Background

Although Cambodia has made recent strides in economic growth, it continues to face significant challenges in terms of poverty, food insecurity, and infrastructure, especially in rural areas where 80 percent of the population live.

There are few employment opportunities in rural areas other than seasonal unskilled agriculture wage labour, which tends to be temporary and low paid.

Despite a national rice surplus and functioning markets, household access to food remains challenging due to low purchasing power with rural households spending up to 70 percent of their income on food. This combined with poor rural infrastructure due to nearly three decades of turbulence in the country provides a unique opportunity to address poverty and food insecurity through public works programmes in rural communities.

In the ‘lean season’ just prior to the main rice harvest, food insecurity can push poor households into extreme poverty as they resort to harmful coping strategies such as selling productive assets accumulated over long periods in order to survive.

In recent years, as one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world, Cambodia has suffered regular flooding and droughts resulting in loss of lives and livelihoods, damaged social infrastructure and decreased agricultural production.

What we do

WFP’s Productive Assets and Livelihoods Support (PALS) programme utilises cash or food transfers to provide poor rural communities with the opportunity to build or rehabilitate productive assets in an effort to better mitigate disasters and improve natural resource management and climate change adaptation while adding to overall household and community resilience.

Since 1996, WFP has built and rehabilitated over 11,000 kilometers of feeder roads (more than one third of the national tertiary road network) increasing access to markets, and social services such as schools, clinics, and hospitals.

In 2014, WFP provided food assistance to over 55,440 people through this programme, of which over 40% were women. Through cash activities, WFP distributed US$ 167,804 to 1,781 households, of which 56% were women-headed.

WFP also supports government and communities to anticipate and prepare for climate-related hazards by analysing the combination of data and science to forecast potential impacts.

The PALS programme is aligned with the National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS) for the poor and vulnerable, and the Government’s Public Works Programme, as well as other national policies including the Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition (SFFSN).
WFP’s PALS programme helps Cambodian communities to strengthen their resilience against weather shocks, reduce disaster risks, and build vital infrastructure to improve market access and agricultural production. This is achieved through food or cash-based activities to improve rural livelihoods.

The cash programme is implemented through decentralized government structures and uses mobile banking in collaboration with a microfinance service provider. Cash payments are made at regular intervals during project implementation; Food assistance, equivalent to the cash provision, is also provided during the project when pre-agreed milestones have been met.

Due to resource constraints, this programme will be reduced by 62 percent in 2015 and will primarily focus on three provinces (Kampong Thom, Kampong Chhnang and Pursat), which are among the least resilient to climate change and natural disasters in the country.

Climate change adaptation – Activities will help communities strengthen their resilience to weather-related shocks by providing climate change awareness training, and improve food security through irrigation systems, agricultural skills training, crop diversification, and home gardens—depending on what the communities themselves identify as the mitigation priority.

Disaster risks mitigation & natural resource management – Activities will strengthen local natural resource management, including community water management, community forest, and establishment of early warning systems, etc.

Rural infrastructures – Construction and rehabilitation of rural roads will continue to ensure better access to social services such as schools, health centers and markets, as well as contribute to improved agricultural production.

Local capacity building – WFP will also continue to focus on building the capacity of communities to do development planning and to anticipate shocks before the occur.

Target Areas 2014-2015

Partnerships

♦ The National Committee for Sub-National Democratic Development (NCDD) and sub level authorities
♦ The Ministry of Rural Development and sub level departments
♦ Angkor Micro-Finance of Kampuchea (AMK)
♦ USAID Mekong ARCC
♦ NGOs
♦ Local communities
♦ CARE Cambodia

Resources

Under WFP’s Country Programme 2011-16, US$ 3.2 million is needed in 2015 to reach 105,468 beneficiaries from poor disaster-prone vulnerable communities.