Background

Although Cambodia has made considerable progress in expanding basic education with 97 percent net enrolment rate, regular attendance, and retention remain major challenges.

Overall drop out for primary grades in school year 2013-14 was 10.5 percent, one of the highest in the region. Child labour is a major concern, with 19 percent of Cambodian children aged 5 to 17 economically active, according to the International Labour Organization.

The prevalence of high drop-out rates is mainly the result of food insecurity and poverty. Cambodia ranks 136 out of 187 countries on the 2014 UNDP Human Development Index. About 18 percent of Cambodia’s population does not have access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food.

School children in Cambodia have high levels of chronic undernutrition, underweight, and anaemia, which affect their health, concentration in school, and future productivity as adults.

Compounding these malnutrition rates is the limited Royal Government of Cambodia budget for supporting education. After 15 years from the end of the civil conflict and unrest in the country, many schools still lack vital infrastructure for water, sanitation, and kitchens. Teaching materials are also limited.

What we do

WFP’s Education Programme aims to improve the education of children from poor food insecure households through supporting regular attendance and improving retention levels.

In 2015, WFP School Meals will provide a daily nutritious breakfast for 267,869 primary school children from grades 1 to 6 in nine provinces. Breakfast includes rice, canned fish, vitamin A-fortified vegetable oil, yellow split peas, and iodized salt. Of this total, USDA supports 166,928 students in three provinces through the McGovern Dole initiative. WFP also provides seeds for school vegetable gardens, literacy materials, vital water, sanitation and kitchen infrastructure, and training on nutrition and personal health. WFP is also working with partners to pilot a Home Grown School Feeding programme with local small-scale farmers providing fresh produce for school meals.

WFP Scholarships are conditional food or cash transfers given to the poorest families with children in grades 4 to 6 who attend school at least 80 percent of school days each month. The cash scholarship programme, which uses mobile banking through a microfinance institution, will reach 4,930 students in 2015 in Siem Reap, Kampong Thom and Prey Veng provinces. The food scholarship take home ration, which is partly supported by USDA, will reach 26,709 children in 11 provinces in school year 2014/15.

In 2011, WFP launched a new five-year Cambodia Country Programme that targets up to 2.76 million people focusing on food based social safety net in the sector of education, nutrition and productive assets/livelihood support.

For further information visit: www.wfp.org/countries/cambodia

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WFP’s Education Programme acts as a safety net that enables poor food insecure households to send their children to school where they can grow and thrive.

In school year 2013-2014, WFP school meals reached 392,400 pre-primary school children in need and provided 53,383 scholarships to poor students in grade 4 to 6. Due to funding constraints, there will be a reduction of beneficiaries for the coming school year 2014-15 to cover only 267,869 students for school meals, and 31,639 students for scholarships (food and cash).

Education – When poor families are forced to keep children out of school to put food on the table, the offer of a meal in school provides a powerful incentive for parents to sending their children to school. School feeding not only fills empty stomachs, it enables children to concentrate and learn better in class and contributes to increased enrolment, attendance, and retention in school.

Nutrition – School meals contribute to improved dietary diversity, leading to enhanced child nutrition, and health. WFP is currently exploring options to add fortified rice to the meals to ensure greater provision of essential micronutrients.

Hygiene and Sanitation – With support from partners, in some areas, the programme incorporates the construction and rehabilitation of hygiene and sanitation facilities and education.

Literacy and Education – WFP is working with partners to ensure schools have basic teaching materials and training on important health issues, such as nutrition and sanitation.

Gender – WFP remains committed to improving access to school for poor children, particularly girls, and empowering women to control household finances. Under the cash scholarship pilot, 82 percent of accounts were set up in the name of women.

Home Grown School Feeding – WFP is working partners to procure food from smallholder farmers in the community so that children can have a balanced diet of local produce.

Sustainability – WFP has been working with the Government to establish a nationally-owned school feeding programme by 2020. In 2013, significant responsibilities for implementing food scholarships were handed over to Government in two provinces, Kampot and Kratie, and a Road Map for starting its own school feeding programme is expected to be completed in early 2015.

Target Areas school year 2014/15

Partnerships

♦ Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MOEYS)
♦ Commune Councils
♦ PLAN International
♦ Kampuchean Action for Primary Education (KAPE)
♦ For the Smile of a Child (FSC) - an NGO
♦ Angkor MicroFinance Institute (AMK) and
♦ School Aid Japan (SAJ) - NGO
♦ Helping Address Rural Vulnerabilities and Ecosystem Stability (HARVEST) — USAID-funded