

# Kingdom of Cambodia



## Participant in the Study Visit

**H.E. Dr. Sok Silo** has served as Secretary General for the Council for Agricultural and Rural Development (CARD) of the Royal Government of Cambodia since July 2019. He has been the Government Focal Point for the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement since August 2014 and the National Food Systems Convener since November 2020. Dr. Sok Silo has played an important role in multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder coordination and the formulation of policies and strategies related to agriculture, food systems, food security and nutrition in Cambodia. Dr. Sok Silo holds a Doctoral Degree in Business Administration, MBA in Finance, and bachelor's degree in economics.

## Expectation for the Study Visit

My top three challenges that I would like this study trip to help to answer are:

- How can we secure commitments from all relevant ministries to work together to support school feeding?
- How can we secure contributions and support from local communities and local administrations to reduce the financial pressures on the National Government?
- How we promote private sector activity to help sustain the school feeding programme? This includes local producers and suppliers.

## Nutrition Facts

According to SOFI 2025, Cambodia is making progress toward meeting one target for maternal, infant, and young child nutrition (MIYCN) by lowering the prevalence of low birth weight, which was estimated at 11.4% of infants in 2020. In contrast, exclusive breastfeeding rates have shown a very important decrease, with only 50.3% of infants aged 0 to 5 months exclusively breastfed in 2023, when compared to the 72.8% rate estimated for 2012. The national implementation score of legal measures related to the implementation of the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes is 51 (out of a maximum of 100). There has been only a very slight progress in reducing anemia among women of reproductive age, with 38.0% of women aged 15-49 affected in 2023, compared to 39.5% in 2012. More than 60% percent of women of reproductive age are deficient in iodine and zinc, and other key nutrients like folate, vitamin B1, and vitamin D (CDHS 2014). Additionally, over 93% of children aged 6-16 years old are deficient in Zinc, about 50% are deficient in iron, and a substantial number in other nutrients such as iodine and folate (Perignon, 2016).

Regarding child nutrition, Cambodia has made some headway in reducing stunting. Between 2012 and 2024, the rate of stunting among children under 5 declined from 34% to 22%. However, no progress has been made in reducing wasting, one of the most life-threatening forms of malnutrition, which affected 9.6% of Cambodian children under 5 (or one in 10 children) in 2024.

The prevalence of overweight children under five was estimated at 5.7% in 2024, but it more than doubled from 2.1% estimated in 2012, being above the average for South-east Asia of 4.3%.

In terms of diet-related non-communicable diseases (NCDs), progress remains limited. Obesity affected 4.4% of adults in 2022, more than double for 2012 (2.2%). The investment case for the prevention and control of NCDs in Cambodia found that implementing a set of WHO-recommended measures would restore more than KHR 1.7 trillion (US\$ 417 million) in economic productivity over 15 years, far exceeding the cost of implementation. More importantly, doing so would avert more than 180,000 deaths and lead to nearly 700,000 healthy life-years gained.

### **Fast Track Roadmap for Improving Nutrition (2023–2030)**

The Ministry of Health of the Royal Government of Cambodia launched the Fast Track Roadmap for Improving Nutrition 2023–2030, a second national-led initiative aimed at accelerating progress to tackle the burden of malnutrition and ensure every child, adolescent, and adult has access to the nutrition they need to thrive. The roadmap is led by the Ministry of Health in collaboration with relevant ministries and supported by UNICEF and development partners.

The health system has integrated nutrition services into primary healthcare services, which contributes to promoting optimal nutrition and the best start in life. The Rectangular Strategy Phase IV for Growth, Employment, Equity, and Efficiency and the National Strategic Development Plan (2019–2023) reaffirm the Royal Government of Cambodia's strong commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals for 2030, specifically reducing poverty and promoting health, nutrition, and hygiene, especially among the poor and vulnerable.

The roadmap aims to ensure that all communities in Cambodia have access to optimal nutrition, health, and well-being. It sets a national target of reducing the prevalence of wasting among children under 5 to 5% by 2030, while accelerating progress to universal access to quality nutrition interventions during middle childhood and adolescence, for women of reproductive age, and during pregnancy, birth, and the postnatal period.

