



MDGIF



Joint Programme for Children, Food Security and Nutrition in Cambodia

PRESS RELEASE

MDG Fund Joint Programme for Children, Food Security and Nutrition brings stakeholders together

Phnom Penh, 8 June 2010: A new Joint Programme for Children, Food Security and Nutrition was launched in Cambodia today. Government ministers, UN agencies and other stakeholders gathered at the Office of the Council of Ministers in Phnom Penh to launch the three-year Joint Programme, designed to improve food security and reduce under-nutrition among children, pregnant women, and lactating mothers.

The Joint Programme, to be implemented between 2010 and 2012, was developed in close consultation between Government Ministries, UN agencies and other relevant stakeholders. The Programme will be piloted in two provinces, Svay Rieng and Kampong Speu, considered by the World Food Programme to be 'chronically food-insecure', and a nationwide mass media campaign on infant and young child feeding and iron/folate for pregnant and postpartum women will be undertaken. Lessons learned will be used to scale up the Programme across the country.

UN Resident Coordinator Douglas Broderick commented, "The Joint Programme provides a unique opportunity to strengthen the Government's response to food insecurity and malnutrition in Cambodia. It is also a significant step forward for the UN in Cambodia to Deliver as One."

Funding for the Programme is provided by the Spanish government through the Global MDG Achievement Fund, a fund that aims to accelerate progress towards achievement of the MDGs in selected countries. USD 5 million has been allocated for this three-year programme.

The joint approach will build on existing experiences of government, NGOs and several UN agencies in implementing nutrition and food security programmes and will work with current initiatives to ensure coordination at both national and provincial levels. The Joint Programme focuses on strengthening implementation of existing policies, as well as developing new policies specifically addressing malnutrition. It also aims to establish an integrated food security and nutrition monitoring system in Cambodia.

The Joint Programme will contribute to the achievement of national targets for Cambodia's Millennium Development Goals 1, 4 and 5, namely to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, reduce child mortality and improve maternal health. The Programme will also contribute to achieving other national strategic development goals, including those set out in the country's first National Nutrition Strategy and the Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition in Cambodia.

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Background: Children and nutrition in Cambodia

Levels of maternal and child under-nutrition are considerably high in Cambodia. Poverty, food insecurity, inadequate knowledge and poor nutrition and feeding practices are the main causes of malnutrition among women and children in the country.

The Cambodia Anthropometrics Survey in 2008 showed that 39.5 percent of children below the age of five were chronically malnourished, 28.8 percent were underweight and 8.9 percent were acutely malnourished. Some of these statistics indicate stagnation, even reversal, in progress made in recent years.

Malnutrition is an important contributing factor for high maternal and child mortality rates in the country. Despite good progress over the last few years in reducing the number of child deaths, Cambodia has one of the highest child mortality rates in the region. The national under-five mortality rate of 83 per 1000 live births equates to more than 30,000 deaths per year among children below the age of five.

In addition to mortality, poor nutrition prevents children from developing to their full potential and leads to reduced cognitive ability in adult life.

While there have been some improvements in the nutritional status of women and children over the last decade, progress has been slow and under-nutrition remains a barrier to realizing children's rights and achieving equity and economic development in Cambodia.

The Joint Programme includes nationwide comprehensive behaviour change communications for breastfeeding, complementary feeding and iron/folic acid supplementation for pregnant and postpartum women, and an integrated and comprehensive package of nutrition and food security interventions.

The Joint Programme for Children, Food Security and Nutrition will be implemented jointly by government agencies: the Council for Agricultural and Rural Development (CARD), the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, the Ministry of Information, and UN Agencies: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), World Health Organization (WHO), World Food Programme (WFP), Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).