Institute for Development and Peace
INEF
UNIVERSITÄT DUISBURG ESSEN
Open-Minded

Frank Bliss

School Meals with Local Procurement in Cambodia

AVE Study 36b/2024

BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCE:

Bliss, Frank (2024): School Meals with Local Procurement in Cambodia, Institute for Development and Peace (INEF), University of Duisburg-Essen (AVE Study 36b/2024, Ways out of Poverty, Vulnerability and Food Insecurity).

Imprint

Publisher:
Institute for Development and Peace (INEF)
University of Duisburg-Essen

Logo design: Carola Vogel
Layout design: Jeanette Schade, Sascha Werthes
Cover design: Shahriar Assadi

Lotharstr. 53 D - 47057 Duisburg
Phone +49 (203) 379 4420 Fax +49 (203) 379 4425
E-Mail: inef-sek@uni-due.de
Homepage: https://www.uni-due.de/inef

ISSN 2511-5111

Frank Bliss

School Meals with Local Procurement in Cambodia

AVE-Study 36b/2024

Ways out of Poverty, Vulnerability and Food Insecurity

Universität Duisburg-Essen
University of Duisburg-Essen

Institut für Entwicklung und Frieden (INEF)
Institute for Development and Peace

AUTHOR:

Dr phil. Frank Bliss, Professor of Ethnology (Development Anthropology) at the University of Hamburg and co-operation partner of INEF, University of Duisburg-Essen. Research work in Egypt, the Maghreb, Sudan and other Sahel countries as well as in Central Asia. Active as a consultant primarily in the water sector, the implementation of social safeguards in infrastructure projects and policy advice.

e-mail: bliss_consult@t-online.de

Project homepage: **https://www.uni-due.de/inef/projekt_ave.php**

The project is funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) as part of the special initiative "Transformation of Agricultural and Food Systems".

Table of Contents

Abbreviations and Local Terms

BMZ	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
BTI	Bertelsmann Transformation Index (especially on governance)
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
commune	(Rural) Community in Cambodia, consisting of several villages (s.a. *sangkat*)
d	Day
district	County
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FD	Financial service provider
g	Gram
GCNF	Global Child Nutrition Foundation (USA)
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit / German Technical Cooperation
GPfE	Global Partnership for Education
GRC	Gouvernement Royale du Cambodge
HDI	Human Development Index
HDR	Human Development Report
HEF	Health Equity Fund (free access system to health services)
HG	Homegrown
HGSF	Home-Grown School Feeding
hh	Households
ID Poor	National Cambodian registration system for the poor
ILO	International Labour Organization
INEF	Institute for Development and Peace (University of Duisburg-Essen)
I-NRO	International NGO
KfW	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau / German Financial Cooperation
KoC	Kingdom of Cambodia
koko	A dish with several cooked vegetables and possibly fish or meat
kuyun	Khmer for hand tractor, single-axle universal implement for agriculture
l	Litre
m	Month
mekhum	Head of the (rural) community administration in Cambodia
mephum	Village chief in Cambodia
MFIS	Microfinance institutions
MoE	Ministry of Education
NIS	National Institute of Statistics (Cambodia)
NGO	Non-governmental organisation/s

NRO	Non-governmental organisation/s
NSPPF	National Social Protection Policy Framework
ODA	Official Development Aid
p.a.	Per year
p.c.	Per capita
p.d.	Per day
p.m.	Per month
ppp	Purchasing power parity
prakas	Khmer for government decree (signed by the Prime Minister)
Riel	Cambodian currency unit, 4,100 Riel = approx. US$ 1 (9-2023)
sangkat	Khmer for rural community, s.a. *commune*
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals (sustainable development goals of the Agenda 2030)
SF	School Feeding
SFP	School Feeding Programme
SSC	School Support Committee
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
US$	US Dollar
UN	United Nations
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme

Project Background

The Institute for Development and Peace (INEF) at the University of Duisburg-Essen carried out a research project funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) from October 2015 to early 2020. The research project was intended to help reach extremely poor, vulnerable, and food-insecure population groups in the partner countries of German governmental development cooperation more effectively than before as part of primarily bilateral measures and, thus, be able to lead them out of poverty in the long term. The research project focuses on holistic agricultural promotion, access to financial services for poor smallholder farmers, and school meals as a contribution to poverty reduction and social security. The project will be continued in a third phase in 2024, with a stronger focus on feminist aspects.

Although extreme poverty has decreased worldwide in relative terms in recent decades, depending on the choice of indicators and calculation method, the absolute number of poor people has largely remained the same. This is despite numerous adapted national poverty reduction concepts, increased measures taken by many countries (above all, Brazil, China, India, but also Mexico, the Philippines, Pakistan and other middle-income countries in particular) and, with a view to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), an increasing commitment to development financing by industrialised countries and individual BRICS states (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa).

In many cases, this is due to not only poor governance and international power relations but also population growth, particularly in the world's poorest countries, where resources are often severely limited. The increasing effects of global climate change also play a role. In addition, there are several reasons for inadequate poverty reduction, which can be found in the instruments of development cooperation, the particular situation of the poor themselves and the interplay of both factors.

People living in extreme poverty and suffering from vulnerability and food insecurity have little capacity for self-help. As documented in the literature, they are also often unable to articulate their interests publicly, so that they and their ideas and wishes are not taken into account when planning development measures or are, at least, not the focus of the measures (cf. Bliss / Heinz 2009 and 2010). National and international planners must also increasingly ask themselves whether, for example, old people, households without available labour or people with disabilities can be reached at all by the means of traditional development cooperation, which focuses on helping people to help themselves and implements measures primarily with the aim of economic sustainability. Consideration should be given particularly to the role that social security contributions, such as school meals for preschool and primary school pupils in the context of this AVE study, can play.

The research project has been located at this interface: the specific conditions of poverty and food insecurity, on the one hand, and the – possibly inadequate – instruments of development cooperation, on the other. Based on the analysis of previous problems in reaching the target groups mentioned above through development cooperation and successful examples of poverty reduction, promising projects (*good practices*) are to be identified and examined in detail. In doing so, it is important to precisely analyse the circumstances of the respective success in order to work out the transfer conditions for a broader circle of DC measures in other situations and different country contexts and to make them usable for those responsible in the ministry and implementing organisations as well as for non-government organisations (NGOs), knowing full well that there can be no blueprints in DC.

Summary

Cambodia in Southeast Asia has decided from the 2020 school year to not only provide school meals for primary and preschool classes, which have already been partially introduced in poorer areas for several decades, to the extent that these were integrated into the primary schools in terms of buildings and institutions, but also give special weight to the local procurement of the food required (i.e. *'home-grown'* in the language of the World Food Programme: WFP) in the medium term. In contrast to the centralised (complete) supply of schools with selected food from outside and to hybrid systems, where, at least, some of the food continues to be procured centrally and may even consist of (donated) imports, as will certainly be necessary in very poor countries for some time to come, this local procurement should include all the food required in a school.

The importance of *school feeding* has increased noticeably in many national social programmes, particularly as a result of COVID-19, as hundreds of millions of pupils worldwide had to interrupt their school attendance for varying lengths of time due to the pandemic. Many of these children were also not allowed to return to school in some countries due to the pressure of family circumstances. School meals are, therefore, an attempt to make parents and pupils a lucrative offer to reverse this *dropout* and motivate extremely poor families to send their children to school in any event.

In addition, recent studies, including those on low- and middle-income countries, confirm that regular school meals not only promote school enrolment and attendance, but additionally have a significant positive effect on adolescents' weight gain. School meals also reduce undernourishment and malnutrition and can, therefore, make a lasting contribution to food security. The studies moreover confirm positive effects on the learning situation and learning success of the schoolchildren involved in the feeding programmes. School meals, especially in primary schools, are, thus, increasingly proving to be an important and effective contribution to food security and social security beyond the narrower field of education. The increase in their school attendance and the longer time they stay in school has a positive effect on girls, who have often been disadvantaged in education up to now.

Sourcing food for school meals – wherever possible – from local producers is also expected to have an impact on the local economy at the school locations. In Cambodia, for example, where rice is produced in many areas and vegetables can be grown almost everywhere, small farmers especially can find an additional market. Purchasing the 15 to 20 tonnes of rice required for four schools in a rural community (*commune*), for example, it is quite possible to reach 100 smallholders through one trader, depending on the circumstances. In this way, the farms would be able to sell not only 5, but also 10, 20 or more sacks of rice in the village itself at a fair price, depending on the surplus. However, there are also discussions about looking for suppliers at a district level with larger delivery offers in order to achieve a better price.

Fish, meat, eggs and cooking oil are also on the list of staple foods that are part of the schoolchildren's diet in Cambodia. These can be sold by local fishpond owners and livestock farmers directly or via local retailers thanks to the feeding programme. There is a further demand: In order to increase the sustainability of the programme, parents and the population in general are also made responsible by asking parents, if they are not too poor, to make small contributions towards the purchase of food and running of the school kitchen, while the general public is also asked to make donations in cash and in kind. In this way, additional ingredients for the meals, such as spices (e.g. chillies and garlic), soy sauce, occasionally fruit and, at least once every few weeks, a "*dessert*" are collected.

Currently, 1,114 schools in ten provinces of the country are involved in the programme originally organised by the WFP, some of which are still in operation but are gradually being handed over to the Cambodian state. Around half of all schools are already managed by the Ministry of Education and financed by the state budget. Another section still receives logistical support and, thanks to financial contributions from some international donors, money for local food purchases by the WFP. The "local" purchase is not yet complete, especially for these latter schools, because rice and cooking oil continue to come from donations, for example, from the USA. However, responsibility for school meals at a further 135 schools is to be handed over to the Ministry of Education in the running school year 2022/2023, meaning that a large number of other rural communities will also benefit from the increased local demand for food.

This study, carried out in Cambodia in September and October 2023 in close cooperation with the WFP on behalf of the Institute for Development and Peace (INEF) at the University of Duisburg-Essen and with funding from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), observed the practical implementation of the feeding programme in 28 schools and examined the effects on the pupils and the most important stakeholders involved. In particular, it also recorded the other effects, i.e. those that go beyond the schoolchildren and their food security. In addition to the economic aspects mentioned above, these include the significant increase in hygiene awareness among all those involved, which is also carried into their parents' homes by the schoolchildren. The programme's approach of relying on the participation and shared responsibility of the local administrations (especially the chairmen of the rural communities and the village chiefs) and the village communities for the implementation of the school meals greatly promotes social commitment and, thus, ultimately the sustainability of the implementation.

The fair payment of the cooks, who prepare the meals early in the morning from 4:00 a.m. so that – depending on the decision of the schools – they are ready at 7:00 a.m., has not yet been sufficiently resolved. Most of the cooks (the majority of whom are women) are volunteers from the village, who, until a few years ago, only received some rice and today receive a maximum of US$ 50 per month, often up to only half as much in schools not yet run by the Ministry of Education. A solution would have to be found here to, at least, come close to the minimum wage, which would be at least US$ 100 for a similar amount of time. Another challenge is the question of the energy supply for the school kitchens, which currently still consists almost exclusively of firewood. Regarding local vegetable production, the quantities on offer in some districts could be improved, especially as a surplus could certainly be sold at the local markets. In view of the commitment required from parents, it would also be important to give them – and mothers in particular – a greater say in decisions regarding school meals, which have, so far, been made almost exclusively by the school management.

1. Introduction

The provision of school meals (school feeding: SF), especially in primary schools, is increasingly proving to be an important and effective contribution to social protection. This system in Cambodia is based on two pillars in accordance with the 2017 National Social Protection Policy Framework (NSPPF): general *social security* and *social assistance*. Social security is currently provided via "social security funds" for state employees, veterans, or people with disabilities as well as workers and employees (initially) in certain sectors. The Framework provides support in the event of illness, accidents at work, maternity and old-age. Social assistance includes, above all, free support for poor households (hh) in the event of illness through the "Health Equity Fund" (HEF), food security measures in special situations, help for pregnant women, maternal and child health, as well as *scholarships* for poor families to enrol and send their children to school, and, last but not least, and with significantly increasing expense, school meals in preschools and primary schools.

Thanks to support from the World Food Programme (WFP) and its supporters, including the Federal Republic of Germany through the BMZ, which ranks second among bilateral donors worldwide, the School Feeding Programme (SF) has since developed into a national flagship programme. As early as 2015–2016, the programme, which had previously involved the central provision of food with a large proportion of imported food supplied free of charge by international donor organisations, was expanded on a trial basis to include a local procurement component. As a result, the aim of providing schoolchildren with a safe and healthy diet, thereby contributing to their food security, and ensuring that more children have access to school education, was expanded to include the possibility of promoting local agricultural production and, thus, contributing to economic development.

