

## Terms of Reference

### Sub-working Group on WASH and Nutrition

#### 1. Background and rationale

Despite significant improvements in economic growth and progress in reducing national poverty, under-nutrition remains a public health threat for up to 5 million Cambodians. Under-nutrition drives a vicious cycle of increased mortality and poor health, impaired cognitive and physical growth, diminished learning capacity and ultimately lower work performance, productivity and earnings.

Cambodia has one of the highest rates of child stunting in the Asia Pacific Region. The most recent data from the Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey 2014 (CDHS) reported that 32 percent of children under-five are stunted; an indicator for chronic under-nutrition, and this figure was ten percentage points higher among rural children (34%) than urban children (24%).

Under-nutrition has many underlying and complex causes. Ultimately, it is underpinned by the intake and use of nutrients. Adequate nutrition does not only require the right type and amount of nutrients to be eaten, it is critical that those nutrients are effectively used for growth and development once inside the body. Nutrient absorption is affected by diarrhoea, worm infections and environmental enteropathy (a permanent sub-clinical condition that results from persistent infection). These three underlying causes of nutrition are linked to poor sanitation, unsafe water and poor hygiene practices and when they occur early in life, they result in stunted growth. Whilst the impacts on cognitive development are hard to measure, the proxy measure of stunting is easier to examine; research in Cambodia found that on average children at the age of five in communities where all households defecate openly are 2 to 3.6cm shorter than children in communities where open defecation is not practiced (WSP, 2013<sup>1</sup>).

The links between WASH and nutrition are increasingly hard to ignore, with a growing recognition of the importance of promoting nutrition through integration within interventions that are responsive to the underlying and basic causes of under-nutritional in individuals, households and societies, particularly water supply, sanitation and hygiene (WASH).

To effectively address the issue of under-nutrition in Cambodia, this requires doing things differently, by bringing together agencies and programs in an integrated approach to nutrition. Simple collaboration is an important start, but successful programs that deliver sustained impact on nutritional outcomes require joint planning, financing and delivery. In the past nutrition programming in Cambodia has included both nutrition specific and nutrition sensitive interventions, however the

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<sup>1</sup> WSP, 2013, Investing in the next generation: Growing tall and smart with toilets.

nutrition sensitive elements, such as WASH, have not been optimized. At the first National Conference on Nutrition in early 2015, the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) and development partners committed to the elimination of all forms of malnutrition. At this same conference access to sanitation, water supply and hygiene were highlighted as fundamental underlying causes of under-nutrition, and have until recently been overlooked in nutrition programming. The conference noted how reducing open defecation, improving sanitation and hygiene practices and access to safe drinking water is fundamental to Cambodia's efforts to improve the nutrition of children and reduce stunting. The Ministry of Health has recently completed the Fast Track Road Map for Improving Nutrition and the Ministry of Rural Development is currently in the process of developing a costed National Action Plan for Rural Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene, thus presenting new opportunities for coordinated action.

## **2. Purpose, Objectives and Scope**

The purpose of the WASH and Nutrition sub-working group is to bring together the WASH and Food Security and Nutrition (FSN) sector actors for the development of a shared forward-thinking vision, learning and sharing experiences on the integration of WASH and nutrition, establishing synergy between the sectors to improve the quality of programming and services in this area and achieve greater impact.

The scope of the W&N (WASH and Nutrition) sub-working group covers the WASH and Nutrition sectors. For the purpose of this working group, the term "WASH" will encompass any activities undertaken in water, sanitation and hygiene. The term "Nutrition" will refer to any activity that addresses improved nutritional outcomes, which may encompass a range of different sectors, including but not limited to: health, education, food security, agriculture and livelihoods. The focus of the group is on activities relating to the health of children under five years of age.

The W&N sub-working group will report to and provide technical support to the WATSAN monthly meeting and FSN forum by every two months on any issues related to WASH and nutrition, so that inputs may be further provided to the TWG-RWSSH and Sub-technical working group on FSN of TWG on Food Security and Nutrition and Social Protection (TWG- FSN, SP).

