



World Food Programme

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# WFP Cambodia

## Country Brief

June-August 2025



Ken Leav, 42, stands resolute with her family at Banteay Ampil Camp in Oddar Meanchey Province, waiting for WFP's emergency food distribution after being displaced by the Thailand-Cambodia border clashes. ©WFP/Daraech Chea

### Operational Context

Cambodia has achieved remarkable economic progress over the past two decades, with poverty falling 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—driven by sustained growth and structural transformation. However, a significant portion of the population remains 'near poor' and still at high risk of falling back into poverty when faced with economic or environmental shocks. Undernutrition continues to pose a serious public health challenge: 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's exposure to climate-related—including seasonal flooding in the Mekong and Tonle Sap basins and recurrent droughts in the plains—threatens to reverse hard-won developmental gains and underscores the need for resilient, inclusive systems.



Population: **16.8 million**

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

Income Level: **Lower middle**

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

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## Highlights

Cambodia is at a pivotal moment. With graduation from Least Developed Country status on the horizon and aspirations to attain upper middle-income status by 2030, the nation's development path demands agile, strategic, and system-driven engagement. WFP is uniquely positioned to support this transition—mobilizing resources, shaping policy, and delivering impact through national systems.

WFP's role is evolving from direct service delivery to strategic technical assistance, systems strengthening, and policy influence. The recent border crisis with Thailand—displacing over 172,000 people and triggering the return of nearly 900,000 migrant workers—highlighted the fragility of livelihoods and the urgency of resilient, government-led responses.

WFP rapid emergency food assistance and leadership in humanitarian coordination, coupled with early recovery planning, exemplify our dual-track approach: enabling national systems to absorb shocks and safeguarding vulnerable populations.

Our strategic priorities include:

- **Lean, agile operations:** Restructuring the office to ensure optimal human and financial resources for high-impact technical support to government.
- **Home-Grown School Feeding:** Scaling through evidence-based advocacy and cost-efficient models, with full national ownership by 2028 and WFP transitioning to a supporting role.
- **Resilience building:** Enhancing disaster risk management and climate adaptation capacities.
- **Strategic Positioning:** Serving as a trusted technical partner to government and international financial institutions, leveraging convening power to unlock domestic and external financing for nutrition, education, and social protection.

## Operational Updates

### Border Crisis Response

- In late July, five-day border clashes between Cambodia and Thailand displaced over 172,000 people and triggered the return of approximately 900,000 workers. Although a ceasefire was signed on 28 July, the situation remains precarious, with ongoing risks such as unexploded ordnances in provinces like Oddar Meanchey. As of late August, an estimated 31,000 civilians—primarily women, children, and the elderly—remain displaced. Reintegration efforts are underway for the returning migrants, as the loss of livelihoods and remittances continue to strain the already vulnerable households.

Country Strategic Plan (2024-2028)		
Total Requirement (in USD)	Allocated Contributions (in USD)	September-February 2025 Net Funding Requirements (in USD)
63.38 m	40.32 m	0.99 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.

- In early August, WFP delivered over 227 mt of rice to 4,544 affected households in Oddar Meanchey to help curb food insecurity amid the crisis. The Humanitarian Response Forum (HRF), co-chaired by WFP and DanChurchAid, issued five Situation Reports to guide coordinated multi-sectoral responses. While 80 percent of the displaced individuals have returned home, the continued influx of returnees from Thailand keeps the situation fluid and complex.
- In late August, an inter-agency assessment led by the National Committees for Disaster Management (NCDM) and HRF began shaping early recovery planning and resource mobilization.

Social Protection

- To support the scale-up of Cambodia's National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme, WFP completed two key studies:
  - A Value-for-Money Study—conducted with Harvard University's School of Public Health, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, and the National Social Protection Council—revealed returns of USD 4—14 per USD 1 invested, with measurable benefits across education, nutrition, and local economic development.
  - A Costing Analysis—by the Sustainable Financing Initiative—confirmed affordability of the programme under the current costs (around USD 0.21 per meal) and projected full national ownership by 2028. However, adopting enhanced nutrition standards post-2028 could create an annual financing gap of USD 9–11 million. Key recommendations include mobilizing domestic resources, leveraging climate and corporate social responsibility funds, and investing in cost-efficient delivery models (e.g., centralized kitchens).
- WFP facilitated a one-week in-person study tour on Climate and Disaster Risk Financing and Insurance (CDRFI) for 13 Cambodian government officials to draw lessons from Indonesia's advanced systems. The tour focused on risk-layering financial mechanisms, inter-ministerial coordination, and people-centred solutions, laying the groundwork for engagement in the Southeast Asia Disaster Risk Insurance Facility. Cambodia has recently launched several foundational frameworks:
  - The First Disaster Risk Financing Strategy (2024),
  - The Shock-Responsive Social Protection Framework (2023), and
  - The National Action Plan on Disaster Risk Reduction (2024–2028).