Although no studies on the physical development of schoolchildren in the face of continuous SF are yet available for Cambodia, it can be deduced from studies in other countries "that school feeding can serve as an optimal strategy for addressing the nutrition needs of adolescents" (Bekri et al. 2023: 2; also see Cohen et al. 2021; Greenhalgh et al. 2007). One study team confirms the general observation for Ethiopia and other lower middle-income countries that school meals, for example, have a small but significantly positive effect on adolescents' weight gain. Other studies confirm positive effects on the learning situation and learning success of the schoolchildren involved in the SFs.

In addition, pupils especially from poor hh can benefit from a hot meal during school hours; many of these schoolchildren would not even be sent to school by their parents without this offer. It has been shown internationally that girls are particularly able to attend school significantly more often where school meals are available and stay at school longer and are allowed to transfer to middle or secondary school.

The COVID-19 pandemic has noticeably increased the importance of school meals in many national social programmes, additionally, in order to bring children back to school who have practically given up attending or have been forced to do so by their families. After all, according to the African Union in a 2021 report, the pandemic has triggered one of the biggest education crises in recent history with devastating effects on the lives of children, with around 50 million pupils in 42 countries on the African continent alone having to interrupt their school attendance (cf. AU 2021).

Local procurement has also been gaining importance for some years now outside Cambodia concerning the provision of the food needed to prepare school meals. Whereas wheat, rice, maize or cooking oil used to be purchased en bloc for entire countries, in some

cases donated from production surpluses in North America and Europe, the countries involved are now increasingly endeavouring to purchase food nationally, regionally or even locally[1]: The *home-grown school feeding* (HGSF) model not only has the advantage described of the previous SF of increased and secure school attendance, but also achieves the economic effects mentioned in the Cambodian strategy by supporting local value creation and, if systematically and participatively planned and well organised, can also contribute to social cohesion in and around the schools.[2]

An impact analysis was carried out as part of the INEF-BMZ research project "Ways out of Poverty, Vulnerability and Food Insecurity", in Cambodia at 18 of the 84 schools with local procurement in 2018. It confirmed the broad range of effects of this procurement approach and explicitly emphasised the economic impetus provided by the funds (cf. Bliss 2018). The timing of this study was very favourable in that during the INEF team's field research in Cambodia, the question of the effects of local procurement in comparison with national food purchases or their (partial) import was being raised and discussed by the government.

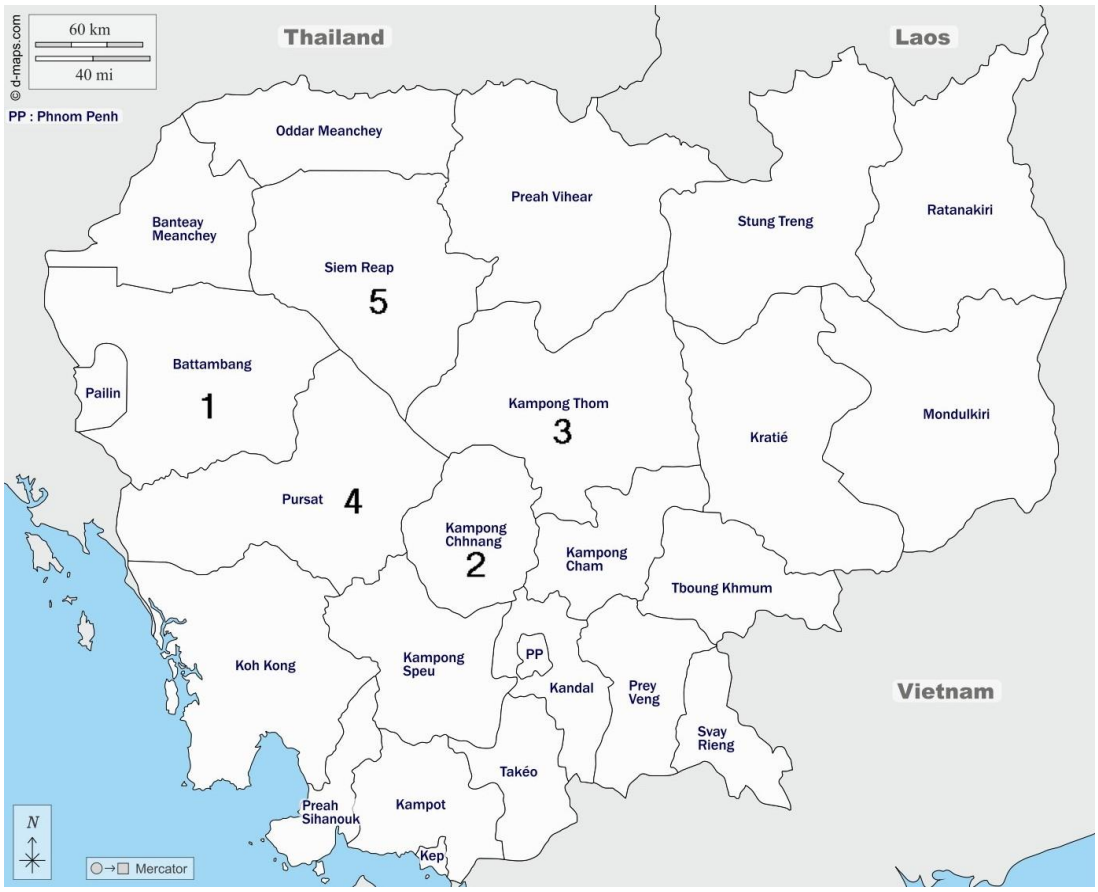
At the same time as the INEF surveys, the country's Ministry of Education (MoE) conducted its own survey of local SF stakeholders, which led to an exchange of interim results between the two team leaders, with the MoE and the WFP, as a key supporter of SF, expressing a desire to incorporate the INEF results into the national decision-making process on HGSF as a potential national priority solution. All ministries involved in the process were represented at a high level by heads of department or state secretaries at the presentation of the conclusions and recommendations of the INEF study in Phnom Penh. A further presentation of the most important findings and conclusions of the INEF study then took place at the invitation of the Deputy Minister of Social Affairs in his office. The study, thus, made an early contribution that could positively influence the decision to introduce HGSF 2020 as a standardised approach in Cambodia.

It should be emphasised that this new contribution is not an evaluation. Nor is it intended to assess the work of the state structures or the WFP. It was intention of the INEF research team with the present study, which covers a further 28 schools, to find out more about the further development and expansion of the HGSF approach in Cambodia with a view to the broader effects of local food procurement and, thus, explicitly beyond the effects on school enrolment and children's school performance. For this purpose, schools were selected in five provinces, some of which were to include facilities already under government responsibility for SF as well as schools that – donor-funded – are still being supported by the WFP and waiting for the MoE to assume responsibility for SF.

[1] This approach has been practiced in thousands of schools in Brazil for around 30 years, where, depending on the programme, a certain proportion of the food even has to be purchased from local smallholder farmers (cf. WFP et al. 2018).

[2] The Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) study by Luana Swensson et al. (2021) takes a comprehensive and up-to-date look at public procurement in the design and implementation of school meals. Numerous country-based case studies are also cited here. Also see WFP et al. (2018) on the HGSF. For a summary of the status of SF worldwide, see WFP 2022.

Fig. 1: Map of Cambodia with, among others, the provinces of the study: Battambang (1), Kampong Chhnang (2), Kampong Thom (3), Pursat (4) and Siem Reap (5). Source: d-maps 2024.



Similar to 2017, schools were selected where the WFP's experience shows that SF works well, in addition to those where there are known to be problems with implementation. Some of the schools should be further away from the urban centres, as communication and, therefore, closer support from the school administration and external support organisations, such as the WFP and NGOs, would be less intensive here than in schools in more central locations.

The study is based methodologically on the secondary analysis of existing documents, among which two recent evaluations of South Korean and US contributions to SF and the HGSF approach are particularly important (cf. WFP 2023a; WFP/USDA 2022). The sections on the institutionalisation of SF and the technical implementation of both evaluation reports were mainly used for the summary in Chapter 3 of this report. Their evaluative statements are only taken into account in the later context of our own observations and conclusions and are explicitly identified as sources.

The field study in Cambodia was organised in such a way that an INEF team visited one school per day and began the interviews and observations (including photo documentation) in the morning at the time of meal distribution or shortly before. After a brief introduction, the cooks, who generally wanted to get home quickly as they were already busy preparing food from 4:00 a.m. or 5:00 a.m. at the latest, were interviewed first. After that, the storekeeper, who was responsible for supervising the food delivery and management and documenting it, was interviewed.

Fig. 2: Conversation with pupils about the food served, the food at home and what the children tell their parents about school meals.

The following stakeholders were then interviewed in different orders and mostly in small groups: the parents (or grandparents due to the high proportion of migrant fathers and mothers) of the children; members of the "School Support Committee" (SSC), which is important for fundraising; teachers, including those responsible for any school gardens; the headteacher as the most important organiser of the SF; girls and boys from higher classes (usually 10–14 years old); and, if active at the school, the members of a special SF committee.

After these interviews and discussions in the morning or after the lunch break, further discussions took place with a representative of the *commune* (roughly: rural community), often the chief (*commune leader* or Khmer: *mekhum*) himself; the *village chief* (or in Khmer: *mephum*), who, however, is often also a member of the SSC or heads it; and the supplier*(s)*, i.e. of the food produced by local farmers or bought at markets for the SF. Finally, the producers of vegetables were visited, where possible on the farm itself, and, in two cases, the owner of several fishponds, who was also a supplier in a school district, and a man with one fishpond.

In this way, between 20 and over 40 people per school were involved in the interviews and discussions, i.e. a total of 560 to over 1,000 stakeholders directly involved in the SF. In addition, discussions were held with those responsible for school districts and the provincial school administration, who are responsible for the overall supervision of the implementation of the SF.

Over 1,100 schools are currently participating in the SFP, therefore, the INEF study is not statistically representative, but is, instead, a snapshot that builds on the previous study from 2018 and largely confirms its results, albeit with significantly more data. The findings are partly narrative in nature due to the design of the study. However, the significance and representativeness of the statements are supported by the fact that most statements – from all groups involved in the surveys and discussions – are consistently repeated in the assessments and challenges (cf. Appendix 6 on the punctuality and quality of food deliveries).

The study was conducted between June and October 2023 by two INEF freelancers, Prof Dr Frank Bliss (development anthropologist and team leader) and Stefan Neumann (freelance consultant), on the basis of the methods described above as part of a four-week on-site mission in August and September. The report was prepared by Frank Bliss, who was able to give a preliminary report to the Council for Social Security at the beginning of the mission in Phnom Penh and present a short oral report on the interim results of the study on 30 August 2023.

2. Cambodia's Socio-Economic Foundations

2.1 Economy and Social Situation of the Population

Cambodia, with 17.3 million inhabitants (p.e.), a population growth rate of around 1.06 to 1.5°% p.a. (cf. statista 2023; World Bank 2023; estimated for 2022) and a total area of 181,035 km², appears relatively insignificant in terms of population between its much larger neighbours Vietnam and Thailand. Nevertheless, the agriculturally important lowland areas are already densely populated and there is a shortage of arable land.

According to the CIA World Factbook (2023), 95 % of the country's population is Khmer, 2.4 % Cham, 1.5% Chinese (with a recent upward trend) and other groups account for 0.7 %. Other sources assume significantly larger proportions of ethnic minorities in the total population, including around 3 % Indigenous groups, which according to the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) are made up of 24 different ethnic groups (IWGIA 2022). The official language is Khmer; the ethnic minorities have their own languages, some of which differ greatly from one another. Officially, 97.1 % of the population are Buddhists, 2 % Muslims, 0.3 % Christians and 0.5 % members of other religions (CIA 2023 for 2019).

Although the data on the gross national income (GNI) has increased steadily over the last ten years, with industry particularly showing strong annual growth, almost every second person in employment is still fully or partially employed in agriculture.[3] Agriculture only contributed 21.9 % to GNI in 2022, while manufacturing or industry now accounts for the largest share at 37.7 %, followed by the service sector at 33.7 %.[4]

With the exception of 2009 (plus 0.1 %), economic growth in Cambodia's GNI was over 8 % p.a. between 2000 and 2010 and has almost continuously exceeded 7 % since 2011 (cf. Tradingeconomics 2018). The World Bank still recorded a growth of 7.1 % in the last year before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, but then assumed a first-time drop below the 0 % mark at minus 3.1 % for the year 2020 (World Bank 2022a). However, economists forecast growth of around 5 % p.a. again for 2021–2023 (cf. Tradingeconomics 2023). The World Bank is currently forecasting 5.5 % in 2023, 6.1 % in 2024 and 6.3 % in 2025 (WB 2023a).

Cambodia is ranked 146th out of 191 countries included in the Human Development Report (HDR) published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) with a Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.593. In terms of social indicators and economic strength, the country has been in the (albeit lower half of the) group of countries with "medium human development" since 2015. In this group of countries, Cambodia also has had the highest HDI growth rates in the last 30 years, just ahead of Bangladesh (cf. UNDP 2022 for 2021/2022). Nevertheless, the country remains one of the poorest countries in Asia behind Equatorial Guinea (ranked 145), but ahead of Zimbabwe (147), Syria since the civil war (150), Pakistan (161) and Afghanistan (180).

