



The recipe for success: how policy-makers can integrate water, sanitation and hygiene into actions to end malnutrition

Country profile: Cambodia



Key statisticsⁱ

- **32.4%** of children under five are stunted
- **9.6%** of children under five are wasted
- **75%** of the population have access to at least basic drinking water services
- **49%** of the population have access to at least basic sanitation services
- **66%** of the population have access to basic hygiene

Background

Cambodia is making good progress on nutrition and the country is on course to meet the World Health Assembly (WHA) target for stunting; however, progress on wasting and anaemia is lagging behind. Currently the Government has up-to-date policies and plans both on nutrition and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). The interconnection between WASH and nutrition is highlighted in national action plans like the 'National Action Plan for the Zero Hunger Challenge in Cambodia' (2016–2025).

The Government has shown particular leadership and commitment to the integration of WASH and nutrition, holding a national conference on the importance of WASH and nutrition for children's health and development in November 2016 under the theme 'Improved Hygiene and Nutrition Make Children Grow'. This brought together ministries and stakeholders working on nutrition and WASH in order to improve inter-sectoral cooperation and collaboration at national and sub-national levels. Since then a sub-working group on WASH and nutrition integration has been established. In 2014, the Kingdom of Cambodia joined the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement but is currently not a member of the Sanitation and Water for All (SWA) partnership. Cambodia has agreed to the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) framework for action and has committed to three national targets on stunting and wasting in children and anaemia in women, to be reached by 2018.

Is water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) integrated within national nutrition plans?

National Strategy for Food Security and Nutrition (NSFSN) 2014–2018

The NSFSN is coherent and comprehensive, and is structured along a conceptual framework that considers food security and nutrition (FSN) under four areas: food availability, food access, use and utilisation of food, and food security. The plan details actions required in both nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions, and recognises WASH as a priority area under 'use and utilisation of food'. It identifies key opportunities within objective 2 and programmatic priority area 2 to integrate WASH into all child and maternal nutrition community-based and behaviour change programmes, and to integrate nutrition, hygiene and sanitation aspects into school curricula and campaigns.

The strategy comprehensively outlines the different institutional mechanisms to coordinate FSN in Cambodia, including the Council for Agriculture and Rural Development (CARD) and the Technical Working Group on Social Protection and Food Security and Nutrition (TWG-SP&FSN). It includes detailed information on plans to strengthen monitoring and evaluation, including the use of information to revise and adapt plans, capacity building (within CARD, in other sectors, and at provincial, district, local communes), and knowledge and information management. The budget for WASH activities under objective 2 was outlined as was a plan to develop a Nutrition Action and Investment Plan in 2014 to further operationalise these actions.

Is nutrition integrated within national WASH plans?

National Strategy for Rural Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene 2011–2025

The national plan recognises the links between WASH and nutrition, with specific mention of stunting from diarrhoea-related malnutrition as a result of poor WASH, and is referenced in the NSFSN 2014–2018. The plan outlines several WASH interventions most relevant for nutrition, including improvements in water and sanitation infrastructure in schools and healthcare facilities, along with hygiene behaviour change components in schools. There are, however, opportunities to enhance the nutrition-sensitivity of these programmes, by integrating relevant nutrition activities (e.g. nutrition interventions integrated into school-based hygiene promotion activities) and including nutrition indicators within the prioritisation of service delivery based on the List of Poor Households.

Two main mechanisms coordinate delivery of the WASH strategy, including the technical working group (TWG-RSSH) and the sectoral working group (WATSAN sectoral WG), both chaired by the Ministry of Rural Development. This provides an important forum for multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder engagement. It is not clear if nutrition stakeholders and the Ministry of Health are involved in these working groups.

Recommendations for the Government of Cambodia

- All stakeholders should align behind and support the nutrition plan, which comprehensively considers nutrition in Cambodia as a multi-sectoral issue and outlines specific actions from different sectors.
- The nutrition strategy should consider including relevant 'BabyWASH' interventions, such as food hygiene interventions and environmental hygiene interventions including safe play areas for children and safe disposal of child faeces. Opportunities to integrate WASH interventions with the delivery of vitamin A supplementation and de-worming activities should be explored, particularly if evidence suggests that the high rates of anaemia are caused in part by soil-transmitted helminths (STHs).
- The Government should continue to support the newly established WASH and nutrition sub-working group as a forum to share information and practical experiences. Similarly, the Government should ensure nutrition and WASH stakeholders are involved in each of the institutional coordination mechanisms established for the planning and implementation of the nutrition and WASH strategies.

Recommendations for all national governments

- Ensure policies align with the Sustainable Development Goals and their interconnected targets to strengthen WASH and nutrition coordination and collaboration, using opportunities such as policy reviews and joint sector reviews.
- Establish effective cross-ministerial coordination mechanisms championed at the highest level by heads of state, to support sharing of information and joint planning and implementation of policies.
- Ensure cross-ministerial coordination structures incorporate meaningful participation of and consultation with civil society and affected communities.
- Ensure up-to-date national WASH and nutrition plans and progress reports are easily accessible online, to allow civil society to monitor progress and hold governments to account.

Nutrition policy-makers and practitioners should:

- Prioritise nutrition-sensitive WASH interventions and include specific objectives to improve WASH within nutrition plans and policies. Clear entry points to integrate WASH and nutrition include: behaviour change promotion; improvement of provision of WASH in healthcare facilities and schools; and co-location of interventions to areas with lowest WASH access and highest prevalence of undernutrition.

WASH policy-makers and practitioners should:

- Increase the 'nutrition-sensitivity' of policies and programmes, including by: targeting geographical areas where undernutrition is most prevalent;

prioritising women and children; and including nutrition-relevant interventions, such as improving WASH in health and nutrition centres.

This country profile is drawn from the global report ‘*The recipe for success: how policy-makers can integrate water, sanitation and hygiene into action to end malnutrition*’ produced by ACF, the SHARE Consortium and WaterAid. Read the full report at www.wateraid.org/recipeforsuccess

ⁱ To ensure consistency and cross-country comparability, we have used the most recent figures published by global monitoring reports. In some countries, more up-to-date national statistics are available. Nutrition statistics from UNICEF, WHO & World Bank Group (2017) *Child malnutrition estimates*. Available at www.who.int/entity/nutgrowthdb/jme_dataset2017_final.xlsx?ua=1 WASH statistics from UNICEF/WHO Joint Monitoring Programme (2017) *Progress on Drinking Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene: 2017 update and SDG Baselines*. Available at washdata.org/report/jmp-2017-report-launch-version1