

## *Chapter 2.*

### **A territorial approach to food security and nutrition policy: The case of Cambodia**

*The Royal Government of Cambodia is committed to improve the food security and nutrition (FSN) situation in the country, and has put various policy mechanisms in place to deal with its multidimensional nature. Implementation has presented some challenges, most notably in ensuring that all regions and provinces benefit equally from the progress achieved to date. As things currently stand, FSN outcomes vary across regions and provinces, and the capacity to deal with territorial disparities is constrained by co-ordination failures and disconnects between various tiers of government, as well as between the many development organisations and non-governmental organisations operating in the country. Adopting a territorial approach would help to ensure that policies are delivered effectively to where they are most needed, and that policies and programmes are linked up to prevent fragmentation and duplication of efforts.*

## Key findings

The adoption of a territorial approach is likely to be a viable avenue for promoting a more even geographic distribution of the benefits of food security and nutrition (FSN) initiatives in Cambodia. Cambodia experienced considerable economic growth between the mid-1990s and 2007. Nevertheless, levels of poverty remain high, especially in rural areas. Moreover, there is considerable territorial variation in the prevalence of issues related to FSN.

The Royal Government of Cambodia has prioritised FSN, for example, making it the focus of a Cambodian Millennium Development Goal. The establishment of the Council for Agriculture and Rural Development and the Technical Working Group for Social Protection and Food Security and Nutrition as well as the formulation of the National Strategy for Food Security and Nutrition 2014-2018 reflect the government's commitment to eradicate issues of FSN.

The implementation of FSN strategies is, in practice, constrained by several factors. Among them are capacity constraints, co-ordination failures and disconnects between various tiers of government. A territorial approach would: ensure that FSN interventions are delivered at the sub-national level and reflect local conditions; promote the design of holistic and integrated approaches; improve inter-actor co-ordination and encourage synergies between FSN initiatives and other development interventions.

## The issue of food security and nutrition in Cambodia

### *The overall food security and nutrition situation in Cambodia is improving*

The Royal Government of Cambodia employs a multidimensional definition of FSN that is based on four core pillars: availability, access, use/utilisation and stability. The National Strategy for Food Security and Nutrition 2014-2018 has been developed in accordance with this approach, and states clearly that “by 2018, Cambodians will have substantially improved physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences and optimise the utilisation of this food to keep a healthy and productive life”. The strategy relies on in-depth analysis to contextualise and justify its FSN policies.

According to a recent assessment by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forest and Fisheries, Cambodia has achieved national food security at least in terms of availability and has produced quantities of rice that have matched or exceeded domestic demand (i.e. consumption) since 1995. Cambodia produces large surpluses of rice each year and is now one of the world's most prominent rice exporters: its rice surplus increased from 2.5 million tonnes in 2010 to around 3 million tonnes in 2013 and 2014 (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, 2015). At the sub-national level, the majority of Cambodia's 25 provinces and their capital cities achieved positive levels of rice production in 2012, 2013 and 2014. The only provinces that failed to do so were three of the country's less agriculturally oriented provinces: Phnom Penh, Koh Kong and Preah Sihanouk. In spite of this success, the benefits from rice production are not distributed evenly at the sub-national level. Inequality is acute in rural areas, where the majority of the individuals are smallholder farmers with limited land for production.

Cambodia is active in other types of agricultural production as well. It has the potential to produce fruit and vegetables, but in practice, its capacity to do so has been constrained by, among other things, inadequate infrastructure and the consequent inability to manage perishable produce. The implications of this are two-fold: 1) Cambodia

imports large quantities (70% of supply) of fruits and vegetables (CARD, 2014a); and 2) Cambodians consume insufficient quantities of fruit and vegetables.<sup>1</sup> Cambodia's livestock sector, on the other hand, is better developed. The commercial poultry and pork production sectors have fared especially well in recent years. The livestock sector has benefited tremendously from both technical extension services and the provision of training and knowledge dissemination to farmers. Fishing and the collection of non-timber forest products also contribute to Cambodia's agricultural production.

The production of subsidiary and industrial crops by small-, medium- and large-scale farms has increased in recent years as well. Between 2009 and 2014, the number of hectares cultivated for the production of subsidiary and industrial crops increased from 669 990 to 953 597.