Considering the current development and emerging areas of focus between these two sectors, the following is a list of key thematic areas that requires the attention of the W&N sub-working group in the first year. These areas will be updated as the context evolves:

1. Behavioural Change – with a focus on sanitation, hygiene promotion, child faeces management and infant and young child feeding practices;
2. Food hygiene, preparation and storage.

The objectives of the W&N Sub-working group are:

- To facilitate a common understanding, develop an evidence-base and provide recommendations on methodologies and approaches for the integration of WASH and nutrition programs;
- To facilitate knowledge sharing, foster learning and support coordination and advocacy across WASH and Nutrition sector stakeholders;
- To facilitate the development and/or review of relevant technical guidelines, sectoral operational plans, sector policy and other sector development plans and strategy related to WASH and nutrition (e.g. M&E, capacity development, BCC, etc.) within the framework of the National Strategy for Food Security and Nutrition (NSFSN 2014-2018) and the National Strategic Plan on RWSSH; and
- To support the WATSAN Sectoral Working Group and FSN Sub-working group to undertake any task given by the TWG-RWSSH and FSN, SP-TWG related to WASH and nutrition.

### **3. Activities**

To fulfill the above objectives, the W&N Sub-working group will conduct the following activities:

- Jointly review the ToR of the W&N Sub-working group, based on a yearly assessment of the priority of thematic areas and gaps perceived by all sector partners, and agree on specific outputs on an annual basis;
- Support the development of annual operational plan for WASH and nutrition under the National Strategic Plan for RWSSH and National Strategy for Food Security and Nutrition;
- Support the review, consultation and dissemination process of analytical studies and sharing of programmatic experience related to WASH and nutrition; and
- Organise thematic learning events to share the knowledge widely in the sector;
- Jointly develop advocacy strategy and tools for WASH and Nutrition improvement.

### **4. Structure and composition**

The W&N sub-working group consists of:

- Senior staff of Council for Agricultural and Rural Development (CARD), mainly from FSN Sub-working group;
- MRD senior staff from DRHC and DRWS;
- MoH senior staff from National Centre for Maternal and Child Health;

- Development Partners and NGOs working on sanitation and hygiene, water supply and nutrition programs, including the National Coordinator of WSSCC in Cambodia and the convenor of the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Civil Society Network; and
- Other concerned government ministries' representatives such as Ministry of Education Youth and Sport, Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries and Ministry of Women's Affairs will be invited based on the needs of the group and depending on the thematic areas discussed.

The W&N sub-working group is chaired by CARD and the representative of selected Development Partners (DPs) or NGOs as co-chair on an annual basis. In case the any co-chair is not available, he/she can delegate his/her chairmanship to any member from MRD/MoH (from government side) and any member from DPs/NGOs (from DPs or NGOs site).

The Chair, or in the absence of the Chair, the Co-chair will be responsible to report to the Food Security and Nutrition Forum (every two months) and the WATSAN Sectoral Working Group Meeting on any issues or activities undertaken by the W&N sub-working group and relevant information related to WASH and Nutrition improvement.

The inputs from the W&N sub-working group will be then communicated to TWG-RWSSH, and TWG Social Protection and Food Security.

## **5. Operational arrangement**

The W&N sub-working group will meet once every two months and additionally if needed.

The agenda is based on the need and set one week in advance of each meeting. The members of the sub-working group will take and circulate minutes, both Khmer and English version, on a rotational basis. In each meeting, the minutes-taker for the next meeting will be identified. The co-chair of the sub-working group will circulate the minutes of the last meeting at least 7 days prior to the next meeting.

Depending on the size of the group's members, the meeting place will be identified by the co-chair of the sub-working group.

While no financial contribution from members is expected, they may be called upon to support, where relevant to their programming and within their parameters of funding agreements.

The W&N sub-working group will review its ToR on yearly basis to reflect on-going developments and newly emerging issues in the RWSSH Sector and FSN sector.

### Structure of WASH and Nutrition Sub-Working Group

