



Kingdom of Cambodia
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OFFICE OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS
Council for Agricultural and Rural Development

Press Release
3rd National Nutrition Day Celebration
“Improved Hygiene and Nutrition Make Children Grow”

“Living without proper sanitation and hygiene is one of the factors contributing to malnutrition, specifically stunting and wasting in children, as well as fatality in some serious cases,” said Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia on 3rd National Nutrition Day Celebration, November 4, 2016.

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia, 4 November 2016 – On this day, the Kingdom of Cambodia celebrates its Third Annual National Nutrition Day. This event is jointly organized by the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) through the Council of Agricultural and Rural Development (CARD) along with the Ministry of Rural Development and the Ministry of Health, in partnership with USAID, UNICEF, FAO, WFP, GIZ and the Scaling Up Nutrition Civil Society Alliance in Cambodia (SUN CSA Cambodia) coordinated by Helen Keller International (HKI), with support from Save the Children, Plan International, Action Against Hunger, Samaritan’s Purse, Medical Teams International, Malteser International, GSF and WSSCC. The theme for this year’s National Nutrition Day is **“Improved Hygiene and Nutrition Make Children Grow”** which focuses on the impact of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and proper nutrition practices on the healthy growth and development of Cambodian children.

The first 1,000 days from conception until the child turns two year of age represent the most critical time in a person’s development. The damage caused by poor nutrition and WASH practices during this time is irreversible. Without exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months, proper complementary feeding, clean drinking water, adequate sanitation and hygiene, a child is at increased risk of malnutrition, including stunting, which is linked to poor health outcomes, education performance and economic success over time. According to Debora Comini, UNICEF Representative in Cambodia, **“scaling up specific interventions to address undernutrition, and reaching at least 90% of all children during the first 1,000 days of life, will generate a return on investment of 16 dollars for every dollar invested.”**

In Cambodia, one out of three (32%) children under the age of five are stunted and one out of ten (10%) are wasted. In addition, 54% of the population does not have access to improved sanitation and 50% use unimproved sources of drinking water. According to the World Health Organization, nearly half of child undernutrition is attributed to poor WASH practices and unsanitary environments from children being exposed to risky bacterial infections and diarrheal diseases; all of

which inhibit the absorption of energy and nutrients, compromising their nutrition status and growth potential.

“Living without proper sanitation and hygiene is one of the factors contributing to malnutrition, specifically stunting and wasting in children, as well as fatality in some serious cases. Health experts indicated that water consumption and inappropriate hygiene practices, are the main causes of disease outbreaks including diarrhea and intestinal parasites, which have serious adverse impacts on children’s health and nutrition”, said **Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia.**

The evidence clearly shows that WASH and nutrition are sectors that need to work hand-in-hand to ensure maximum impact for the benefits of Cambodian children and their future. **H.E. Deputy Prime Minister Yim Chhay Ly, Chairman of CARD, highlights the interdependence needed in furthering the nutrition agenda by stating that the “promotion of nutrition is not an exclusive role of a ministry or institution; rather this is a cross cutting theme that requires joint efforts from various sectors including water supply and hygiene, agriculture, rural development, education, health, social protection and information sectors, as well as contribution from sub-national authorities, development partners, and the private sector to promote nutrition.”**

Improved integration of WASH and nutrition issues within Cambodia will create synergistic effects which can ultimately contribute to a reduction of hunger and malnutrition for all. As **Polly Dunford, USAID Mission Director** said, **“If we all work together to improve hygiene and nutrition – we can help children grow and – equally as important – we can help Cambodia grow, too”.**

Keith Porter, HKI Country Director, reinforces the action of nutrition-WASH integration in Cambodia, asserting that, **“Many of our (SUN-CSA Cambodia) member organizations are actively supporting sub-national government to integrate relevant water, sanitation and hygiene interventions and nutrition programs.”**

Finally, Prime Minister Samdech Hun Sen calls on all stakeholders and partners dedicated to improving WASH, health, and nutrition in Cambodia to work together and to: 1) continue adhering to the implementation of the policies, strategies, and plans outlined by the government; 2) improve inter-sectoral cooperation and collaboration among relevant stakeholders at the national and sub-national level; 3) expand awareness on the importance and benefits of good hygiene and sanitation practices and encourage social and behavior change; and 4) continue the implementation of suitable monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure effective and efficient integrated programs.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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