Per capita income in Cambodia increased from USD 248 to USD 1 117 between 1994 and 2015. This sizeable increase in gross domestic product (GDP) per capita has increased the average Cambodian's net purchasing power and has improved Cambodian households' access to food. Cambodia's economic growth is most immediately attributable to the recovery of its construction and tourism sectors, increases in the export of agricultural products and clothing exports. Not surprisingly, the country was adversely affected by the global financial crisis. The economy has, however, recovered and the pre-crisis economic growth trajectory has been restored. Economic growth has been accompanied by a sizeable reduction in poverty. In 2013, 18.8% of the population was living below the national poverty line. That said, close to 3 million Cambodians still live in poverty, 90% of them in the countryside (World Bank, 2015). A further 8.1 million people remain classified as "near poor" (i.e. living just above the poverty line) and are therefore at risk of falling back into poverty. While considerable progress has been made in the reduction of poverty, much work remains to be done.

Food prices have fluctuated considerably in recent years. The international food price crisis came to a head in 2008. Food and rice prices then decreased in 2009 before increasing again in 2011. They have declined gradually in the years since. Local consumer prices and food price indices in Cambodia are, however, on an upward trajectory.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the ratio of food to non-food prices – an indicator of the food purchasing power of households – increased 22% in the period between the food price crisis and 2011 (CARD, 2014a). This decline in purchasing power constitutes an especially pronounced barrier for rural households. Most rural households are net food buyers and, as a consequence, spend the main part of their household income on food. A rapid assessment of the impact of rising food prices on the poor and vulnerable conducted by the Cambodia Development Resource Institute in June 2012 indicated, for example, that households in the poorest quintile (in terms of wealth) spent more than two-thirds of their budget on food (CDRI, 2012). Rural households are therefore particularly vulnerable to volatility in food prices.

The impact of the 2008 food price crisis is manifested in child anthropometrics. Between 2000 and 2005, acceptable progress was made in the nutritional intake of children aged 5 and under. This progress stagnated between 2005 and 2010. Progress resumed as the Cambodian economy recovered. That said, in 2014, 23.9% of children aged 5 and under were classified as underweight and 32.4% suffered from stunted growth, leaving considerable room for further progress.

Much room for improvement also remains in terms of female nourishment. Little progress was made towards addressing the low body mass index scores of women between 2000 and 2010. In 2010, one out of five Cambodian women was undernourished

and 6% of women were shorter than 145 centimetres, indicating that they had suffered from malnourishment as children. Malnourishment among women is correlated with higher levels of maternal mortality, increased incidence of premature births, lower birth weights and malnutrition among children. The number of overweight women (BMI >25) has also increased significantly. In 2000, 6% of women were classified as overweight. By 2010, this figure had risen to 11%.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, urban, middle-class obesity is likely to emerge as a significant concern as processes of urbanisation intensify and value chains and dietary patterns evolve.

### ***Food security and nutrition progress varies across provinces and social groups***

Poverty and issues of FSN are closely correlated. An examination of spatial patterns of poverty offers insight into the territorial dimension of FSN. Poverty rates vary dramatically across Cambodian regions. The poverty incidence rate, for example, is as low as 6.5% in some territories and as high as 50.9% in others. In 2013, the National Institute of Statistics and the United Nations World Food Programme prepared a study for the Royal Government of Cambodia to support the geographical targeting of health and poverty interventions. Motivated by the necessity of accurate statistical information for efficient and effective policy design,<sup>4</sup> the study provides estimates of poverty and malnutrition rates at the district level. The analysis revealed relatively low levels of poverty in Phnom Penh and slightly higher levels in the plains, river valleys and the shores around the Tonlé Sap Lake. The highest levels of poverty were found in the northeast uplands.<sup>5</sup>

Food security trend analyses based on food expenditure data from the 2004 and 2009 Cambodia Socio-Economic Surveys (CSES) suggest that overall food consumption in Cambodia has improved. The percentage of the population that consumed less than the minimum daily energy requirement fell from 37% in 2004 to 33% in 2009. There is, however, interpersonal and territorial variation in undernourishment. Undernourishment was, for example, higher in the lowest wealth quintile (59%). Similarly, while undernourishment decreased in Kompong Thom, the North, Northeast, Phnom Penh, Takeo and West and Centre, it increased in Siem Reap, Northwest and South Coastal (Figure 2.1).<sup>6</sup>

There is a pronounced urban-rural gap in terms of youth nourishment. In 2010, 42.2% of rural children were chronically malnourished and 30% were classified as underweight. In urban areas, on the other hand, 27.5% of children aged 5 and under were malnourished and 18.4% were underweight. The malnourishment gap between urban and rural areas did decrease between 2010 and 2014, but it remains sizeable.<sup>7</sup>

