Allocated Contributions (in USD)	June-November 2025 Net Funding Requirements (in USD)
63.38 m	40.19 m	0.69 m

Strategic Result: National programmes and systems are strengthened.

Strategic Outcome 1: By 2028, systems are strengthened for people in Cambodia, particularly women and others most at risk of being left behind, to benefit from improved nutrition, education, and social protection.
Focus area: Root Causes

- Activity 1:** Provide technical support, facilitate coordination and generate evidence for public and private actors towards reducing all forms of malnutrition.
- Activity 2:** Provide technical support, facilitate coordination and generate evidence for national and subnational authorities to strengthen the social protection system, with a focus on the transition to the national home-grown school feeding programme.

Strategic Result: National programmes and systems are strengthened.

Strategic Outcome 2: By 2028, food systems and disaster management systems in Cambodia are strengthened to better support the livelihoods, climate adaptive capacity And ability to manage shocks of people in hazard-prone areas.
Focus area: Resilience Building

- Activity 3:** Provide technical assistance to, and generate evidence for, institutions and value chain actors, particularly women, to strengthen food systems resilience to climate change.
- Activity 4:** Provide national and subnational authorities and communities with technical support, coordination and evidence generation services relevant to disaster risk management and shock-responsive social protection.

Strategic Result: People are better able to meet their urgent food and nutrition needs.

Strategic Outcome 3: Crisis-affected populations in Cambodia are able to meet their food, nutrition and other essential needs during and after crises.
Focus area: Crisis Response

- Activity 5:** Provide nutrition-sensitive food assistance to crisis-affected populations.



WFP-Cambodia's strategy (2024-2028): Enhancing human capital, fostering resilience, and enabling emergency response through evidence-based, gender-inclusive partnerships with the government and communities.

- Alongside the German Agency for International Cooperation and UNICEF, WFP also assisted the General Secretariat of the National Social Protection Council in advancing key climate-responsive social protection measures. These include strengthening routine social protection programmes to build resilience among vulnerable groups, scaling up shock-responsive systems and early warning access, supporting a just transition for livelihoods affected by climate change, and enhancing urban social assistance through climate-sensitive housing affordability schemes. These efforts aim to strengthen both systemic and household-level resilience while aligning with Cambodia's National Social Protection Policy Framework 2024–2035.
- Simultaneously, WFP also supported the formulation of the food systems and social protection components of Cambodia's NDC3.0.

Social Protection

- WFP supported the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) in the development of a School Feeding Policy Action Plan 2025-2035 to guide the effective implementation of the policy. The plan focused on multi-sectoral integration to enhance community impact. Following further consultations both at national and sub-national levels, the policy action plan is scheduled to be finalized and endorsed in July.
- With technical support from WFP, the Primary Education Department collaborated with sub-national authorities to develop a comprehensive 2026 budget for the National Home-Grown School Feeding programme. The domestic budget to be allocated to the national programme, approximately US\$9 million, will support 816 schools—including 130 to be transitioned from WFP to full government management by the end of 2025—and includes funding for the construction of 39 kitchens. The budget has been submitted to the National Social Protection Council for review, with final approval expected in August. In parallel, MoEYS, with WFP support, has integrated annual budget plans through 2028—amounting to approximately US\$36 million—into the national social protection financing framework. These plans include provisions for capacity strengthening, infrastructure, kitchen equipment, and hygiene materials.
- With WFP support, MoEYS drafted an update on Cambodia's progress toward the six national commitments made under the School Meals Coalition. Against the 2021 commitments, notable progress has been made in increasing government

funding and ownership of the national school meals programme, endorsing a national policy, implementing a multi-sectoral monitoring and evaluation framework, integrating nutrition standards, strengthening community engagement, and aligning school feeding with broader education, health, and agriculture policies. Challenges remain in areas of food safety oversight, improving infrastructure, strengthening linkages with local agricultural cooperatives, and enhancing cross-sectoral coordination at sub-national levels.

Food Systems

- WFP, in partnership with the World Bank, finalized an analysis exploring the trade-offs and potential win-wins between healthy diets, nutrition, and environmental sustainability in Cambodia's food system. The study found that shifting to healthier diets—when combined with climate-smart food production and the replacement of unfortified rice with fortified rice—could reduce greenhouse gas emissions from food consumption by up to 55 percent. This reduction alone represents over a quarter of Cambodia's current mitigation target outlined in NDC 2.0, positioning food systems and healthy diets as critical levers for climate action and laying the groundwork for their inclusion in the upcoming NDC 3.0.
- WFP launched a social and behaviour change (SBC) intervention—*Mahob Brojam Krousar* (Family Food)—to promote healthier diets through agricultural cooperatives in Mondulkiri. Developed under the Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme, the intervention integrates SBC activities with agricultural and livelihood investments, aiming to ensure that increased income or food production leads to improved nutrition and dietary practices.

Disaster Risk Management

- In collaboration with FAO, WFP collected feedback on the Anticipatory Action Plan which informed the development of a harmonized protocol for the agriculture sector. The plan, currently under review which proposes scenarios and response packages, is expected to be finalized by November 2025.

Donors

Cambodia, KOICA, private sector donors, Russia, and USA (USDA and USAID)

Community Roots, Brighter Futures: How Cambodian Parents Are Transforming School Meals

In rural Cambodia, a quiet movement is reshaping school meals—one banana, coconut, and sweet potato at a time. **Parents are contributing fruits and vegetables from their home gardens to enrich daily school breakfasts.**

This grassroots effort, known as the Parents-Funded Fresh Fruit Initiative, complements the school meals programme led by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport and WFP.

It's a simple yet powerful idea: communities pooling what they have—seasonal produce, small donations, or time—to help children thrive.

"I may not have much money," says Sokha Chea, a mother in Siem Reap, "but I can bring bananas from my garden. It feels good to know my child—and their friends—are eating well."

With guidance from WFP, each school tailors the model to fit local needs. Some parents give monthly, while others bring in-kind donations. The approach is flexible—but the impact is consistent. Students receive more diverse, nutrient-rich meals, and teachers report improved focus and energy in class.

"Even small donations make a big difference," says Nara Sab, a school principal. "It's not about how much—it's about showing we care."

Beyond better nutrition, the initiative is renewing bonds between schools and families. Parents are stepping into new roles as co-creators of their children's education and well-being.

"This shows the power of community engagement," says Nisith Um of WFP.

"When parents are involved, programmes become sustainable."

In a world of top-down solutions, this one grows from the ground up—rooted in generosity, ownership, and a shared commitment to brighter futures.



©WFP/Darapecth Chea