Building on these, WFP will integrate insights from the study tour into a feasibility study and capacity needs assessment to inform targeted support for government-led CDRFI initiatives.

## Disaster Risk Management

- The Government has endorsed the National Implementation Roadmap for Early Warning 4 All 2024-28, developed by the NCDM and WFP, with the support from UNDRR, WMO, IFRC, and ITU. Scheduled for launch in September, the roadmap outlines strategic investments in early warning systems to enhance disaster preparedness, strengthen risk reduction, improve coordination, optimize resource use, and protect communities and infrastructure.
- WFP's upgraded [Seasonal Monitoring Update](#), now published monthly, uses geospatial data to monitor rainfall, temperature, and river levels. This tool supports anticipatory action by identifying flood and drought risks and informing food security planning.

## Looking Ahead

- WFP Cambodia is deepening its engagement with International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and the Royal Government of Cambodia to unlock sustainable financing for nationally led systems. Strategic priorities include expanding school feeding, enhancing disaster preparedness, and scaling up nutrition-sensitive social protection. These efforts are designed to strengthen resilience, advance equity, and accelerate progress towards Cambodia's long-term development goals.

## Donors

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



Newborn Seyha, just two days old, lies between his parents in a weather-worn shelter at Banteay Ampil Camp — born after their village was shattered by border clashes on July 24. WFP aid cut through the rain's roar, but much more is still needed to ensure his future. ©WFP/Darapec Chea

## A New Life in the Midst of Unrest: Seyha's First Days in Banteay Ampil Camp

Banteay Ampil Camp, Oddar Meanchey Province—Just two days old, baby Seyha rests nestled between his mother and grandmother. His tiny form is both fragile and glowing with life, against the backdrops of displacement and uncertainty.

His mother, 20-year-old Khun Khal, cradles him gently inside a makeshift shelter stitched together with a thin tarp. The memory of gunfire on the night of 24 July still echoes in her mind. Alongside her husband, 20-year-old Pek Chhin, and her mother, 42-year-old Ken Leav, she fled their home after the abrupt clash of artillery fire shattered the quiet of their village. The journey was chaotic: rain mingled with smoke; thunder mimicked gunfire; and fears clung to every step. Families fled with only what they could carry in their arms.

*"It felt like ages. We left in the morning and arrived at the camp at night. I was terrified – my daughter was due to give birth any day," says Leav.*

A week later, Seyha was born when they were in the camp. Life here is harsh. Monsoon rains soak shelter at night, turning the floor wet and muddy and the air chilling. Nights are long and sleepless.

Bathing is a daily challenge. Chhin navigates slippery trails to fetch water from communal water points, balancing what he could carry with anxious care. In the dim shelter, under Leav's watchful gaze, Khal washes Seyha with just a few sips. Chhin's voice cracks as whispers, *"I'm scared my wife and baby will fall ill without enough clean water."*

Food is basic and monotonous—rice, oil, noodles, dried fish. Fresh vegetables, fruits, or milk rarely make their way into the camp. Khal worries if her own limited nutrition is enough to nourish Seyha through breastfeeding.

Health risks loom large: diarrhea, fever, cough sweep through the crowded, damp camps. No malnutrition screening is in place, even as Cambodia's wasting rate hovers near 10 percent—a silent threat to newborns like Seyha.

Yet, in the quiet rhythm of Seyha's breath, Khal looks softly at the baby and murmurs: *"I only want him to feel love, not fear."* Her gaze shifts to Leav, sitting silently nearby, offering strength in absence of infrastructure, and Chhin, whose every careful move spells love in action, not words.

In that whispered phrase lies something profound: a newborn's soft breath could outlive conflict—if we help make sure of it.