



World Food Programme

SAVING
LIVES
CHANGING
LIVES

WFP Cambodia Country Brief September-October 2025



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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**

2025 Human Development Index: **151 out of 193**

Income Level: **Lower middle**

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

Highlights

On 26 October, Cambodia and Thailand signed a Joint Declaration of Peace in Kuala Lumpur, a milestone that has brought renewed confidence among displaced families, accelerated their returns, and reduced tensions along the border. As of 30 October, the number of internally displaced persons dropped to 2,278, down dramatically from about 172,000 in late July. Nevertheless, the number of economic migrants continues to increase—a trend that underscores the need for targeted livelihood support and strengthened social protection.

Operational Updates

Border Crisis Response

- Under the overall coordination of the Humanitarian Response Forum (HRF)—co-chaired by WFP and DanChurchAid—27 partner agencies continue assisting the remaining displaced households across three provinces, utilising in-country stockpiles and mobilising external resources. To date, over 162,784 people have received support including food, WASH and shelter.
- In August-September, the National Committee for Disaster Management (NCDM) and HRF conducted a joint multi-sectoral early-recovery assessment to shape planning and resource mobilization. The study identified and analysed the needs of both returnees and migrant households—highlighting critical gaps in livelihood restoration, education, and access to basic services. Based on these findings, HRF has formulated an early-recovery response strategy targeting both those still in displacement sites and those who have returned to their communities. Partners are now mobilising and implementing this strategy, working in coordination with the Cambodian Government.
- In line with findings from the joint assessment, WFP is planning a targeted recovery initiative in the border provinces, particularly Oddar Meanchey and Preah Vihear on areas of heavy infrastructure damage, high concentrations of displacements and returns, and significant nutritional or economic vulnerability. The programme will concurrently restore community infrastructure (such as roads and schools) and revives livelihoods for displaced families, returnees and other vulnerable households. Using a nutrition-sensitive Food Assistance for Assets model, beneficiaries will rehabilitate communal assets and receive either in-kind food or vouchers to buy fresh, nutrient-rich produce—thereby energizing local markets as well.

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Country Strategic Plan (2024-2028)		
Total Requirement (in USD)	Allocated Contributions (in USD)	November 2025-April 2026 Net Funding Requirements (in USD)
63.4 m	40.4 m	1.4 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.

School Feeding Programme

- Following the Prime Minister's endorsement of the overarching School Feeding Policy in September 2024, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) officially adopted the School Feeding Policy Action Plan (2024–2025), marking another major milestone in Cambodia's school-feeding journey. Developed with technical support from WFP, these frameworks provide the legal and operational foundation for the national programme. They recognize school-feeding as a cross-sectoral intervention that links nutrition, education, social protection, rural livelihoods and resilience.
- As part of the transition strategy toward full national ownership, the Cambodian Government assumed responsibility for an additional 130 schools in the national school feeding programme — bringing the total share of government-owned schools to over 70 percent of all programme schools. The government also committed USD 9.02 million for the 2025–2026 school year, a substantial increase in funding that expands food rations for over 230,000 students across 816 schools and finances the construction of 39 new kitchens. The strengthened investment and expanded ownership underscore a strong commitment to embedding school feeding as a sustained national intervention.

Food Systems

- Under the Joint SDG Fund, FAO, WFP, and UNICEF worked closely with the Council for Agricultural and Rural Development to revise Cambodia's national Food Systems Roadmap. They developed an accompanying Financing Strategy and advocacy tools tied to six core transformative actions: climate-smart and nutrition-sensitive value chains, sustainable aquatic food systems, food safety systems, food fortification, home-grown school feeding and school food environments, and social & behavioural change for healthy, sustainable diets. The revised Roadmap has now been endorsed, and its launch is scheduled to next month.

Nationally Determined Contributions 3.0

- Ahead of COP30 this November, Cambodia officially launched its third generation Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC 3.0) in September. The plan is built on three pillars—ambition, acceleration, and inclusivity—and commits to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by up to 55 percent (around 73.7 Mt CO₂e) by 2035 under the conditional scenario. The framework spans key

sectors—energy, industrial processes & product use, agriculture/forestry/other land use, and waste—and embeds adaptation across health, water & sanitation, infrastructure, ecosystems, livelihoods, social protection and food systems. WFP, having already led in developing the disaster risk management component and supported the formulation of food systems and climate-responsive social protection elements of NDC 3.0, is now supporting the Ministry of Environment to strengthen sub-national understanding and ownership of this climate roadmap.

- Noticeably, Cambodia elevated its commitment to sustainable development by incorporating food systems as a distinct priority sector in this NDC 3.0—a bold move that signals readiness for scaled investment and partnerships and underscores the country's emerging leadership in regional food systems transformation.

Donors

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

From Husk to Hope: How Biochar and Organic Farming Are Transforming Lives in Mondulkiri



Before dawn, Kanha stands in the steaming paddies of Koh Nhek, the mist draping the hills of Mondulkiri and the air still heavy with the scent of last night's rain. She lifts a handful of soil—warm, textured—and something inside her swells. This land can heal again. Not just to yield rice,

In previous seasons, planting was a gamble. The rains might delay or arrive in torrents. Chemical fertilisers, when affordable, wore down the soil over time. What hope could a small-scale farmer hold amid such uncertainty? Then Kanha learned of a new approach—one that turned what seemed like waste into possibility.

She joined a climate-smart organic-farming initiative run by WFP and the Cambodian Agriculture Cooperative Corporation (CACC), backed by the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP). Supporting over 1,200 smallholder farmers in Koh Nhek, the project promotes organic methods, better market access, strengthened nutrition and inclusion of women and indigenous communities.

One practice captured Kanha's imagination: making biochar from rice husks. Agricultural residues—rice husks, dried cow dung, sugar-palm waste—are transformed into a stable biochar under low-oxygen conditions. Mixed into the soil, this biochar boosts water retention, nutrient-holding capacity, reduces reliance on synthetic fertilisers and even locks away carbon.

"I never imagined the husks I used to toss away could be as precious as gold," Kanha says softly but steadily. "When I mixed biochar into my field, I saw the seedlings stand straighter. Even in dry spells, the soil didn't crack as much."

In her first trial plot, she watched the ground breathe again. Moisture lingered, nutrients stayed put. She also learned to grow sun-hemp as a cover crop to fix nitrogen naturally, and choose seeds suited for organic conditions. These weren't small changes—they felt like rays of hope after years of unpredictable harvests.

Kanha didn't keep her learning to herself. With quiet determination, she gathers neighbours in the field, hands sifting soil, voices sharing what she learnt. Today, over 1,200 farmers across the project area receive hands-on training in soil health, water management, biochar production and seed selection.

On the market side, CACC helps guarantee that organic rice from participating farmers will be purchased at fair, stable prices—reducing the usual fear of "*who will buy my crop?*" that holds many farmers back. "Knowing I will have a buyer changes everything," Kanha says, her eyes bright. "Now I plant with intention, not desperation."

At 31 and as a mother of two young children, she feels the shift deeply. "My children's meals are more varied. When I walk through my field, I feel pride again. I know each seed, each handful of biochar, holds our future." The cards of survival are shifting toward thriving.