

Multisectoral Food and Nutrition Security in Cambodia

Fresh vegetables from diverse home gardens contribute to healthy diets and provide additional income.

INITIAL SITUATION

Today Cambodia has the resources to feed its population and is a major exporter of rice. Despite ongoing economic growth, the stunting rate among children under five years remains at 22% (2022). At the same time, overweight and nutrition-related noncommunicable diseases such as diabetes are on the rise, even in rural areas. Malnutrition, especially during the first two years of life, has severe long-term consequences. Beyond health implications, this also prevents the country's human capital from being fully developed and keeps economic growth below its potential. Malnutrition is therefore not only a public health issue but also an economic development constraint.

Diverse and intertwined causes require a holistic approach. This is where the Multisectoral Food and Nutrition Security Project (MUSEFO) comes in. It combines measures from the areas of nutrition, health, agriculture, private sector and good governance, which complement one another and together hold the potential to sustainably improve food and nutrition security.

The project works directly with its target groups in two Cambodian provinces, Kampong Thom and Kampot. Successful approaches are scaled up nationally by the government, which is also supported in achieving its development

goals. For example, advisory services in the health and agriculture sectors are being strengthened nationwide with nutrition-sensitive training and supported through digital solutions such as apps, enabling standardized and effective practices as well as a unified monitoring and evaluation system.

ACTIVITIES IN CAMBODIA

- **Supporting the Government:** MUSEFO works with the Cambodian government in implementing its transformative sector policies and promotes so-called “Game Changers” for sustainable food systems.
- **Commune Investment Planning:** Local communities across the country are enabled to allocate their budget funds more effectively for food and nutrition security. They gain transparency on existing resources and receive guidance for needs-based budgeting.
- **Food Processing in Food Banks:** In line with a sustainable circular economy, women process agricultural surpluses (e.g. mangoes, bananas) or by-products (e.g. cashew apples) into durable, high-quality food products. This reduces waste and greenhouse gas emissions, creates income opportunities for women in rural areas, and contributes to food security.



Pouen combines breastfeeding with nutritious complementary feeding.



REGIONS

Kampot and Kampong Thom Provinces,
nationwide



DURATION

March 2015 to March 2026



BUDGET

€ 17 million



COMMISSIONING AGENCY

German Federal Ministry for Economic
Cooperation and Development (BMZ)



IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS

Helen Keller International (HKI),
Reproductive and Child Health Alliance
(RACHA)



LEAD EXECUTING AGENCY

Cambodian Council for Agricultural and
Rural Development (CARD)



TARGET GROUP

15.000 women of reproductive age, i.e.,
between 15 and 49 years,
and 3,000 children between 6 and
23 months

OUR GOAL

Nutritionally vulnerable people in Cambodia, especially women of reproductive age and children under two, have reliable access to adequate and nutritious food at all times – including during hunger crises.

FROM PRACTICE

Pouen is a mother of two living in a Cambodian village. For six years, she has been a member of a MUSEFO Care Group with the goal of improving her family's health in a sustainable way. It is her heartfelt desire to provide the best possible care and nutrition for her children.

For her, breastfeeding is the key to health and well-being. Her youngest child has never been sick, something she attributes to consistent, exclusive breastfeeding and the hygiene practices she follows in food handling and child care. In the past, her family often suffered from illnesses such as diarrhea. Today, she proudly says: "In recent years, we were never sick – never."

Pouen shares her knowledge with neighbors, who often seek her advice. She feels honored to serve as a role model and is grateful for the knowledge she has gained through the group – on the importance of nutrient-rich complementary feeding, child-friendly nutrition, and strengthening the immune system.



Women in Cambodia gain financial independence and invest in nutrition-sensitive business ideas.

With every meal she prepares and every lesson she passes on, Pouen not only changes the life of her own family but also shares health and hope with her entire community.

IMPACT

Nutrition-sensitive savings groups: Participants save collectively and invest in nutrition-sensitive business ideas. In particular, women gain access to financial resources and strengthen their economic independence, contributing to local social protection.

In the 53 supported Saving for Change groups, 1,183 women and 164 men are members. Within one year, the groups saved around EUR 71,000, which enabled the realization of 840 new business ideas. Since 2021, the groups have collectively saved and reinvested about EUR 165,000.

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