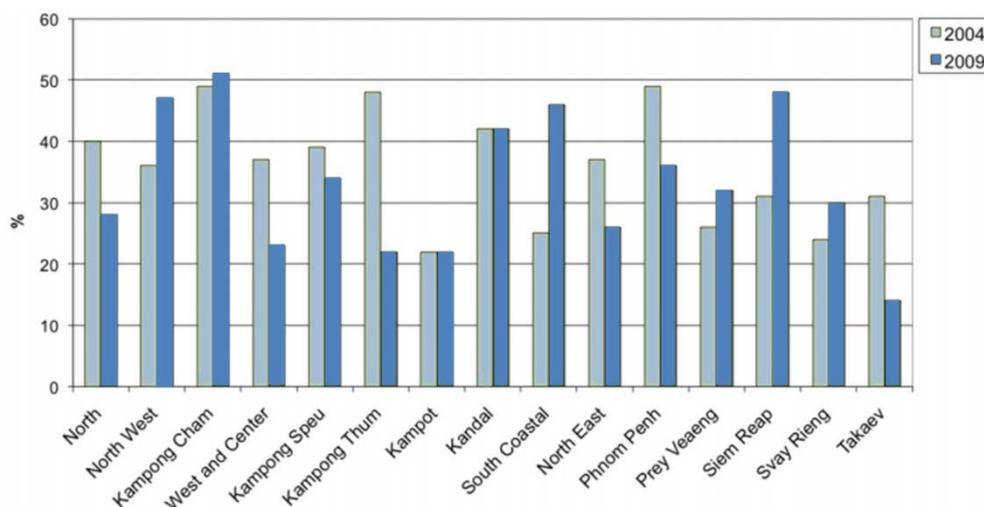
Certain territories are also more afflicted by childhood malnutrition. The incidence of childhood malnutrition is, for example, exceptionally high in poorer locations and settlements around Phnom Penh.

Childhood malnutrition is also more frequently observed among impoverished segments of society. In 2014, for example, 41.9% of children aged 5 and under in the poorest wealth quintile suffered from stunted growth. The figure was 18% for children in the highest wealth quintile.<sup>8</sup>

### ***Some key challenges to sustained food security and nutrition progress***

Food availability and access in Cambodia are constrained by several factors.

Figure 2.1. Prevalence of undernourishment by region, 2004 and 2009



Source: NIS (2011), “Food security trend analysis: Cambodia Socio-Economics Survey 2004-2009”.

Policies targeting FSN have tended to adopt a sectoral orientation and, more specifically, a singular focus on rice-based farming. Rice-based farming is characterised by low productivity and is especially vulnerable to climatic variation. The prioritisation of a single sector gives rise to an insufficiently sectorally diversified rural economy that offers few non-agriculturally related employment opportunities to the rural population. The absence of employment opportunities forces rural residents to seek employment primarily in urban centres. Interestingly, economic assessment (UNCDF, 2010) has indicated that the eco-tourism and renewable energy sectors are potential sources of economic growth and development for Cambodia’s rural areas. Actualising this potential, however, is fraught with obstacles. For rural areas to reap the economic benefits of tourism, for example, concerted efforts will have to be made to ensure that rural communities develop the capacity to manage local cultural and ecological sites, many of which are protected. Similarly, rural areas will require assistance to access carbon financing mechanisms and develop small-scale renewable energy options (UNCDF, 2010). The expansion of the renewable energy sector in rural areas will have the added benefit of reducing Cambodia’s reliance on coal and wood charcoal, with positive implications for processes of deforestation in rural regions. Opportunities for poverty reduction may also exist in the expansion of pre-existing rubber, pepper and silk clusters (UNDCF, 2010: 15).

Insufficiently developed transport and market infrastructure systems are notable barriers to the expansion of the agricultural sector and the rural economy more broadly. Poor farmers are hampered by inadequate irrigation systems and poor market integration and, as a result, often struggle to improve their food security and nutrition status.

The most prominent challenges relating to food use and utilisation include: a higher incidence of malnutrition in rural areas, issues related to the upscaling of nutritional interventions in the health sector, inadequate provision of nutritional education, poor access to sanitation in rural areas, poor hygiene in rural areas and limited access to nutrition services among poorer households.