[3] See statista 2023 under "Share of economic sectors in the gross domestic product (GDP) from 2012 to 2022". However, many members of families continue to do farm work as wage labourers in the catchment area of industrial zones, which could distort the statistics. In 2020, before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, there were around 800,000 people, mainly younger women, in the more than 500 companies in the textile industry alone (cf. Kosal 2019 and Khmer Times from 3 December 2021).

[4] See CIA 2023 for 2017 and Federal Statistical Office 2023 for 2022.

Cambodia officially has full employment. With an almost constant unemployment rate of less than 1.5 % in the last 20 years and only 0.3 % in 2023, or 0.13 % according to another source, there should even be talk of over-employment.[5] However, the actual under-employment of the working population, especially in rural areas and the informal sector in cities, is enormous in some cases (cf. CIA 2023; statista 2023). This situation has increased in part due to COVID-19, as many people who have been made redundant from industry and the service sector have tried to keep their heads above water with an informal business (street trading) or had to resort to casual jobs. However, many were called back to their old jobs in light of the positive economic development since the end of 2021. At the time of the study, however, many people were once again complaining about increasing economic problems.

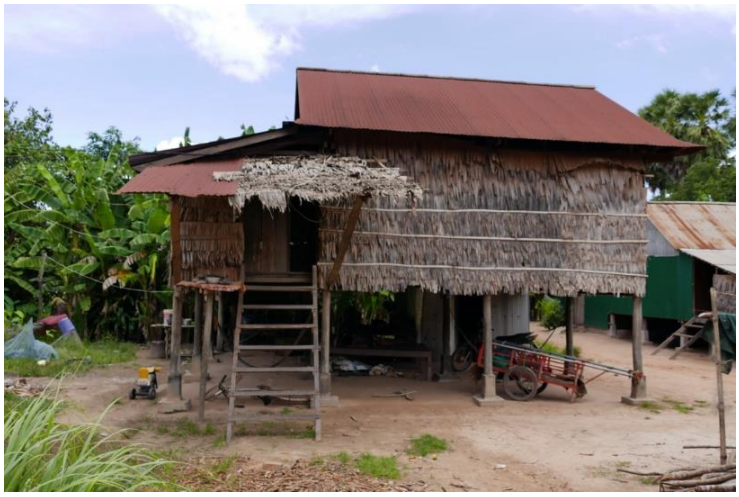


Fig. 3: Typical small house of a poorer family, built mainly from palm leaves; founded on stilts due to flooding during the rainy season.

The rapid economic development with high growth rates over 20 years and a considerable expansion of jobs in the manufacturing industry has drastically reduced poverty in general and extreme poverty in Cambodia in particular. Seasonal work for men in the construction sector, labour migration (especially to Thailand) and the expanding textile industry with considerable additional employment opportunities for women have increased the family income of broad sections of the population. In terms of figures, the poverty rate has more than halved during the period of the Millennium Development Goals and the first years of the SDG from 30–35 % to around 13.5 % in 2018–2019.

Extrapolated based on the last socio-economic survey for 2019/20 and taking into account the costs of *basic needs* and a *common basket approach*, the national poverty line currently stands at 10,951 Riel or US$ 2.7 p.c./p.d., taking into account the consequences of COVID-19. This means that the poverty rate has risen again to around 18 %. This figure is only 4.2 % in Phnom Penh, averages 12.6 % in other urban areas and is 22.8 % in rural areas, where almost three-quarters of people live (cf. KoC.NIS 2020; World Bank 2022b).

Using the Oxford Multidimensional Poverty Index, the poor population was estimated at 37.2 % in 2019 (= 6.131 million inhabitants [p.e.]), although this is extrapolated from figures up to 2015. An amount of 13.2 % of those lived in severe multidimensional poverty. A further 21.1 % of the population was also categorised as vulnerable to multidimensional poverty,

[5] Statistical figures for Cambodia can vary considerably depending on the source for the same year. It should also be noted that statistics are often extrapolated on the basis of older census data or separate hh surveys, whereby external shocks, such as the 2008–2009 financial crisis, years of drought or, now, the COVID-19 pandemic, can lead to distortions.

meaning that a total of 58.3 % of all people in Cambodia can be considered poor or, at least, at risk of poverty or vulnerable based on the criteria for multidimensional poverty (cf. Andersen 2019; OPHI 2020).[6]

Vulnerable in this context means that their income is a maximum of twice the income set for the international poverty line, including the monetary value of subsistence production. Even minor economic crises, the illness of a full-time earner or a drought in agriculture can plunge a hh back into deep poverty in the short term. Therefore, many people who manage to leave the poverty line behind find themselves back below it a short time later (cf. OECD 2017). The effects of COVID-19 also confirm this fundamental problem for the present (cf. EU 2021, UNICEF 2021).

Poverty in Cambodia is characterised by an extreme urban-rural divide. Around 90 % of the poor live in rural areas. Nevertheless, there are also considerable pockets of poverty in the cities (visible, for example, in the form of medium-sized and small slums, for example, along railway lines, swamps/lakes and riverbanks). Apart from income, poverty in rural areas manifests itself in a lack of social infrastructure compared to urban centres. Health services, for example, are often difficult to reach (poor roads and expensive transport) and offer a poorer service.

Determining the actual disposable income of hh in Cambodia is extremely difficult given the attempts by statisticians (e.g. the World Bank) to adjust to the actual purchasing power of the Riel or US$ in the country. The nominal GDP p.c. is estimated to be around US$ 1,488 (Tradingeconomics 2023) to around US$ 1,896 (cf. statista 2023). According to the World Bank's purchasing power parity (*ppp*) calculation method, however, the GDP was US$ 4,421 (cf. Knoema World Data Atlas 2022) or even around US$ 4,531 (Tradingeconomics 2023).[7]

Excursus: Labour migration and its consequences for children's school attendance

Income generation and **labour migration** are directly linked in Cambodia. Internal migration within the country ranks significantly higher than labour migration abroad, with the latter focusing primarily on Thailand. Many fathers and older sons work, at least, seasonally in the neighbouring country, especially in the provinces bordering Thailand, where wages are two to three times higher than in Cambodia. In some cases, entire families move to Thailand for a few months a year or couples leave their children with their grandparents (or other relatives as "*caregivers*") in the meantime. The importance of this segment of labour migration is so

[6] In Germany, for example, 14.7 % of people who earn 60 % or less of the average (median) income are at risk of poverty (cf. Federal Statistical Office, under "Income, consumption and living conditions" [2023]). It can be observed in Cambodia, similar to many other poorer countries, that poverty – statistically speaking – has decreased significantly in recent years (COVID-19 and the short-term consequences notwithstanding). However, it is also clear that a particularly large percentage of the population has an income that is only just above the poverty line. Even minor shocks can, therefore, throw a disproportionately large number of people back into poverty.

[7] Nominal GNI p.c. adjusted by the World Bank using a *ppp* formula, which is relatively complex and, in many cases, ignores the fact that poor population groups have to spend a high proportion of their expenditure on basic foodstuffs, such as rice, wheat, millet or maize, the costs of which are almost the same worldwide. Energy is also very expensive in Cambodia. This reduces the real purchasing power of the poor considerably in relation to the World Bank's average, *ppp-adjusted* estimate.

great regionally that financial service providers offer loans in Thai Bath, for example, in Banteay Meanchey, and accept savings deposits in Bath.

Internal migration, which is by far the most important in terms of income generation, leads, in many cases, to temporary or permanent double residences, at least, for parts of a family. Phnom Penh is particularly affected by this, where, according to ID Poor employees, tens of thousands of hh have their temporary residence in order to regularly return to their villages during the growing and harvesting season. The exact extent of this form of labour migration has not been clarified by the 2019 census. The fact that families in Cambodia react flexibly to labour opportunities has already become clear in previous INEF surveys. The surveys of almost 1,400 hh as part of the INEF microfinance study (cf. Bliss 2022) has shown that a relatively large number of families in their home village were "currently absent" or had "recently moved away".

This temporary absence, which can often last for years, has significant consequences for schoolchildren. An unknown proportion move with their parents and is, therefore, taken out of their home school – often at very short notice – without the children concerned attending school in Thailand during the family's stay. This would not be easy in view of the language alone. The problem is exacerbated by the uncertainty of how long the parents will actually have work. When the children return, they have great difficulty following lessons and may have to repeat classes.

A presumably larger proportion of families try to place their school-age children with relatives, usually grandparents, for the period of labour migration, so that they can continue to attend school. This solution seems to have very positive effects for the children, who are not only able to attend their familiar (Khmer-speaking) school without interruption, but also achieve the same school success as their classmates despite the absence of their parents. In this context, school meals play a particularly important role for encouraging the children to stay in the village (cf. Chapter 6.1).

2.2 Food Situation and Social Security

Previous INEF studies on Cambodia have already addressed the links between poverty, nutrition and health[8]: The relatively well-developed social security system in the country was also discussed in these studies. Without wishing to present this context in more detail in this analysis paper, an important point must be made with regarding the socio-economic context and against the backdrop of the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and a significant increase in debt among broad sections of the rural (and urban) population. There have, for example, been restrictions on the amount of food available in many hh and the quality of the food purchased (or to be purchased) in everyday life due to ongoing income losses or mandatory loan repayments[9], which in some cases significantly reduce the disposable hh income.

[8] See Bliss (2017), Hennecke / Schell / Bliss (2017), Hennecke / Bliss / Schell (2018), Hennecke / Bliss (2018), Bliss (2018), (2021) and (2022).

[9] One of the frequently cited measures in the event of loan repayment difficulties in Cambodian hh is the reduction in the quantity and quality of food to save on hh expenditure in favour of regular loan repayments (cf. AusAid 2021: 61; EU 2021: 35; UNICEF 2021: 55f, 71). There are two reasons for this: On the one hand, missing repayments is considered dishonourable in the national tradition and debtors come under social pressure (and massive pressure from financial institutions); on the other hand, debtors

This is important because the health situation in Cambodia has not improved in the last two decades to the same extent as the poverty figures in the country have fallen. Food insecurity, including undernourishment and malnutrition, continues to pose major challenges for the government, especially in rural areas. Less than the daily energy intake required is consumed by 14 % of hh and 11.6 % are affected by insufficient food diversity, which, in some cases, significantly exceeds the average in Southeast Asia (KoC / USDA 2022: 4).

Restricted growth is observed in children, and anaemia particularly in women. Even more than hunger (= lack of access to food), undernourishment and, above all, malnutrition are the cause. There is still a high morbidity rate, particularly among children under the age of five. The World Bank sees considerable deficits here in Cambodia compared to other members of the same group of countries (i.e. lower middle-income countries) (World Bank 2021). Malnutrition and undernourishment lead to mental and physical developmental delays at a later age, which, in turn, result in poor school performance and later limited ability and performance at work (cf. UNICEF 2017, 2022; USAID 2018). Despite a considerable investment in healthcare for the poor (cf. Bliss 2018 on the HEF), these consequences have been cemented to this day, particularly due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The relatively well-paced economic recovery and resumption of tourism since February 2022 have led to an increase in employment and, thus, to higher incomes again. However, it remains to be seen whether a further reduction in food quality will be the first priority for the hh affected, as Cambodia is, of course, also currently suffering from the increased prices for basic foodstuffs.[10]

In the context of the connection between poverty, nutrition and COVID-19 consequences, however, it should be noted that during the pandemic, a total of 678,459 or 19 % of all Cambodian hh received unconditional cash transfers (i.e. social assistance payments) from the state through the ID Poor programme since June 2020 and in terms of numbers as of October 2021. The recipients were the poor already identified under the national identification system ID Poor[11], as well as those elderly people and people with disabilities particularly affected, whereby digital payment channels were already widely used in Cambodia. For the period from June to December 2020 alone, US$ 300 million was earmarked for this purpose, with a further US$ 500 million earmarked for the period from June to November 2021. Over US$ 837 million had actually been disbursed by October 2022 (cf. Phnom Penh Post, 25 October 2022). According to the UNDP, this enabled the poverty rate to be reduced, which had risen sharply due to COVID-19, by 2.7 % in 2020 and by a further 3.4 % in 2021.[12]

Families classified as poor by ID Poor also receive state support as part of Cambodia's social security systems, regardless of the COVID-19 pandemic.[13] Regarding the health sector,

---

who fail to make repayments are blacklisted by credit institutions with the result that they will not be able to obtain new loans later. The consequences of hh savings often have to be borne by the children.

[10] Apart from a brief upward "slip" in 2020, which was quickly corrected, the price of rice has risen continuously in recent years (since August 2020) (cf. tradingeconomics 2023 under "commodity / rice"). The FAO states that the price in September 2023 was still almost 28 % above the level at the beginning of 2023 (FAO 2023 at: https://t1p.de/oyr15 [10/2023]).