### **Progress Towards Nutrition Integration**

Cambodia has maintained strong policy and advocacy environments despite financial challenges. These efforts have been reinforced by participation in global initiatives like the

UN Food Systems Summit, Nutrition for Growth, the Global Action Plan for Child Wasting, among others. Policymaking processes have become more consultative in line with decentralization reforms.

Building on the foundations of the National Strategy for Food Security and Nutrition 2019–2023, Cambodia launched its 3rd National Strategy for Food Security and Nutrition (NSFSN) 2024–2028. The new strategy envisions all Cambodians having access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food, while being protected from all forms of malnutrition. It adopts a systems-based, multisectoral approach that integrates agriculture, health, education, social protection, and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), while also addressing gender, climate change, equity, and digitalization. Implementation is supported by an operational plan, monitoring and evaluation, and diversified financing, and it is aligned with Cambodia's Pentagonal Strategy - Phase I (2023-2028), the Government's current five-pillar development agenda that prioritizes growth, employment, equity, efficiency, and sustainability on the path toward Vision 2050.

Cambodia has leveraged international financing to build capacity across government levels. Initiatives include the Cambodia Nutrition Project and rural development support, with investments in SMEs, infrastructure, value chains, and agricultural diversification. Development partners have supported capacity-building for farmers, communities, women, youth, and civil society.

## **Food Labelling Policy**

Prakas No. 0059 on Nutrition Information Requirements for the Labelling of Pre-packaged Food Products aims to protect consumers and promote fair trade by ensuring that any nutrition information displayed on food packaging is accurate, not misleading, and provided in Khmer. The regulation applies to both imported and domestically produced pre-packaged foods, placing responsibility on food business operators to comply with quality, safety, and labelling standards. Importantly, the inclusion of nutrient information on labels is voluntary, but when businesses choose to provide it, the Prakas ensures that the information is reliable and accessible. This can help improve consumer awareness of ingredients and nutrient content, enabling more informed food choices that can contribute to healthier diets.

## **School Meals and Food-Based Dietary Guidelines for School- Aged Children**

Cambodia's Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (HGSFP) is one of the country's flagship social and nutrition initiatives, now (since 2020) fully government-led after a gradual transition from WFP support. The programme is formally anchored in the National Policy on School Feeding (2024-2035), which sets the framework for its long-term implementation and expansion. Each school day, hundreds of thousands of students in food-insecure provinces receive a hot, nutritious meal, which has been shown to improve attendance, learning outcomes, and dietary diversity. In the current HGSFP, smallholder farmers and small- and medium-sized enterprises supply nutritious foods to schools across provinces, improving

local livelihoods while strengthening food system linkages. By relying on local, seasonal produce, the programme also contributes to climate resilience and environmental sustainability and is referenced in Cambodia's latest Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), further connecting school feeding with broader climate and development commitments.

Linked to school-aged children, in 2017, Cambodia's Ministry of Health, in collaboration with development partners, introduced Food-Based Dietary Guidelines for School-Aged Children (ages 6-17) to promote healthier eating habits and improve nutrition outcomes. The guidelines set out practical recommendations on balanced diets across six food groups, emphasizing adequate intake of protein-rich foods, fruits, vegetables, and cereals, while advising moderation of salt, sugar, and fat. They are widely used as a reference for nutrition education and public awareness campaigns and serve as an important framework in the design and implementation of the national school meals programme, ensuring that meals provided in schools contribute to both immediate dietary needs and longer-term healthy eating behaviors.

## **Nutrition and Climate**

Cambodia's updated NDC 3.0 (2025) places a stronger emphasis on the role of food systems in climate action compared to earlier commitments. Under the section "List of adaptation measures, with description and Line Ministries involved", the NDC sets out an action entitled Food systems with the sub-title focusing on "shift food consumption towards more nutritious, healthier and more sustainable diets" and "reducing food loss and waste". This action includes commitments to regulate unhealthy and ultra-processed foods and beverages, strengthen linkages between nutrition and social protection programmes such as home-grown school feeding, and reduce food loss and waste through research, policy development, and pilot projects that promote reuse and value addition. These measures are coupled with the involvement of multiple ministries (across sectors), reflecting an integrated approach to transforming food systems for better nutrition and food security outcomes.