Table 2.1. Nutritional status of children under the age of 5

Background characteristic	Height-for-age		Weight-for-height				Weight-for-age			
	% below -3 SD	% below -2 SD	% below -3 SD	% below -2 SD	% below +2 SD	Mean Z- score (SD)	% below -3 SD	% below -2 SD <sup>2</sup>	% above +2 SD	Mean Z- score (SD)
<b>Resident</b>										
Urban	5.9	23.7	2	7.5	3.1	-0.4	2.6	14.8	1.9	-0.9
Rural	9.4	33.8	2.4	9.9	1.8	-0.7	5	25.4	0.4	-1.3
Province										
Banteay Meanchey	6.9	28.6	0.7	7.8	0.7	-0.5	5.3	17	0	-1.1
Kampong Cham	8.6	33.5	1.5	8.1	2.2	-0.7	4.2	25.7	0.8	-1.3
Kampong Chhnang	13.5	42.8	3.1	11.2	2.2	-0.9	5.1	35.6	0	-1.5
Kampong Speu	10	40.5	2.5	11.5	1.3	-0.8	6.9	29.4	0	-1.5
Kampong Thom	10.7	36.4	3.1	13	3.4	-0.8	7.1	27.7	1.9	-1.3
Kandal	3.5	28.1	3.2	9.2	0.2	-0.8	4.7	26.2	0	-1.3
Kratie	10.5	38.4	2.7	6.5	0.5	-0.7	4.4	25.1	0	-1.4
Phnom Penh	4.9	17.9	1	8.4	3.7	-0.4	2.2	12.9	3.4	-0.8
Prey Veng	8.7	32.7	2.9	8.6	1.8	-0.6	3.4	22.2	0.3	-1.3
Pursat	18.4	38.8	5.7	12.3	4.7	-0.6	7.9	31.6	0.4	-1.4
Siem Reap	11.3	35.9	2.3	9.5	1	-0.7	6.9	26.2	0.4	-1.3
Svay Rieng	8.2	32.8	2.7	7.6	3.6	-0.6	3.6	20.8	0.5	-1.2
Takeo	6.4	30.7	5	14.6	1.5	-0.8	4.4	22.7	0	-1.3
Otdar Meanchey	14	36.3	7.2	15.1	5.3	-0.7	5.2	26.4	0	-1.3
Battambang/Palin	5	24.9	0.3	7.9	0.7	-0.6	1.8	18.2	0.5	-1.1
Kampot/Kep	8.3	25.2	0.9	8.2	1.9	-0.7	3.5	21.1	0.7	-1.3
Preah Sihanouk/Kaoh Kong	10.4	33.4	3.1	10.5	1.8	-0.6	6.5	22	0	-1.2
Preah Vihear/Steung Treng	14	44.3	1.3	13.8	2.3	-0.7	5.9	30.7	0.1	-1.5
Mondol Kiri/Ratanak Kiri	14.6	39.8	1.4	8.2	1.2	-0.6	0.6	26.2	0.3	-1.4

Source: NIS (2015), “Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey 2014: Key indicators report”, available at: [http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/cambodia/drive/2014CDHSKIR\\_2-20-2015.pdf](http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/cambodia/drive/2014CDHSKIR_2-20-2015.pdf).

Cambodia is especially vulnerable to economic and natural crises, both of which inevitably influence food supply and nutritional outcomes. The food crisis of 2008 exemplifies this. During the crisis, the price of food, and rice in particular, increased dramatically, reducing the purchasing power of poor households. The resulting changes in food consumption patterns adversely affected the nutrition and health of Cambodia's population. Similarly, increases in food price inflation since 2007 and the global financial crisis in the latter part of the decade have increased poverty and vulnerability.

Flood and drought exercise the greatest influence on annual rice production in Cambodia. In 2014, for example, rice production was affected by a prolonged drought in the early and mid-stages of the wet season. These factors have a direct impact on the well-being and welfare of the population. Flooding in 12 provinces in 2014, for example, resulted in 49 deaths. Similarly, mass flooding in 2011 affected 1.5 million people, displaced 214 000 and resulted in the death of 247 (FAO and WFP, 2012).

Recognising Cambodia's vulnerability to economic and natural crises, the government developed and implemented the National Social Protection Strategy (2010-15). This involves measures designed both to address emergencies and short-term disruptions as well as to reduce poverty and promote development. Many of the plan's food security-related interventions have not, however, been adequately scaled up to address the needs of the population.

In practice, Cambodia's capacity to prevent, prepare for and respond to such crises is limited. Food security-related social protection measures are often project-based, *ad hoc* and have yet to be scaled up. Moreover, programmes that directly target food-insecure households and other vulnerable groups are inadequate. Consequently, economic and natural crises often have massive adverse implications on malnutrition and chronic food security.