[11] For details on ID Poor, the procedure, the coverage and the reception by the poor themselves, see Hennecke / Bliss (2018).

[12] See https://t1p.de/puuu9 [10/2023].

[13] For the structure of the system, see the NSPPF (KoC 2017), within which, in addition to the aforementioned social benefits, pension insurance is being successively expanded – as are school meals.

this includes free medical care, which otherwise must be paid for mainly by the hh themselves, as only individual occupational groups have benefited from health insurance to date (cf. Bliss 2018). In the school sector, there are scholarships for poor hh (although not all of them) and they receive special support in the event of natural disasters or other damaging events beyond their control. ID Poor hh can also benefit from special local, regional, and national programmes.

2.3 Gender and Development in Cambodia

> *"Social norms and beliefs that restrict what women can do and be, and give higher value and more power to men, are still pervasive."*[14]

National policy in Cambodia has continued to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women for at least the last ten years. Core elements of this are strengthening their economic role, good access to education, legal and health protection for women and girls, and their participation in decision-making in all areas of development (KoC / NIS 2018). Women's access to health services before and after birth is free of charge in state facilities. Poor women and their children benefit particularly from the free treatment provided under the ID Poor programme and the HEF at all levels of the healthcare system (cf. Bliss 2018).

Nevertheless, the situation of women and girls is ambivalent. Significant progress in the areas of education and health contrasts with the persistent multiple workloads of women, who are also structurally disadvantaged compared to men, including in terms of wages and unpaid family labour. Violence in the family is an issue that appears to be losing importance.

Employment and productive capital

Women are significantly less represented in the **labour force** in Cambodia, with 69.6 % of all women aged 15 and over in the economically active age group than men with 82.1 % (2022). However, this difference is somewhat relativised when compared with the average in the East Asia-Pacific region and very clearly when the figures are compared with the mean values in the same economic country group as well as in comparison with the global average, which is significantly lower at just under 50 %. This means that women in Cambodia have an above-average level of economic activity compared to most countries in the world, at least, in statistically recorded areas (cf. WB 2023c). In addition, many women who are not included in the economic statistics also perform (unpaid) labour within the family, even if they have no **productive capital of** their own – apart from perhaps a few chickens and ducks in rural areas. The total amount of time women spend on unpaid domestic labour in Cambodia is also not known in the Global SDG Indicators Database. Women are generally said to receive around 30 % less money for comparable work done by men (cf. WFP / USDA 2022).

[14] From UN Cambodia, Common Country Analysis (2015).

Fig. 4: Women in Cambodia perform a considerable amount of (unpaid) labour, especially in rural areas.

The absence of many family fathers, who work in Thailand mainly because of the higher wages there, makes this situation even more difficult. Here, the processing of cassava (manioc) in the field.

By contrast, the "World Bank Entrepreneurship Survey" for 2018 indicates that 24 % of the people who registered a **business** in Cambodia between 2016 and 2018 were women (according to WB 2023c). The almost non-existent **unemployment rate** in Cambodia, briefly mentioned in the previous chapter, applies to both men and women. Deviations can only be found after the second decimal place. However, **under-employment** affects women much more than men, who can also more easily switch to labour migration, at least temporarily, which is less a way out of unemployment than a desire for higher wages compared with Cambodia.

Cambodian women are, therefore, more economically active than average. However, a further limitation that puts the good statistical data into perspective is the fact that a large number of working women (and men) have to live in vulnerable, even **precarious employment relationships**. According to ILOSTAT, 53 % of all women and 41.5 % of men were affected in 2021. Regarding this sector, the figures are slightly worse than the average for East Asia-Pacific countries, but significantly better than the average for all countries with a lower middle income (cited in WB 2023c).

The HDR assigns Cambodia to group 3 (out of 5) in the Gender Development Index.[15] The GNI per capita (at *ppp*) can, at least, give an idea of the existing income differences, which are, of course, also due to the fact that women often occupy jobs that require fewer qualifications as well as "typical female" and poorly paid jobs (e.g. sewing work in the textile industry). This resulted in a GNI p.c./p.a. of US$ 4,706 for men and US$ 3,464 for women in 2021 (UNDP 2022).

The **migration** of many men means that women have to manage without their husbands, which not only makes raising children more difficult, but also drastically increases the general workload in order to generate a minimum income for the family – which generally continues to live off agriculture in rural areas – and to ensure the food security of the manless hh (cf. USAID 2018). Nevertheless, the migration of just one parent has the advantage for the children that they can stay at home and are not taken out of school.

[15] According to the HDR: Group 3 comprises countries with medium equality in HDI achievements between women and men (absolute deviation of 5–7.5 percent).

Similar to most countries, women tend to have less access to productive capital than men. The situation is different when it comes to **privately used valuables and possessions**. Home ownership is probably the most important for men and women in Cambodia. Only 38.5 % of all women in 2014 had no ownership interest in a house, compared to 48.6 % of all men. At 7.8 %, the proportion of women who are the sole owner of a house is even more than twice as high as that of men (3.7 %), whereas 37.1 % of men and 43.3 % of women owned their home jointly (cf. Demographic and Health Survey, cited in WB 2023c).

Education and social affairs

Regarding the area of **basic education,** there are virtually no differences in access to schools between boys and girls in Cambodia. The United States Agency for International Development also confirms an almost complete school enrolment rate (97 %) for the country in 2020 with a gender parity of 0.98 (cf. USAID 2023). While almost all children attend primary school, only 33.57 % were able to attend kindergarten, mostly affiliated with schools, in 2021 (cf. The Global Economy 2023). In the latter year, 90.68 % of all children who were enrolled in school completed primary school (year 6). The percentage was slightly higher in our sample of 28 schools in 2022/2023 – against the background of school meals – with roughly the same success rate for girls and boys.

The **completion rate at lower secondary level** (grades 7–9) is significantly higher for girls (63 %) than for boys (only 52.5 %). However, both are well below the East Asia-Pacific average of around 90 %, although here too, the rate for boys is slightly lower than for girls (cf. WB 2023c). The ratio of girls to boys in **secondary education** as a whole was 1.15 in 2021 (after just 0.60 in 2002 [cf. The Global Economy 2023]). With a ratio of 1.03 in 2021, there is also almost gender parity in **tertiary education**.[16]

The **literacy rate** for people over the age of 15 is almost 10 % higher for boys and men at 88.4 % (2021) than for girls and women at 79.8 %. While these figures are significantly lower than in the East Asia-Pacific region, they are substantially higher than the average for countries with a "low middle income" according to the UNDP (84.5 % for boys/men and only 72.9 % for girls and women [cf. WB 2023c]).

The **maternal mortality rate** in Cambodia has fallen significantly from 606 per 100,000 to 218 in 2020, but the figure is still higher than the average for East Asian countries. By contrast, the **fertility rate** for girls and young women aged 15 to 19 has not changed since 2000 at 45 per 1,000 births, while it has fallen to roughly the same level in other lower middle-income countries, but from around 75/1,000 births (cf. WHO 2023 cited in WB 2023c).

Social and political participation

With regard to **social participation**, the 2014 Cambodian Demographic and Health Survey found that 93.5 % of decisions regarding hh purchases were made by women together (with their husbands) or alone. Decisions on women's health issues were also made jointly or alone by 91.5 % of women, and 96.4 % of women on family and friend visits (cited in WB 2023c). An older study confirms the dominance of women in decisions about grocery shopping, buying clothes and even buying furniture, while men make significantly more decisions alone when opening a business and buying motorbikes (mopeds). However, the spouses make joint

[16] Cf. Statista 2023 under the page: Female to male ratio in tertiary education in Cambodia 2008–2021.

decisions about schooling, buying a house and opening a business in the vast majority of families (Sokhan 2015: 44f).

The **political participation and representation** of women in Cambodia is similar to or slightly above the average for countries with a comparable socio-economic status: in 2022, 20.8 % of seats in the national parliament were held by women. There has been little change here since 2010. In 2019, 29 % of senior and middle management positions were held by women, which is also above the average for the group of countries in question (Inter-Parliamentary Union, cited in WB 2023c). Among state administrative employees, 41 % are female, 26 % of whom work in positions with decision-making authority. The figure is 36 % in the public and private sectors combined (cf. Khmer Times 2022)

Women are generally strongly represented in the areas of health and education (here, however, mainly in primary and lower secondary education).

Domestic violence

What is unpleasant for society, but also explicitly for the representatives of the political system, is the persistently high rate of violence in families, especially where women and girls are the main victims. "Only" 6.1 % of women between the ages of 15 and 49 reported experiencing sexual violence in 2014, and 19 % of this age group reported general violence by their spouse (Demographic and Health Surveys, cited in WB 2023c). A report by the National Institute of Statistics (2018) puts the extent of domestic violence considerably into perspective, as "the percentage of families having domestic violence has fallen from year to year, and has fallen by almost half between 2010 and 2016 from 1 percent to 0.6 percent" (p. 50). However, it is also noted that the previously tolerated violence (on the part of the man) in the family is declining in society (ibid. p. 52.).

However, more recent reports also show that domestic violence continues to be concealed for fear of stigmatisation, discrimination (of the victims) or fear of the police, and is, therefore, not fully reflected in the statistics (cf. US Embassy 2022: 23f.). In addition, the situation has obviously been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic (cf. UNODC 2022). Alcohol consumption among men (not least among the Indigenous groups in the north-east of the country) generally plays a significant role when it comes to domestic violence (cf. Sokhan 2015). Unfortunately, in all cases of domestic violence, this also includes children, who may not be directly affected.

Child prostitution and child trafficking in particular also appear to have declined – albeit from an alarmingly high level in the 1990s to the 2000s. By contrast, the US Embassy in Phnom Penh states in this year's assessment that the government does not even sufficiently fulfil the minimum standards against human trafficking ("[…] does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and is not making significant efforts to do so […]") (2023). The report concedes that the government is implementing the 2008 law on the suppression of human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation and also working with NGOs to provide victim support.[17]

[17] The government has also recently tackled improvements in youth welfare, to a certain extent (cf. GoC 2023).

Minorities and disadvantaged groups

Ethnic minorities categorised as Indigenous People live primarily in the north-east of the country in the two provinces of Ratanakiri and Mondulkiri (cf. IWGIA 2022). The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights assumes that there were 24 recognised ethnic groups, comprising 220,000 individuals in 2019, making up 1.4 % of the population of Cambodia (OHCHR 2019). The Indigenous People, who are considered the original inhabitants of the areas they still inhabit today, are often disadvantaged, for example, because the children struggle to gain a foothold in school education for language reasons, and the groups that rely heavily on forests and forest utilisation for their economic livelihood are increasingly restricted due to "economic land concessions" and the resulting loss of habitat. The allocation of communal land titles can slow down these losses, but not compensate for them (cf. Hennecke / Schell / Bliss 2017). School meals could make an especially important contribution to increasing school attendance rates for the Indigenous groups, the majority of whom are poor, and supporting children in their school performance.

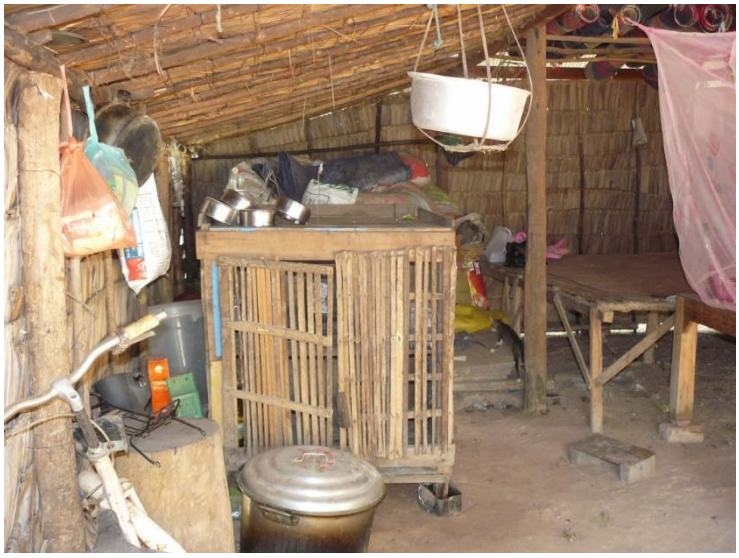


Fig. 5: All the possessions of a poor Indigenous family in this single living space of the house made of wickerwork.

The people in the village are predominantly poor to extremely poor. In addition, the infrastructure in their residential areas is significantly worse than the national average, there are fewer well-paid jobs, and the Indigenous People's land ownership and utilisation rights are repeatedly disregarded.