This food systems approach stands out in contrast to many other countries' NDCs, which have not yet explicitly connected nutrition and climate agendas. By making these links, Cambodia demonstrates how climate policy can simultaneously advance public health, food and nutrition security, and sustainability. The NDC reflects a recognition of the bi-directional relationship between climate change and nutrition. This integrated vision positions Cambodia as a leading example of how policies can align the nutrition and climate communities to drive shared progress.

## **Social Protection**

The National Social Protection Policy Framework 2024-2035\_aims to strengthen the implementation of the existing national social assistance programs and social security schemes and introduce new programs in accordance with socio-economic development.

The goal is to provide income security for citizens throughout their lives, based on the principle of “Leave no one behind”, through strengthening the formalization of social security and beneficiary identification mechanisms.

The Framework refers to nutrition within its broader life-cycle approach to social protection. Notably, it includes a Home-Grown School Feeding Program, which links social assistance with access to healthy, locally sourced meals for schoolchildren. The framework also introduces a Family Package that delivers health-linked cash assistance and allowances, offering additional support to vulnerable households.

## **Cambodia is an early member of the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty.**

### **Engagement with the Healthy Diets Coalition**

Cambodia has engaged with the Healthy Diets Coalition (HDSFS) through participation in key international events. At the Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summit in Paris in March 2025, the country joined a side event co-organized by the HDSFS, the School Meals Coalition (SMC) and other partners, which amplified the global call to prioritize nutrition in school meal programmes. In this session, Cambodia’s National Food Systems Convenor, H.E. Sok Silo, shared the country’s experience in developing preliminary school meal standards, explaining how these informed Cambodia’s SMART N4G commitments and linked to broader school feeding reforms.

At the UN Food Systems Summit+4 in Addis Ababa in July 2025, Cambodia was a key country panelist at the side event organized by the Government of Madagascar and the HDSFS Coalition entitled “Breaking Silos and Fueling Change: Aligning Nutrition and Climate for Food System Transformation.” In this dialogue, Cambodia highlighted, through their National Food Systems Convener H.E. Sok Silo, progress on revising its Food Systems Roadmap and developing the Third National Strategy for Food Security and Nutrition, while emphasizing priorities such as food fortification, agroecological farming practices, and integrating nutrition into the NDCs. The government also underlined its political commitment to linking climate and nutrition, the importance of mobilizing resources through public–private partnerships and referred to its 10 SMART N4G commitments.

Cambodia has been invited to become a member of the Healthy Diets Coalition, given her solid ongoing work to strengthen collaboration on promoting healthy, sustainable diets. The Coalition looks forward to welcoming Cambodia as a country member and to highlighting the important national experiences it can share with partners and peers. Membership involves no financial commitments, and we remain available for any clarifications.

## N4G Commitments (as of April 2025)

- Improving access to healthy diets and nutrition services via social assistance
- Strengthening Food Systems for Food Security and Nutrition
- Promote Food Safety Law to comply with national standards and regulations
- Reduce wasting prevalence in children under five years of age
- Reduce stunting prevalence in children under five years of age
- Ensure availability and affordability of foods for all
- Enhancing Climate Resilience, Climate-Smart Agriculture, and Food System
- Ensuring Universal access to water sanitation and hygiene by 2030
- Promoting fortified rice in Cambodia's Food System
- Safe and Nutritious School Meals

## Remaining Challenges

Cambodia continues to make steady progress in addressing its persistent nutrition challenges through strengthened policies, national roadmaps, and cross-sectoral collaboration.

Nutrition remains a key priority within broader development strategies, with efforts focused on improving outcomes for vulnerable groups, particularly women and children. However, key challenges remain. Undernutrition persists, with stunting among children under five at 22% (down from 32% in 2014) and wasting holding at around 10%, particularly affecting rural and poorer households. At the same time, Cambodia faces a rising burden of overweight, obesity, and diet-related NCDs, reflecting a growing double burden of malnutrition. Gaps in dietary diversity and reliance on energy-dense, nutrient-poor foods contribute to these trends, compounded by limited access to safe WASH in some communities.

Climate change, subnational implementation capacity, and the need for sustained financing further challenge progress, underscoring the importance of continued cross-sector coordination and resource mobilization.