## Policies and programmes

Addressing FSN has been made a priority by the Cambodian government and deemed instrumental in achieving the Cambodian Millennium Development Goals. FSN features in one form or another in: the government's overarching agenda as articulated in the Rectangular Strategy for Growth, Employment, Equity and Efficiency Phase III (2014-18); the National Strategic Development Plan (2014-18); the National Strategy for Food Security and Nutrition 2014-2018; and in other more narrowly defined policies and strategies (Table 2.2). The Rectangular Strategy for Growth, Employment, Equity and Efficiency Phase III outlines the broad policy directions for the improvement of FSN and identifies priorities for enhancing the availability of, access to, utilisation of and stability of food. The National Strategic Development Plan addresses the implementation of the Rectangular Strategy for Growth, Employment, Equity and Efficiency Phase III and is thus supplemental to it.

The National Strategy for Food Security and Nutrition is a logical extension of the government's overarching agenda (RS III). The Rectangular Strategy for Growth, Employment, Equity and Efficiency Phase III is broadly concerned with: agricultural intensification and diversification, land reform, sustainable natural resource management, the enhancement of health and nutrition, and the establishment of social safety nets. Accordingly, the National Strategic Development Plan includes policy actions targeting the availability of, access to, utilisation of and stability of the food supply.<sup>9</sup>

The National Strategy for Food Security and Nutrition has identified the following FSN-related objectives:

1. Objective 1: Increase availability and access of food through more productive and diversified agriculture and livestock production, sustainable fisheries and forestry, and from non-agricultural employment and income opportunities.
2. Objective 2: Improve the use and utilisation of food in Cambodian households, to reduce child and maternal malnutrition and enhance human and economic development.
3. Objective 3: Improve food security-related social protection and enhance poor and vulnerable households' ability to cope with risks and shocks to increase the stability of their food supply.

Action under the National Strategy for Food Security and Nutrition is conducted at three levels, macro, meso and micro, and takes the form of individual programmes or projects. FSN-related programmes and projects are generally implemented by sector-specific ministries (the Ministry of Agriculture, Forest and Fisheries; the Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology; the Ministry of Rural Development; the Ministry of Health, etc.) with support from non-governmental organisations (NGOs), international organisations and United Nations agencies. These programmes and projects are sectoral in nature and aim to address issues including: livelihood enhancement, natural resources, community health, nutrition, social safety nets and rural health. In other words, they do not address FSN as a cross-cutting issue.

The roles of the key ministries addressed in Table 2.2 are described below.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forest and Fisheries (MAFF), which is responsible for agricultural production and, by extension, FSN, has developed the Agricultural Sector Strategy Development Plan (ASDP 2014-2018). The plan is composed of five programmes: 1) productivity, diversification and commercialisation; 2) livestock production; 3) sustainable fisheries management; 4) sustainable forestry management; 5) strengthening institutions and human resources. The programmes are subdivided into 60 sub-programmes, including approximately 600 activities. The progress of each programme is measured against pre-established targets and indicators.<sup>10</sup> Funding for the plan comes from both the government and external partners (the African Development Bank, International Fund for Agricultural Development and the European Union).

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forest and Fisheries also promotes the creation of new producer organisations. As of 2014, Cambodia had 516 community fisheries (477 inland and 39 marine), 370 of which were registered with the ministry. The ministry has also recently issued a declaration (*prakas*) for the establishment of community forestry management committees, and 19 have so far been created.

The Ministry for Economy and Finance (MEF) is involved in FSN policy through the Emergency Food Assistance programme, which is active in 7 provinces and 200 communities and offers subsidised seeds and fertiliser to poor farming households.

The Ministry for Economy and Finance also promotes education by providing scholarships in two of the provinces in which it is active, and through in-school nutrition programmes executed in partnership with the World Food Programme. It also invests in infrastructure development. The aim of infrastructure development is two-fold: first, it creates employment and income-generating opportunities for individuals in rural areas. Second, it improves the production capacity of rural farmers. Finally, the Ministry for

Economy and Finance provides extension services, including training and education to farmers.<sup>11</sup>

Table 2.2. **List of key programmes and policies that explicitly target food insecurity**