3. School Meals in Cambodia: The Basics

3.1 School Meals as Social Assistance

Even though Cambodia tends to receive negative marks internationally in terms of *governance* (cf. BTI 2022), the social protection system, with its two components of *social assistance* and *social security*, has developed relatively positively in the last decade. The NSPPF from 2017, which covers the ten-year period between 2016 and 2025, explicitly mentions school meals – for the first time on a statutory basis – as an instrument of *social assistance* (cf. KoC 2017).

Contributions to SF, at that time, still predominantly implemented and financed by external donors, primarily the WFP, gained considerable importance for the national political agenda as a result. All relevant government agencies have been requested or even obliged by the NSPPF to support the implementation of SF in their respective areas of responsibility. The aforementioned ID Poor Identification System was able to make an important contribution, as it was now also able to define the priority zones for SF on the basis of empirical data concerning the accumulation of poverty in individual districts of the country (cf. Hennecke / Bliss 2018).

During the INEF study, interviewees pointed out that in the debate of recent years, as well as in the current medium-term budget planning, the SF is naturally in competition with other social programmes with a limited budget and has to prove its necessity on an ongoing basis. As an important component of food security, the SF is, at least, conceptually backed up by other national programmes to improve food security. The NSPPF, for example, is supported by the "National School Health Policy" of 2019, which, ironically, also looks at a problem that will have to be addressed later, namely, the sale of nutritionally questionable snacks in schools (cf. chapter 6.2). Cambodia's Roadmap for Food Systems for Sustainable Development also lists HGSF among the priorities to be implemented by 2020 (KoC 2021: 2). The "National Action Plan for the Zero Hunger Challenge in Cambodia" from 2016 does not yet recognise the term "*home-grown*" for school meals, but calls for the expansion of the existing SF, which, at the time, was still explicitly a request directed at "development partners" (KoC 2016: 5).

The school administration, represented by the MoE and its structures in the provinces and districts, created, between 2017 and 2023, the necessary framework conditions for the increasingly independent implementation of school meals in cooperation with the other government institutions on three levels. It simultaneously received massive (technical and financial) support from the WFP.

The ongoing measures include the training of stakeholders within the organisation and its agencies. Firstly, ranging from appointed co-ordinators, who specifically supervise the school meal provision in the ministry and the responsible unit in the important National Social Protection Council, down to the (governmental) stakeholders within the rural communities (*communes*). For details, see Chapter 3.3. Secondly, these stakeholders further include the co-ordinators for SF in provincial and district departments of education, as well as so-called school cluster officers, who are responsible for schools in several *communes*, primarily perform advisory tasks and, for example, provide assistance in the acquisition of funding. Finally, there are the employees of the local administrations, among whom, in addition to the officials responsible for women's and youth affairs, an astonishing number of "commune leaders" (Khmer: *mekhum*) claimed to have participated in the training and further education about SF themselves.

Two groups that obviously play one of the most important roles in SF and were, therefore, very specifically included in the training programmes are the headteachers and the suppliers of the food to be procured locally. The headteachers emerged in the corresponding INEF research as particularly important actors, whose knowledge and, above all, commitment was crucial for the functioning of the SF at the individual schools and especially the programme's sustainability.

3.2 School Catering – Central Versus Local Procurement

There are very different models for procuring food for school meals around the world, even in the same country. Donations of staple foods, especially wheat (flour), maize, rice, and beans, as well as vegetable oil, milk powder, sometimes sugar, pasteurised cheese and very often tinned fish, dominated in many poorer countries between the 1980s and 2000s. It was not uncommon for these donations to be surpluses from the donor countries' own production, for example, from the EU in order to reduce the "milk lake" or the USA's soya oil and wheat. Many cases are known in which these products were virtually imposed on the countries, neglecting the differentiating national food framework.

The WFP currently receives the majority of cash grants for the SF, but must also continue to accept donations. This results in the existence of "hybrid systems". Here, the programme's food is partially imported as a donation and then distributed to the schools in combination with locally procured products. Additionally, the definition of the term "local" varies between countries and programmes. Field studies in Ethiopia and Benin, also carried out by the INEF team, have shown that "local" is primarily understood as non-imported food. The tenders, therefore, explicitly refer to products that are (or could be) produced in the country itself. Only cooking oil, which is included in all SF packages, is imported from abroad because national production is too low or the quality is not accepted by the WFP.

The term *home-grown* is interpreted very narrowly in Cambodia, in contrast to the SFs in Benin and Ethiopia, , i.e. it does not refer to the regional area (e.g. the province) and not even to the narrower administrative area, such as the district, but is understood – and the community leaders involved attach great importance to this – primarily (70 %) to the *commune*, i.e. the rural community in which the school itself is located. This decision, which is supported by national policy, has certain disadvantages as the prices for "local" services can be more expensive than a nationwide bid. Additionally, not every region always produces exactly what is best suited for the school menu. There are regions, for example, where fish cannot be farmed due to limited water supplies, at least, not at a competitive cost. However, as fish is one of the standard meals for schools, it has to be bought at the nearest market, where it is delivered from other districts or even provinces. Exclusively local produce is, therefore, not always obtainable, even in tropical Cambodia, due to ecological and geographical conditions (cf. KoC 2020 and ADB 2021). The 70 % is not yet adhered to everywhere in practice.

In reality, the question of exclusively local procurement has not yet arisen, as the government has only been able to manage a portion of the roughly 1,100 schools with HGSF programmes by itself, while financing food procurement. Therefore, the WFP continues to supply roughly the same number of schools with, at least, basic cooking supplies – and has to rely on donations of natural produce (cooking oil, rice, salt) from the USA. However, if the state continues to take over at least 100 schools per year from the WFP, the proportion of truly local or, at the minimum, regional products will steadily increase.

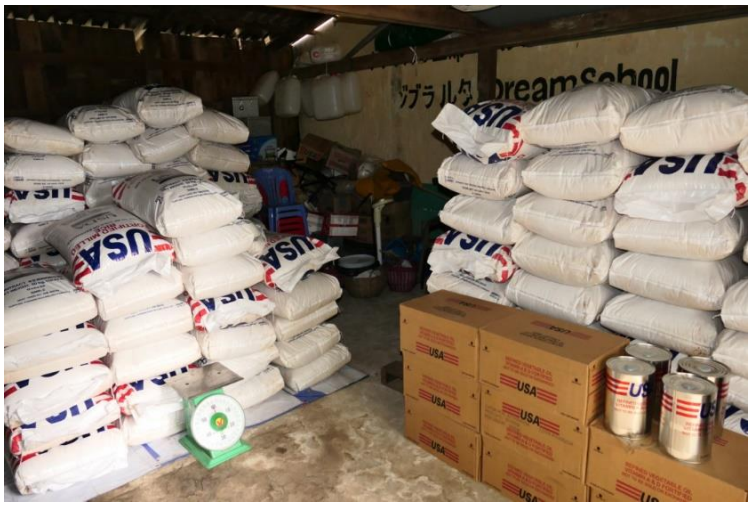


Fig. 6: Bags of rice and cans of cooking oil from the USA, which were delivered "in kind", are stored in a school supported by the WFP with funds from the USDA.

3.3 The Institutional Framework of School Meals[18]

3.3.1 General Introduction

As was shown in Chapter 3.1, the importance of school meals and the government's obligation to provide children with free meals, at least, in public preschools and primary schools, is undisputed today. The main focus currently is on increasing the funds available in the annual state budget in order to slowly reduce donor contributions to financing and, if necessary, to further raise the quality level of SF.

The implementation of SF is not yet fully the responsibility of the state. This responsibility currently extends to 453 schools altogether, including the full local food procurement. The responsibility for implementation here, including financing, lies with the state structures, i.e. largely under the MoE at the levels of the provinces, districts and *communes*, which, in turn, report to the Ministry of the Interior. All other schools continue to be supervised by the WFP, which also uses the support of NGOs in some regions.

If the school meals organised by the state are described as having been completely converted to local procurement, this applies primarily to foodstuff financed by the state, for example, rice, vegetables, fish, meat, eggs, cooking oil and salt. The so-called "ingredients", i.e. spices, onions, garlic, fish sauce, are provided by the population or the pupils' parents, usually through small monthly financial contributions. The products are almost always sourced from the immediate vicinity of the schools.

The SF schools which continue to be financed with donor funds by the WFP receive food from local procurement. This applies to vegetables, fish, meat and eggs, as well as rice and cooking oil from donor donations in kind, which the WFP then passes on to the schools. The WFP pays the schools fixed amounts per pupil to pay for the locally procured food.

[18] As has already been mentioned in the introduction, the summarised presentation in this chapter is largely based on the two current WFP evaluation reports on the two donor-financed partial contributions to the HGSF by Korea and the USA (cf. WFP 2023a, WFP/USDA 2022).

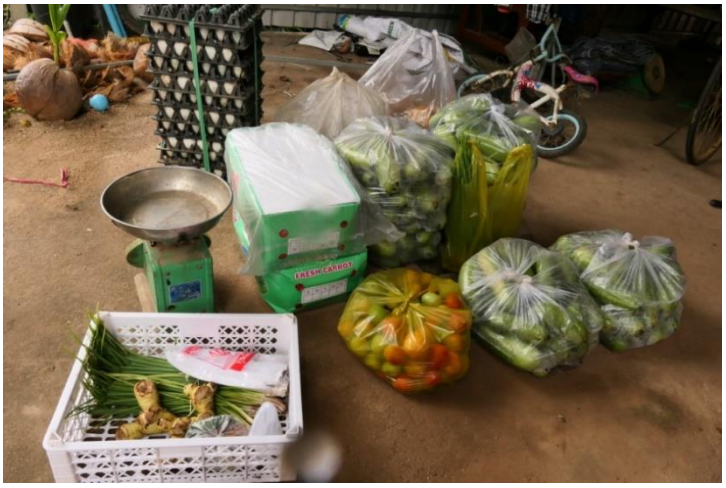


Fig. 7: Vegetables purchased from local producers are collected centrally by a trader (supplier) and then delivered daily to one or more schools together with the fish, meat or eggs required.

Locally produced food is procured via tenders, which primarily allow the participation of local traders. They should ideally stem from the respective *communes* themselves, especially regarding the vegetable vendors.

The organisation of SF is complex. It is centred around the close collaboration between representatives of the *communes*, the school headteachers and representatives of the school administration, and integrates the participation of the parents, the children themselves and other stakeholder groups (cf. the sections in Chapter 4 for details). In addition to providing material support, the WFP has been involved in the existing system for many years, primarily through technical support, and is pursuing the goal of handing over the entire SFP to the state in the medium term.

3.3.2 The Basic Education System in Cambodia

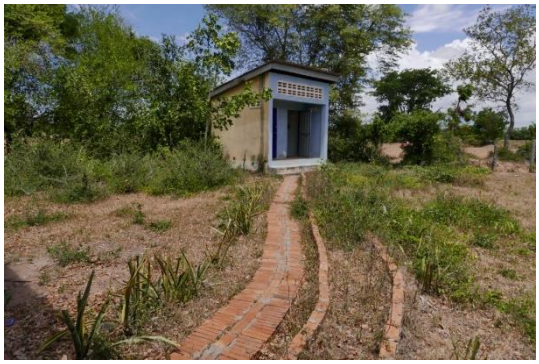
A summary overview of Cambodia's preschool and primary school system is necessary to understand the SF. This system has developed very positively in the last two decades and the country is well on its way to achieving the relevant SDGs (cf. UNICEF 2023). The school enrolment rate had already reached 97.9 % by the 2014–2015 school year. The school enrolment rate in the penultimate school year 2021/2022 in the more rural provinces of Kampong Chhnang and Kampong Thom, and in Pursat, was 94.4 %, 96.8 % and 99.3 %, respectively, with the girls' rate exceeding that of boys at 95.6 %, 100 % and > 100 %, respectively. The 6th grade completion rate for girls is also higher than that for boys everywhere. In addition, the girls' rate of grade repetition is only 35.8 % of all "dropouts" (cf. WFP 2023a, Tab. 2).

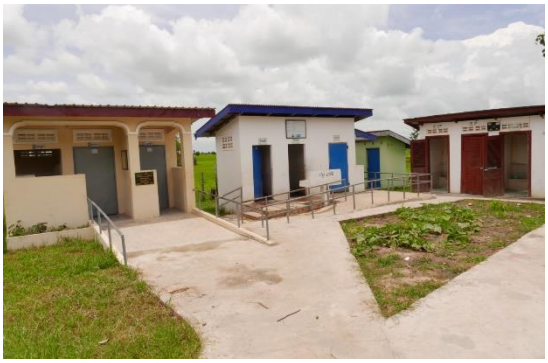
The headteachers, teachers and representatives of the SSCs everywhere told us that one of their main tasks was to persuade all families in the school district to enrol their children in school. To this end, they would personally visit the parents of children who are not enrolled in school – often together with the *village chief*, who enjoys considerable authority, and other respected individuals. However, there is a very practical reason why full school enrolment can hardly be achieved at present. Children with disabilities are currently still inadequately supported regarding accessibility when attending school. Even the infrastructure for physically disabled children, often established via NGOs, for example, is not yet sufficient in many schools. Even if there are ramps to classrooms or latrines (which is by no means the rule), children with limited mobility are sometimes unable to reach school at all during the

rainy season and unable to use any barrier-free access to classes or toilets on the school grounds.