Dimension of food security and nutrition	Strategies and plans	Lead ministry	Time frame	
1. Food availability and access	Agricultural Sector Strategic Development Plan; Strategy on Agriculture and Water (SAW); related Programme Design Document	MAFF MAFF/MOWRAM	2009-13 2006-10 2010-13	
	Policy Paper on the Promotion of Paddy Production and Rice Export (Rice Policy)	MEF, MAFF	2010-15	
	Strategic Planning Framework for Livestock	MAFF	2011-20	
	Animal Health Medium-Term Priority Plan	MAFF	2011-15	
	Strategic Planning Framework for Fisheries	MAFF	2010-19	
	National Forest Programme	MAFF	2010-29	
	Agriculture Sector Strategic Development Plan	MAFF	2014-18	
	Agricultural Extension Policy in Cambodia	MAFF	Long-term	
	2. Food utilisation	Health Sector Strategic Plan (HSSP II)	MoH	2008-15
		National Nutrition Strategy (NNS)	MoH/NNP	2009-15
Fast-Track Road Map for Improving Nutrition		MoH/NNP	2014-20	
National Strategy for Rural Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene		MRD	2014-25	
National Policy on Feeding of Infants and Young Children		MoH	2002 (revised 2008)	
3. Food stability	National and Policy Guidelines for Micronutrient Supplementation to Prevent and Control Deficiencies in Cambodia	MoH/NNP	November 2011	
	National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS)	CARD	2009-13	
	Disaster Management Law	NCDM		
	National Action Plan (SNAP) for Disaster Risk Reduction	NCDM	2008-13	
	Sub-Decree on the Establishment of Cambodian Food Reserve System	NCDM	June 2012	
	National Adaptation Programme of Action to Climate Change (NAPA)	MoE	Long-term	
	Response Strategy to the Impact of Climate Change	MAFF	2014-18	
	Cambodian Climate Change Strategic Plan (CCCSP)	MoE		
Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction in Agriculture	MAFF	2014-18		
Law on Agricultural Co-operative	MAFF	Long-term		

*Notes:* MAFF: Ministry of Agriculture, Forest and Fisheries; MOWRAM: Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology; MEF: Ministry of Economy and Finance; MoH: Ministry of Health; NNP: National Nutrition Programme; MRD: Ministry of Rural Development; CARD: Council for Agriculture and Rural Development; NCDM: National Committee for Disaster Management; MoE: Ministry of Environment.

The Ministry of Rural Development (MRD) has developed two main FSN-oriented programmes. One is focused on food security; the other is oriented towards nutrition.

The food security programme is currently active in three provinces and provides cash and/or rice to poor households. These transfers are supplemented by the provision of agricultural support and money to purchase seeds, livestock, etc. by the Department of Community Development. The department also trains farmers in the use of fertilisers for various types of agriculture.

The National Nutrition Programme (NNP), on the other hand, centres on the provision of food and non-food related (i.e. AIDS, malaria, etc.) education and training. Training efforts are co-ordinated with those of NGOs and international organisations. Additionally, the Ministry of Rural Development has some oversight over water and sanitation infrastructure development.

The Ministry of Health (MoH) is responsible for the National Nutrition Strategy. This adopts a multisectoral approach to food insecurity and is primarily focused on maternal and childhood malnutrition. The present focus of the Ministry of Health is implementing measures outlined in the National Strategy for Food Security and Nutrition.

## **Institutional framework and governance of food security and nutrition in Cambodia**

### ***Horizontal co-ordination***

At least 12 ministries and government agencies are active in promoting FSN. These include: the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries; the Ministry of Health; the Ministry of Rural Development (MRD); the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MOEYS); the Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology (MOWRAM); the Ministry of Planning (MOP); the Ministry for Economy and Finance; the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction (MLMUPC); the Ministry of Environment (MOE); Tonlé Sap Authority (TSA); the National Committee for Disaster Management (NCDM); and the Council for Agriculture and Rural Development (CARD) (Figure 2.2). Each ministry has its own annual budget, which is subject to review by the Ministry of Economy and Finance and requires approval by the council minister, National Assembly and Senate. The annual budget is proposed based on sectoral priorities aligned with those of the National Strategic Development Plan 2014-18.

The institution responsible for co-ordinating FSN-related policies, strategies, action plans, programmes and projects among the relevant ministries and departments at the national level is the Council for Agriculture and Rural Development. One of the most important co-ordination structures employed by the Council for Agriculture and Rural Development is the Technical Working Group on Social Protection and Food Security and Nutrition (TWG-SP&FSN),<sup>12</sup> which is mandated to provide FSN-related technical inputs for all action plans and national strategies. A second co-ordination structure is the Food Security Forum (2003). This is open to all ministries and relevant stakeholders (including civil society) and aims to share experiences and identify the priorities for FSN. The Technical Working Group on Social Protection and Food Security meets twice a year and reports directly to the prime minister. It addresses budgetary concerns, sets indicators/targets and approves the priorities identified by the Food Security Forum.