Fig. 8 (*left*): In this school, the SSC attempted to make the path from the classroom blocks to a latrine accessible for the rainy season. This solution is inadequate for children in wheelchairs, especially as there are two steps to climb at the end.

Fig. 9 (*right*): The only truly barrier-free school with latrines that are easily accessible for children with restricted mobility, even during the rainy season.





Despite the good enrolment rate in Cambodia, the often inadequate level of teaching and learning as well as the number of school dropouts are criticised. Despite overcrowded classrooms, the research identifies two main reasons. Firstly, these are due to outdated teaching methods and, secondly, in the case of many dropouts, the parental migration and the necessity for children of poorer hh to help with the work. This is, in some cases, due to the over-indebtedness of families[19], but derives mainly from extreme poverty. A factor that leads to a child being taken out of school instead of repeating a grade, especially if they fail to achieve a grade goal (no promotion!). Our surveys show the extremely important role of school meals here in reducing and even completely preventing the school dropout rate.

3.3.3 Conceptual Basis for Local Procurement Regarding School Meals

A *prakas*[20] was issued in March 2023 to anchor SF with national/local procurement in Cambodia for the concrete implementation of this SF approach with the aim of a firmly institutional establishment. The decree concretises the goal of SF itself, which was still kept general in the NSPPF, and which now lies primarily in improving the food security of vulnerable schoolchildren and their hh. The aim is to promote children's school education particularly in communities with a high level of food insecurity. These goals are to be achieved through the provision of safe (i.e. uninterrupted) and nutritious school meals, which, in turn, should promote healthy eating habits and hygiene awareness. At the same time – and this is where local procurement explicitly comes into play – the aim is to promote agricultural development and local economic growth. The aim is ultimately also to establish long-term ownership (among the participating and responsible stakeholders), partnership-based

[19] In cases of over-indebtedness and pressure to repay loans, labour migration is seen as a solution, as is the need to have children work (cf. Bliss 2022).

[20] Roughly "government decree" signed by the Prime Minister, referred to as a "sub-decree" in the English translation (cf. KoC 2023).

cooperation and cross-sector co-ordination in order to ensure the sustainability of school meals.

The MoE, Youth and Sport has the central responsibility for the SFP. The creation of the legal framework, the provision of training measures for all those involved and the management of information, therefore, falls into the domain of the MoE. An *operation manual* is also to be drawn up for the actual implementation. A draft of this manual (in Khmer) is already available, referring specifically to the broadest possible participation of all stakeholders within the school community. The school management of the participating school is made responsible for this, as for most other things on site, which, as became clear in the INEF study, represents a considerable challenge and workload and, thus, requires considerable commitment. An important section of the handbook concerns the training of staff for the future food storekeepers, which emphasises the position of responsibility that the trainees will later assume within the SF (cf. chapter 4.5).

The *prakas* refers to further responsibilities in the basic sections that go far beyond those of the MoE. The following are involved:

- the Ministry of Economy and Finance regarding the annual budget, the Ministry of the Interior primarily concerning the creation of the necessary procedural regulations for stakeholders below the national level;
- the Ministry of Health, which is required to provide training and further education on food, hygiene and child nutrition, and monitor the corresponding implementation of hygiene measures in schools;
- the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MoA), which, among other things, should (and already does) set the price framework for food tenders and procurement and ensure that farms can grow and supply healthy food, as well as educate about healthy food and nutrition;
- the Ministry of Planning, by providing data on food insecure areas of Cambodia and poverty figures and by participating in monitoring and evaluation;
- the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation, whose tasks include supporting the living conditions of hh identified as extremely poor by ID Poor; and
- the Ministry of Women's Affairs, which aims to educate the population about the importance of good nutrition for women and children, and support women farmers in the production of vegetables for the SFP.
- In addition to the ministries, the municipal and district administrations are also explicitly addressed. It is their task to pass on feedback from the schools to the government and, above all, to help mobilise financial resources and contributions in kind for the benefit of SF. The municipal administration is also responsible for educating the population about school meals, which is already being done intensively in practice.

Among the documents to be prepared by the MoE, the study team also obtained a paper on minimum standards for a good SF, laid out by the WFP, which outlines the organisational structure within the schools. It emphasises the social commitment to SF very prominently. The involvement of the private sector is also emphasised (both primarily in order to mobilise additional resources to improve the food on offer, the energy and water supply and the kitchen utensils). The infrastructure desired, aspects of food safety, hygiene, and other aspects are also mentioned. Once again, it should be pointed out that schools should not allow

unhealthy food to be sold privately on school premises; we found snack stands and even boutiques selling more than just "healthy" food in almost all schools.

3.4 Basic Data on the Status of School Meals

Locally sourced school meals began as part of the WFP's support for Cambodia in the 2016/2017 school year and, in some cases, even earlier. At that time, over 1,220 schools with a roughly estimated total of 300,000 preschool and primary school pupils received a free hot meal daily at the start of the school day. Of these schools, 84 were initially selected for procurement by May 2017 and the necessary conditions were created by the administrations of the *communes* involved and in the schools themselves. In the same year, the government decided to make local procurement the rule throughout the country, so that many more schools could be included in the programme in the following years.[21]

Fig. 10: One of two class blocks from the smaller schools in the sample, ideally equipped with water points for washing hands, even though there is still no mains connection for the water, which has to be carried in buckets from the pump to the containers.

Regarding the 2022–2023 school year, the WFP lists 1,114 schools in Cambodia that procure food mainly locally as part of government SFs. At the time of this study (August 2023), 534 schools in 10 provinces of Cambodia were fully included in the exclusively local procurement approach. With the exception of just under 100 donor-funded SF schools, this exclusively local procurement has, so far, only taken place in the SF schools funded by the government and implemented by the state structures. A so-called "hybrid" approach is currently still being implemented for the other approx. 580 schools, in which national (also based in part on donated food imports) and local procurement are combined. The cost of school meals without the ingredients financed by parental contributions and donations is US$ 0.20 (= 780 Riel) in the HGSF system and US$ 0.12 (= 495 Riel) in the hybrid approach. In the latter case, the value of the basic products rice and cooking oil provided by the USDA as donations would also have to be added, so that the costs for both systems would be roughly the same. However, the aim here is to gradually switch to local food procurement as well. At the end of the 2022–2023 school year, around 135 of the 1,114 schools are to be released from WFP management and donor funding and placed under state responsibility. In subsequent years, at least 100 more schools per year are to be handed over this way, leading eventually to all schools being switched to exclusive local procurement.

[21] In March 2020, however, all schools across the country had to be closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and were only able to reopen in January 2022. This led to a slower increase in conversions than planned.

In detail, the current form of the SF, the financing and the responsibility for implementation are as follows (Table 1):

Tab. 1: Types and financing of school feeding.

Serial No.	Province	Type of SF	Financing	Implementation
7-60	Kampong Chhnang	100 % HGSF	Government	Government
61-122	Kampong Thom	100 % HGSF	Government	Government
123-153	Kampong Chhnang	HG+Hybrid	USDA / KOICA	WFP
154-193	Kampong Thom	HG+Hybrid	USDA / KOICA	WFP
194-205	Siem Reap	HG+Hybrid	USDA / L	WFP
206-230	Oddar Meanchey	HG+Hybrid	Other encoders	WFP
231-258	Siem Reap	HG+Hybrid	USDA / L	WFP
259-270	Kampong Chhnang	HG+Hybrid	USDA / L	WFP
271-289	Kampong Chhnang	100 % HGSF	KOICA	WFP
290-308	Oddar Meanchey	100 % HGSF	Other encoders	WFP
309-329	Kampong Thom	HG+Hybrid	USDA+LRP	WFP
330-350	Kampong Thom	100 % HGSF	Government	Government
351-374	Siem Reap	HG+Hybrid	USDA+LRP	WFP
375-401	Siem Reap	HG+Hybrid	USDA+LRP	Government
402-505	Siem Reap	HG+Hybrid	USDA+Others	WFP
506-531	Siem Reap	HG+Hybrid	USDA+KOICA	WFP
532-606	Kampong Thom	HG+Hybrid	USDA+KOICA	WFP
607-628	Oddar Meanchey	HG+Hybrid	Other encoders	WFP
629-655	Siem Reap	HG+Hybrid	USDA+Others	WFP
656-676	Siem Reap	HG+Hybrid	USDA+Others	WFP
677-714	Oddar Meanchey	HG+Hybrid	Other encoders	WFP
715-755	Pursat	100 % HGSF	KOICA	WFP
756-597	Pursat	HG+Hybrid	KOICA+Others	WFP
798-830	Pursat	100 % HGSF	KOICA	WFP
831-861	Siem Reap	100 % HGSF	Government	Government
862-899	Preah Vihear	100 % HGSF	Government	Government
900-933	Battambang	100 % HGSF	Government	Government
934-953	Stung Treng	100 % HGSF	Government	Government
954-1002	Banteay Meanchey	100 % HGSF	Government	Government
1003-1035	Kampong Cham	100 % HGSF	Government	Government
1036-1066	Kampong Chhnang	100 % HGSF	Government	Government
1067-1074	Pursat	100 % HGSF	Government	Government
1075-1120	Siem Reap	100% HGSF	Government	Government

Note: Highlighted in grey: Handover to the government was planned for the 2022/2023 school year.

4. Locally Sourced School Meals in Cambodia: The Practice

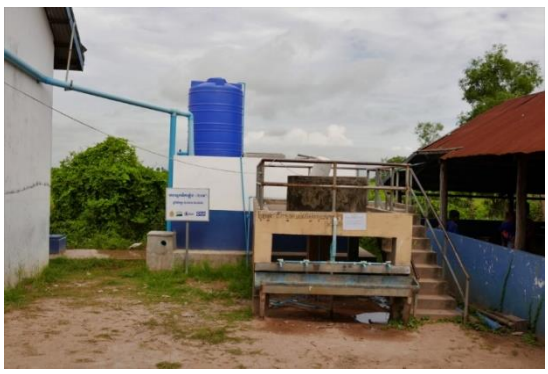
4.1 The Schools Visited: Facilities, Pupil Numbers and Special Characteristics

The schools visited differ significantly in terms of the number of pupils, classroom facilities and number of teachers. Some schools are small, but have enough rooms and manage with one occupancy per day. Others, but not only the large ones, have to divide the classes into mornings and afternoons because there are not enough rooms or teachers available. Most classes are taught in the morning if possible, but some are also taught in the afternoon. As a general rule, the preschool classes (children between the ages of four and six) and the first and second years of school should always be taught in the mornings and, therefore, receive 100 % of their daily meals, as this is the only time that SF takes place. All other classes will be considered as fairly as possible in the timetable so that they can take part in the SF at least every second week. However, as there are usually fewer classes in the afternoons than in the mornings, the children receive their meals much more often than every other week, for example, they only have to miss out once a month for a week.

The 28 selected preschools and primary schools have a total of 9,651 pupils. A total of 794 boys and 824 girls attend the preschools. There are 4,173 boys (51.85 %) and 3,875 girls (48.15 %) in the primary schools. However, there are 546 boys (48.1 %) and 589 girls (51.9 %) in Year 6. The smallest school has 60 pupils (but no preschool), the largest 778, including 83 preschool pupils (cf. Appendix 2).

Fig. 11 (*left*): A combined system consisting of an old rainwater collection reservoir, a private well with an electric pump and, in this case, a system with four taps for washing hands and dishes.

Fig. 12 (*right*): At this school, water still has to be carried in buckets to the fixtures with a small reservoir for handwashing.



Eleven schools have a **water connection** (public network), 24 have their own (often poor) well-based water supply (in some cases, in addition to the network connection), albeit with electric pumps, two schools only have hand pumps and the situation remains unclear for two schools (cf. Appendix 1). Even schools with a main connection often have predecessor systems, for example, hand pump wells, which were usually later equipped with an electric pump and supply the pressure for "running" water via internal school pipes with the help of a small water tower. In this way, the latrines or stations with taps for washing hands can also be supplied with water. Where this is lacking, small containers have to be filled by hand, for example, to enable the children to wash their hands. Some schools still have rainwater

collection systems in operation, where the water is channelled from the roofs into a reservoir. All schools that cannot use water from the mains must filter the water for drinking purposes, for which special equipment was provided previously by a third project. Replacing the filter elements remains a problem in some cases.

All schools are now connected to a **public electricity grid**. This represents great progress compared to previous years, when solar systems (seven schools, all operational) were already a luxury. However, electricity is expensive in Cambodia and places a considerable burden on the school budget. Electricity cannot, therefore, be used for cooking purposes.