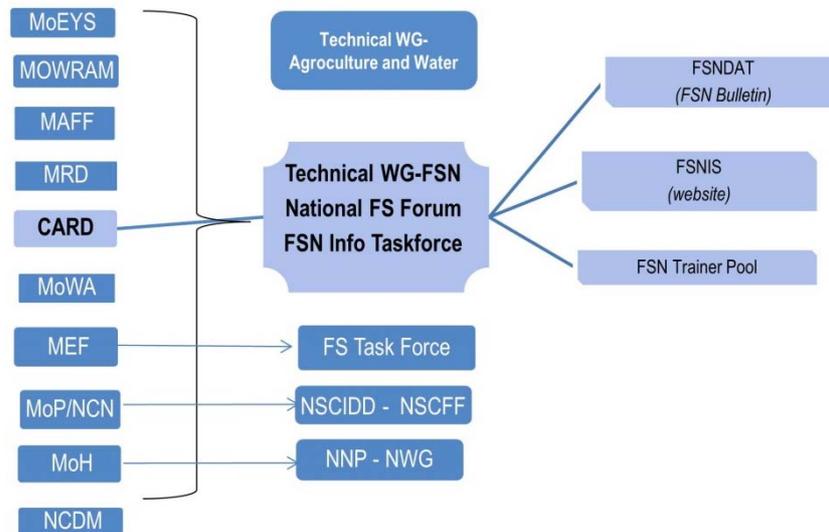
### ***Vertical co-ordination***

There is no provincial equivalent to the Council for Agriculture and Rural Development, which co-ordinates FSN policies at the national level. The Council for Agriculture and Rural Development has, however, made efforts to train provincial authorities.

The case of Takeo is a useful exemplification of the challenges faced in the vertical co-ordination of FSN policy in the Cambodian context. Efforts to address FSN in Takeo are highly fragmented, as a result of the absence of a co-ordination mechanism to align the agendas, programmes and priorities of different actors. Overlap between departments is not uncommon. For example, both the Department of Health (DoH) and the Department of Human Affairs (DoHA) provide training in cooking and household sanitation for women, in particular young mothers, and the Department for Rural Development (DoRD) also deals with sanitation education. Similarly, both the DoHA and DoRD promote on- and off-farm income-generating activities, albeit for different target

populations: the DoHA focuses on women’s trades while the DoRD provides vocational training in, for example, machine repairs.

Figure 2.2. **Institutional arrangements for horizontal co-ordination of food security and nutrition in Cambodia**



Source: CARD (2014a).

## Challenges for effective food security and nutrition policies and governance

Cambodia’s national FSN policy framework would seem to be quite advanced, and a comprehensive national strategy for FSN has been set up. FSN is, however, still not perceived by authorities as a “cross-cutting issue” (CARD, 2014b: 40-41) but rather as a sectoral issue closely linked to agricultural productivity. A number of more specific challenges remain for FSN policy as well. Many of these relate to policy implementation and programme delivery.

Efforts to implement FSN policies and actions are constrained by a lack of capacity and resources among ministries and government institutions. FSN interventions therefore often rely on external support, especially at the sub-national level. Sub-national authorities in particular lack the necessary mechanisms or structures for co-ordination with and between government agencies and development partners. FSN has thus been addressed largely on an unsustainable project-based approach. Holistic and integrated programme-based approaches for FSN that operate across sectors do not yet exist at the regional level.

FSN policies at the sub-national level have tended to be small in scale and narrow in geographic scope. Co-ordination between those responsible is spotty (given a dearth of co-ordination structures), leading to duplication and overlap between sub-national initiatives. Other challenges include high transaction costs that have deterred investment; an inability to develop sustained capacity in sub-national departments and councils; and an overreliance on external funding. Not surprisingly, the effectiveness of programmes has suffered as a result.

FSN policy also suffers from top-down policy making and severe disconnects between the national level and sub-national authorities. National development plans are devised at the national level with little sub-national involvement, input or consultation. Sub-national development plans are developed in accordance with national plans and their objectives, targets and priorities. Sub-national policies are therefore designed and budgets are set without sufficient consideration of local conditions and opportunities, which ultimately limits their efficiency and effectiveness.

### ***Recent intervention to boost FSN***

The government has, however, taken steps to address the above challenges:

- The Council for Agriculture and Rural Development was established in 2004 to promote co-ordination and collaboration between and among government bodies and development partners at the national level.
- A National Trainer Pool was established in 2008 to increase capacity to address FSN challenges. Numerous national and sub-national level government officials have participated in and benefited from FSN capacity building. Training is based on an integrated and holistic understanding of FSN.
- A specific inter-ministerial task force for FSN information management was established in 2009 under the Technical Working Group on Social Protection and Food Security, to support the development of an FSN-related information network. The ultimate aim was to enhance co-ordination of various initiatives and take advantage of potential synergies and complementarities. A small, cross-sectoral Food Security and Nutrition Data Analysis Team (FSNDAT) was also established in 2010.