The idea that schools should have **their own school gardens**, at least, for teaching purposes in a rural society, is generally only implemented to a lesser extent. It is true that 18 of the 28 schools have such a garden, which was established years ago mainly as part of I-NRO projects. However, the idea of closely linking the school gardens with the school meals and growing some of the vegetables required themselves has not yet been realised, or, at most, in only two or three schools. The largest garden is around 600 m² in size and could – compared to the vegetable cultivation of numerous small-scale producers, mainly women – make a substantial contribution to meeting demand, but even here, vegetables are only grown on a small scale. However, they are sold in order to raise money for the purchase of ingredients for the kitchen, as vegetables are delivered anyway.

Fig. 13 (*left*): One of the best maintained school gardens, which can supplement the food supplied for a few days or, if the produce is sold (e.g. to the suppliers themselves!), bring in small amounts of money to buy spices or fruit.

Fig. 14 (*right*): A teacher helps with watering the garden.

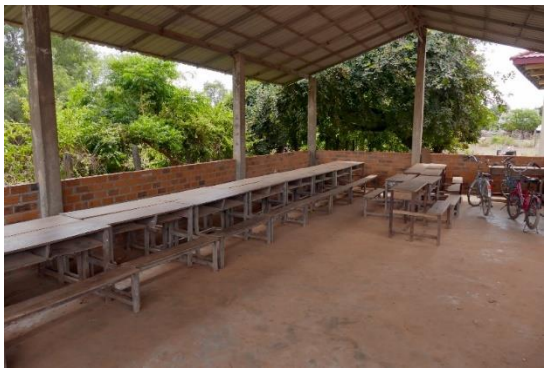
Most of the other school gardens are small, under 300 m² (down to less than 50 m²) in 14 schools, and, if they were used intensively, could at best familiarise the children and their parents with certain nutritious plants that could also be grown in the small gardens that almost always exist at home. The main problem with using the gardens is that, on the one hand, all the work (apart from one "tidy-up day" a month) has to take place outside of school lessons and, therefore, places a heavy burden particularly on the teachers. In addition, there is hardly anyone among them who has any experience of (organic) gardening. Only one teacher referred to specialised knowledge that he had taught himself – on the basis of a colonial French manual. After all, many schools have the necessary infrastructure for the gardens, i.e. a water connection and almost always also reserve areas, so that with a new focus on home production, at least the two most important means of production would be available. Compost could also be produced with the biomass available.

Firewood is still the most important source of energy for the school kitchens, therefore, **planting** a small **area of trees** specifically for the production of firewood would, at least, make a small contribution to saving costs for its purchase or relieving the burden on parents. Only four schools (all in Kampong Thom) have established such a plantation. Surely, a dozen more schools could plant trees at the boundaries of their grounds, given the space available. In some areas, this would even help to drain the plots, which could reduce the problem of months of waterlogging.

The **canteen for serving meals** must be observed very closely in the context of the SSC. From the perspective of most of the headteachers, teachers and parents (including the SSC) surveyed, this is probably the most important need for action. Ten schools have no canteen at all, another has to use the designated hangar for teaching purposes and a third has set up a kind of bazaar in part of the very large hall for the sale of snacks, exercise books and pens, and, unfortunately, also the cheapest plastic goods (cf. Fig. 15).

Fig. 15 (*left*): Part of a very spacious hall used for sales, which is, therefore, not available for school meals.

Fig. 16 (*right*): A sufficiently large hall in another school, but there are not enough tables and chairs to cater for all the children here.



Accordingly, the children in 12 schools either eat in the classrooms, which is a problem for the very young children as they are not used to eating at tables and are, therefore, given mats where they can eat on the floor, or they have to look for a suitable place. This can be a bench, the stairs to the classrooms, a small wall or even a piece of grass or the bare floor. The classrooms, which are perhaps the best solution in the absence of a canteen, remain a hygiene problem according to some headteachers. with process of small children eating is not possible without something falling on the table or floor and it is impossible to clean everything in a few minutes and then continue the lesson.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the **snack stands** that are available at 21 of the 28 schools on the school grounds themselves. The stalls offer a wide range of snacks from the almost always female operators' own kitchens. The nutritional value, the usefulness, as well as the ecological soundness are more or less absurd (especially because of individual packaging of even the smallest items). In a few cases, these are supplemented by the aforementioned school supplies as well as Chinese goods, ranging from plastic toys to stickers, buttons, hair clips, bracelets and Pokémon figurines, all of which are certainly not items that should be sold on a school campus, aiming at children that are partially food insecure.

Fig. 17 (*left*): The younger preschool children are often not used to eating at a table at home. They are, therefore, allowed to sit on a mat on the floor.

Fig. 18 (*right*): Where there is no canteen, the children either have to find a suitable place on the school grounds themselves, or the food is served in the classroom. However, many teachers and headteachers are reluctant to do this for reasons of hygiene. Nevertheless, it is often the only suitable alternative.

Box 1: The Individual Steps of the SF Organisation in *Commune* and School

1. Selection of schools according to the selection criteria

↓

2. School is awarded the HGSF (at the latest, a few months before the start of the school year)

↓

3. *Commune administration* and school(s) prepare for the first SF school year: (i) information to all stakeholders, starting with *commune management*; (ii) formation of a HGSF Support Committee; (iii) selection of a *storekeeper*; (iv) search for and recruitment of cooks; (v) training of actors in the *commune* (*mekhum*, *clerk*, *councillor* for women and children, and in the school, i.e. headteacher, storekeeper, cooks, teachers, SSC members, HGSF Support Committee if applicable (by October of the previous year)).

↓

4. School receives the basic package from WFP for the kitchen (i.e. cookers, cooking pots, crockery, storage racks) and, if necessary, hygiene, such as handwashing (soap, washing-up liquid, but the latter not always)

↓

5. School directors and others involved (especially the storekeeper) draw up the menu plan and the requirements plan for the food (October of the previous year)

↓

6. Invitation to tender for food for one year in accordance with the requirements plan, at the same time, training for potential suppliers (November of the previous year)

↓

7. Committee evaluates bids and awards contract to supplier (December of previous year)

↓

8. Supplier prepares his or her package(s) (rice+oil+salt and/or vegetables, meat, fish, eggs), search for suppliers, especially producers of vegetables (December of the previous year)

↓

9. School prepares practical steps: (i) informing parents; (ii) securing the firewood required for the kitchen, (iii) clarifying the water supply, (iv) preparing washing facilities for hands and dishes, etc., if necessary.

↓

10. Supplier buys the daily staple foods (rice, cooking oil, salt) and/or fresh produce (vegetables, meat, fish, eggs) in bulk for a month (staple foods) or daily (fresh produce) and delivers the latter to the schools the day before. Over the course of the months, he or she will try to buy the vegetables directly from the producers. They can receive support from NGOs for (organic) cultivation via a project that is independent of the SFP.

↓

11. The day before, the *storekeeper*, the headteacher and/or someone from the cookery team take delivery of the food and store it safely for the next morning. Ice may need to be purchased daily.

↓

12. On the day of the SF (Mondays to Saturdays), the cooking team usually arrives early in the morning between 4:00 and 5:00 a.m. and prepares the food for 7:00 a.m., at the latest; depending on the school, meals are served between before 7:00 a.m. and 8:30 a.m. (or later in a few exceptional cases).

↓

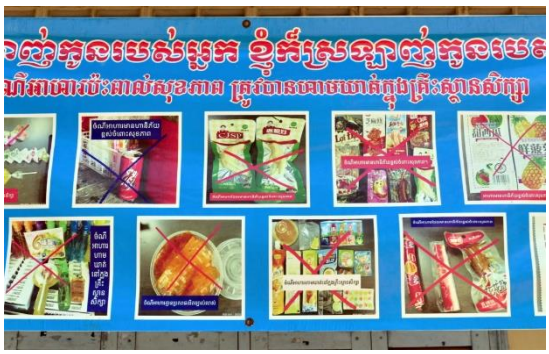
13. The children receive their meals in the dining hall or classrooms (in some schools also in the schoolyard, where they have to find somewhere to eat). The break for this usually lasts 20–30 minutes.

↓

14. After the meal, the children wash their dishes individually; the cooks, in some schools with the help of pupils, clean the cooking utensils and then go home (if the meal is served later than 7:00 a.m., it is still ready around 7:00 a.m. and the cooks put the pots ready for later distribution and go home immediately.

Fig. 19 (*left*): A good solution is the school's policy of only offering home-prepared food for snacks, without using plastic packaging that later flies around in the landscape or is "stored" or burnt in a corner of the school.

Fig. 20 (*right*): The sale of drinks with a high sugar content and "junk" food is not only prohibited by school decree, but there are even posters in some schools pointing out the ban.



The existence of the snack stalls is justified by the fact that the rental of the space could generate money for the qualitative expansion of school meals or that the cooks as operators could compensate for their meagre wages with the sales income. In addition, two schools argued that there were snack shops virtually opposite the school entrance anyway and that

having their own stall on the school grounds could undermine the much poorer offers externally. The latter two arguments are particularly understandable. However, some schools offer an acceptable solution in this case. Snack stands are permitted, but only food and drinks that are produced by the operators themselves according to specified standards, such as sweet potatoes, low-sugar pastries, rice or taro dishes wrapped in banana leaves and deep-fried doughnuts, may be offered (cf. Fig. 19).

4.2 The Role of the *Communes* in the Organisation of School Meals

Cambodia has a local government level that is equipped with moderate expertise and funding, but functions comparatively well. At the top is the *commune leader* or *mekhum,* who is de facto appointed by the state and supported by the *commune council.* The term *council* is only used here to a limited extent as an elected council. Instead, there are four or five people who take on special tasks, such as managing finances or being responsible for women and children's affairs. There is also the *clerk,* who, like the *mekhum,* is a state official and acts less as a "clerk" and more as the professional administrator of the rural community and a registrar of deeds.

A *mekhum* usually has a firm grip on the municipal administration and also decides on minor issues as part of its remit. This makes it all the more important for the SFP to have the support of a *mekhum.* This appears to be the case in all 23 *communes* in the 28 schools visited. In the majority of cases, the officials immediately met with the investigation team, documented detailed knowledge and it was confirmed everywhere that the *commune* and they themselves were very concerned about SF and that it was now one of the main tasks of the administration to help wherever necessary. In addition, in the programmes that are already run by the state, the cooks are paid from the *commune's* budget (i.e. each receives US$ 50 for 10 months p.a., although in some cases less so far).

The *commune*'s tasks include organising the committee that is responsible for the tendering of suppliers for the school meals and awards the contract itself, or through a sub-committee, based on the results of the bids submitted. Strict attention is paid to ensuring that the people concerned are resident in the *commune* or, if several communes wish to commission joint suppliers, that they come from one of them. The committee for selecting the supplier(s) *is* chaired by the *mekhum* and includes the *clerk of* the municipal administration. The members are all the headteachers of the schools involved, some of whom also include the warehouse managers due to their expertise. Another member may be the representative of the "Commune Council for Women and Youth", which exists, at least formally, in every rural community.

The selection of cooks is also the responsibility of the *mekhum* in the communities with state responsibility for the SF, whereby the school management, possibly together with the respective village chief, usually has to find the candidates, which is no longer easy, at least not today (cf. Chapter 4.4). The interviewees almost unanimously describe their other tasks in SF as follows: (i) general overall supervision of the implementation, (ii) in particular, also checking the quality of the food to be delivered and the punctuality of the delivery, (iii) answering questions that arise about the SF and/or forwarding them to the district. (iv) if several *communes* are involved, the corresponding cooperation, in some cases (v) also the decision to commission one or two suppliers (i.e. one for rice, etc. and one for the fresh produce) or the opposite, i.e. if there are several schools in the *commune,* to commission several

suppliers "to reduce the risk of failure". A *mekhum* also almost always helps with special problems, such as a school's water supply.[22]

The Cluster Office of the MoE acts in an advisory capacity for the SF, covering schools in two or more *communes.* A representative is responsible for the programme in each cluster within whose boundaries SF takes place. Their tasks include follow-up with reports to the district, advice on drawing up budgets for the suppliers and their selection, the mobilisation of local partners who could provide material support for the SF and assistance in organising meetings of the various committees involved.