Despite these promising steps, sub-national authorities are still not fully involved in FSN policy formulation and implementation, and co-ordination failures among sub-national authorities and between national and sub-national authorities are omnipresent.

### **Concluding remarks**

The adoption of a territorial approach to FSN could address many of the shortcomings that have plagued Cambodia's efforts to address issues of FSN.

A territorial approach to FSN would feature the integration of local stakeholders in the development of national and sub-national level strategic plans to address FSN. This would permit the tailoring of FSN initiatives to local needs, priorities and specificities. "One-size-fits-all" policies developed by national authorities would no longer be relied upon as heavily to address issues of FSN in Cambodia's heterogeneous sub-national territories.

A territorial approach would promote the implementation of a holistic and integrated approach to FSN and rural development. Such an approach would aim to diversify rural economies rather than increase their dependence on a single sector. It would, for example, exploit opportunities in tourism, renewable energy and other sectors. Diversification would have the effect of creating employment and income-generating opportunities in non-agricultural sectors, which would, among other things, decrease rural outmigration and increase rural economies' resilience to macroeconomic and natural shocks. In short, sector-based policies would be abandoned in favour of cross-cutting approaches.

Territorial approaches could also help resolve co-ordination challenges that have plagued FSN efforts in Cambodia. This could conceivably enhance co-ordination not only between sub-national and national authorities, but with external actors as well. This would facilitate the development of sustained and holistic approaches and decrease reliance on short-term, *ad hoc*, sectoral, project-based interventions.

Finally, a territorial approach would encourage coherence and reveal synergies between FSN-oriented interventions and those targeting other aspects of economic development.

## Notes

1. Between 1992 and 2009, the average Cambodian’s fruit and vegetable consumption was less than the recommended dietary intake.
2. They experienced a small decline in 2009.
3. Female over-nutrition is higher in urban environments than in rural ones (16% versus 5%). Similarly, it is higher for the wealthiest quintile than for the lowest wealth quintile (17% versus 5%) (CDHS, 2010).
4. The foreword of the publication states: “by knowing where the poor and malnourished are, we believe the Royal Government of Cambodia and development partners can more effectively and efficiently meet their specific needs through poverty reduction and development projects, public health nutrition interventions, and increasingly, through social protection measures to reach the poorest and most vulnerable Cambodians”.
5. It should be noted that relative estimates may be skewed by the confluence of high levels of poverty and malnutrition and lower population in remote areas (Haslett, Jones and Sefton, 2013).
6. Geographical classification based on the sample included in National Institute of Statistics (2011: 2): “At the end of the 12 months, reliable estimates were produced for 10 individual provinces: Kampong Cham, Kampong Speu, Kampong Thom, Kampot, Kandal, Phnom Penh, Prey Veng, Siem Rieng and Takeo. The other 14 provinces were grouped according to zones (North, Northwest, Northeast, South Coastal, and West and Centre).”
7. In 2014, 23.7% of urban children were chronically malnourished compared to 33.8% of rural children. Similarly, 25.4% of children in rural areas were underweight compared to 14.8% in urban ones.
8. Acute malnutrition in general is correlated with relative poverty (Table 2.1).
9. The policy actions outlined in the NSDP as well as those included in the NSFSN are linked to and will facilitate the achievement of Cambodia’s Millennium Development Goals.
10. No explicit food security indicators are included, only production-related ones.

11. Examples of Ministry of Economy and Finance interventions include support for efforts to rehabilitate canals and the distribution of seeds to restore crops the mass flooding in 2011 and 2013.
12. Technical working groups are government/donor co-ordination for sectors or cross-cutting issues established to enhance alignment and harmonisation of development support. The TWG-SP&FSN chaired by CARD is one of the 19 such groups in Cambodia.

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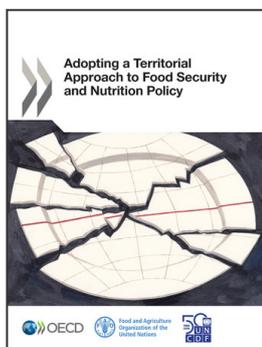
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**From:**

## **Adopting a Territorial Approach to Food Security and Nutrition Policy**

**Access the complete publication at:**

<https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264257108-en>

### **Please cite this chapter as:**

OECD/Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations/United Nations Capital Development Fund (2016), "A territorial approach to food security and nutrition policy: The case of Cambodia", in *Adopting a Territorial Approach to Food Security and Nutrition Policy*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264257108-5-en>

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