4.3 School Management, Teachers, School Support Committee and Parents

4.3.1 The School's Management

In the experience of the INEF research team, the most important pillar of the SF in the rural communities in the 28 schools visited, even before the *mekhum*, is the respective headteacher. In one case, this was also the deputy head of the primary school visited. What is generally regarded as "overall supervision" under the direction of the headteachers has, on closer inspection, turned out to be the co-ordination and involvement of and in almost every sub-component of SF, no matter how small. These include (with more or less support from the SSC in particular):

- the financial management of the school itself, (possibly with the support of an administrator) whose funds often have to step in when other funding (temporarily) fails, and all donations including all acquisition issues and the management of voluntary contributions and donations received;
- the organisation of the SF, starting with the recruitment of cooks, the provision of premises for food storage, the kitchens and the (often still non-existent) canteen buildings (even if mostly financed by third parties);
- together with the Warehouse Manager, the preparation of monthly meal plans and the inclusion of the meal plans in the procurement lists for the retailers at a local level;
- organising the procurement of energy (only firewood in the 28 schools visited so far) and ensuring the availability of (drinking) water;
- ensuring warehousing through the appointment ("election") of warehouse staff and overall reporting (the complexity of which will be discussed later, even if, in practice, the task is mainly the responsibility of the warehouse staff);
- permanent liaison with all MoE staff and the commune, including participation in the tendering process for annual delivery packages and the subsequent selection of food suppliers; and
- the co-ordination of the various committees in the context of SF at the schools (including the SSC, any existing "Committee for School Meals" and the people who may be in charge of the school garden).

[22] A water treatment plant was set up in one *commune* with the help of a project initiated by the *mekhum*, from which the schools in the commune receive filtered drinking water free of charge.

Incidentally, the tasks of the school management include the general maintenance of the school itself as a prerequisite for regular school meals, which cannot function if the roofs let the rain through, the latrines are not operational or the school sinks into the water during the rainy season.

We were able to speak to all the headteachers of the 28 schools or, where applicable, their deputies. Almost without exception, they proved to be very well informed, competent regarding the implementation of the guidelines and, above all, personally very committed, which even extended to financing food ingredients out of their own pockets if the collection among parents had left a gap for the upcoming days. None of the headteachers surveyed complained about the workload in the context of the SF, although the additional assignments (exacerbated by the switch to local procurement) were described as considerable. However, many headteachers – together with the teachers in the discussion groups – would like to see a stronger commitment from the state and, if necessary, from donors, especially in order to create and maintain missing canteen buildings and the furniture required for their operation. Conversely, the positive effects of SF are seen as an incentive for their own commitment (cf. chapter 6).

4.3.2 The Teachers and the School Support Committee

The **teachers** interviewed in all schools also see their role in SF as challenging, but, at the same time, as an obligation in the interests of the pupils. After all, someone has to always be available as a storekeeper. In some schools, food is served with the support of the teachers even before the actual lessons begin. They help the youngest pupils, especially in the preschool classes, and sometimes help out with buying the ingredients and even in the kitchen when the cooks are unavailable (there were two examples of this).

In theory, hardly any school in Cambodia can manage without the SSC, as school operations and maintenance are notoriously underfunded and the SSC – similar to a school carers' association or a support association in Germany – is supposed to help out in many ways. In Cambodia, this includes mobilising manpower (especially from the parents) when repairs are needed and, most importantly, collecting donations in kind or in the form of cash if possible (which is increasing). Roof repairs, participation in the extension of the water pipes, the construction of fences around the school or the production of cement floors in classrooms and ancillary rooms are also part of this.

Members of the SSC are only external people, for example, parents or a grandparent of the children. In sum, people who feel connected to the school because they were once there themselves or, at least, recently had had children there. Third parties who have nothing directly to do with the school and help out of a sense of responsibility or for political reasons are also possible. These include wealthier honorary senior citizens, the head of a temple, the village chief or a local politician.

One of the core tasks of the SSC is to organise the work mentioned above and purchase materials from donations if possible. Regarding the school meals, securing a personal contribution to the financing of the meals almost always took first place among the self-imposed tasks, at least, in the schools visited. At the instigation of the headteachers in most cases, the SSC members inform the parents and the village community about the needs and try to set a contribution as specified by the school management and motivate the parents to pay it. It is usually no more than 2,000 Riel or US$ 0.50 per child per month. If firewood becomes scarce or, as requested in our small sample in three schools, an occasional dessert is

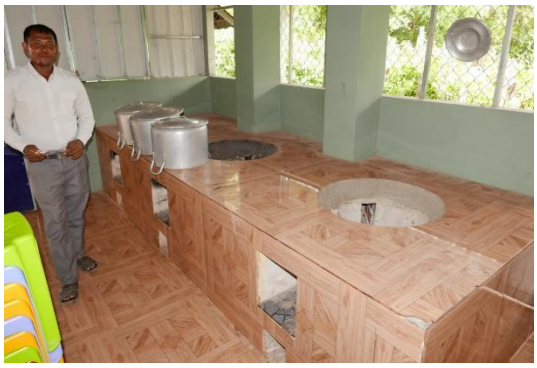
to be introduced into the meal, the SSC (often the teachers as well) take on the task of communicating this to the parents and appealing to their willingness to pay.

The connection between the SSC and the village chief is often close, and, in some cases, the *mephum i*s also a member or even chairman of the SSC. The role of the SSC in securing firewood for the school kitchen was repeatedly mentioned in the conversation. If parents are unable or unwilling to pay, the community is also mobilised. Two village chiefs reported that in such cases, they would drive around with a hand tractor (*kuyun*) and collect wood from hh.

However, we had the impression that there were also clear differences in the commitment of the SSC between the occasional organisation of a parents' meeting (also only at the request of the school management) and quasi participation in day-to-day business, with a member of the committee being present at the school almost every day. Basically, attention must be drawn here to, for example, the very different structures of the SSC, the (still) unregulated composition of the members, the very different presence or even non-presence at the meetings.

Fig. 21 (*left*): A standard kitchen that can be found in a similar form in many schools. Two cooking zones are sufficient here for the rice and the sauce (vegetables with meat or fish) or alternatively the frying process.

Fig. 22 (*right*): Donations were used to modernise this kitchen, which now resembles the equipment you might find in a restaurant (although today it would rather run on gas).



Box 2: Firewood as a Core Problem of School Meals

All of the school kitchens visited cook exclusively with firewood. Even though the vegetation and weather conditions in Cambodia mean that significantly more biomass could be utilised for biogas plants than in most areas of the two partially arid countries included in the INEF studies (Ethiopia and Benin, see Gaesing / Bliss 2023 and Bliss / Hailegiorgis 2023), this would still require considerable effort on the part of those involved. For this reason, improved (i.e. fuel-saving) cookers are currently the more realistic alternatives, at least, in the short and medium term.

However, the term "improved" is relative. With the right design, a firewood-fuelled cooker can save up to 70 % of the wood required. However, this also requires some consideration, especially regarding manageability for the cooks and the adaptation of the cookers to the standard local cooking vessels. The systems shown in Fig. 21 and 22 appear to fulfil their purpose, but with only minor deviations in design, we also found cookers about which the cooks complained massively because there was no draught and the fire took a long time to bring the water to the boil, which, in turn, cancelled out the energy-saving effect.

Another problem that has been repeatedly raised is the storage of firewood. Kitchens can only store enough for a few days. The bulk of the wood, often even larger logs, has to remain outside, which, in turn, means that it is too damp to be used directly during the rainy season. The question also repeatedly arose as to who should make the small logs for the customised cookers from the wood delivered in large pieces.

There is a further problem concerning the use of firewood: the fact that it is usually provided by the pupils' parents. They are increasingly using gas cookers, which means that more and more families no longer have any firewood at home. As a result, it becomes increasingly challenging for each child to bring a small bundle of wood once a week. Consequently, an increasing number of schools have to request money to buy wood, which not everyone can or will pay for.

4.3.3 The Parents of the Pupils

There is no formal parent representation at the schools, which is why the SSC should be an important link between the school management and the parents. As has been mentioned, the effectiveness depends on the people involved. The committees are not always as active as they need to be, which has to be addressed again by the school management – so far, apparently successfully. The parents in the cases we investigated only made up a proportion of the members of the SSCs, for which there appears to be no fixed membership, and they do not officially represent the children's families, but act as (committed) individuals.

There are hardly any formal obligations towards the school for parents or, as is very often the case in the 28 schools, the grandparents who (unofficially?) represent them (possibly also other people who look after the children in the absence of the parents). These include sending the children to school regularly, taking care of school clothes, and, if necessary, contributing to teaching materials (exercise books, pens). Conversely, school administrators expect voluntary contributions in the general context of school operations, be it in the form of labour or monetary payments. These are (also) to be mobilised by the SSC, with local authority representatives sometimes boasting about this. So far, parents have typically carried out unpaid repair work on roofs or pulled fences and contributed financially to the purchase of building materials, for example, or, in one case, money for a new classroom or, in the SF context, a canteen room or kitchen modernisation.

Regular cash contributions had not previously been demanded for the maintenance and improvement of the 28 schools visited. However, with the introduction of the HGSF, this has changed since 2015/2016, and since 2021/2022, at the latest, payment has been regarded as an obligation (not strictly enforced). This is because the firewood and ingredients for food preparation that go beyond oil and salt are no longer provided or paid for by the implementing organization (primarily the WFP).

In order to be able to collect the most urgently needed funds, requests for payment of a personal contribution to the food costs were made everywhere at the instigation of the school management via the SSC, or directly via the teachers to the children, who, in turn, passed them on to the parents. As a rule, in the case of adjustments or special initiatives, such as the collection of money for a dessert, a parents' meeting has been convened by the respective SSC, which, in the cases known to us, only provided information about the need for payment, but did not allow any participatory decisions to be made about the payment itself and the amount of the contributions expected.

Fig. 23: In conversation with parents and, in some schools, mainly with grandparents, because the children's parents are often abroad taking part in labour migration.

If the cost of a school meal is assumed to be US$ 0.22, including the costs to be borne by the parents (which include firewood but exclude the wages for the cooks), then the share to be paid by the parents is rather low. This often amounts to 500 Riel/week or US$ 0.50 per month at a calculated cost of US$ 5.72 or 8.7 %. It should be noted that a maximum of 90 % and, in the worst case. only 40 % of the parents pay for the children, and that in various cases, and not only for extremely poor families, only one child of a family is charged, although we were able to find up to five children in preschool and primary school at the same time. However, the bottom line is that more money is often collected, as there are also donations from third parties, such as merchants or local politicians. If the income is insufficient, headteachers (or sometimes other stakeholders, such as the head of the local authority) occasionally contribute something from their budget for one day or another (e.g. if the supply of firewood becomes critical).

Apart from paying contributions and appeals to participate in the provision of firewood, which is, however, quasi-institutionalised at individual schools ("bring a bundle once a week"), parents have little to do with the organisation of school meals. However, especially in the preschool sector, parents or guardians bring the children to school and occasionally help with serving and eating the meals (unless older siblings can do this).

The flow of information about the details of school meals seems to be generally more intensive at individual schools. Even where NGOs support the SF, parents are not regularly informed as to the reasons for and what is taken into account in the composition of the food. In some cases, parents are involved in maintaining the school gardens. During the previous INEF study on the HGSF in 2018, some mothers were still active as cooks, stating that they accepted the low pay for their work because they could be sure that their children would get a regular meal at school.

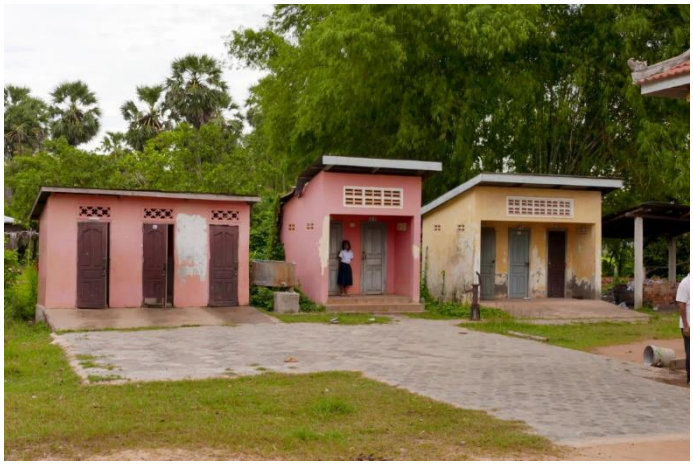
Box 3: The Sanitary Area

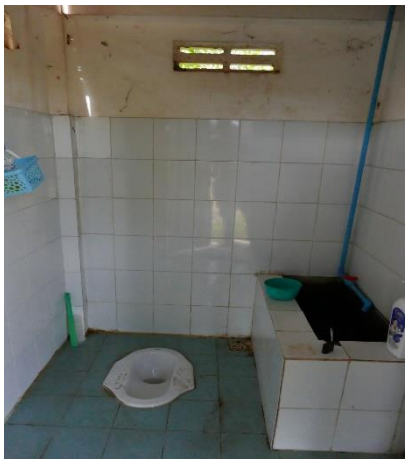
Healthy school meals are best integrated into a WASH approach. This is particularly crucial taking into account the considerable hygiene requirements, where the opportunity to wash hands and access to toilets are essential in addition to the drinking water supply. Girls should also have access to hygiene products and protected places to use them (cf. Willetts et al. 2023). All 28 schools visited fulfilled at least the minimum requirements for gender-segregated toilet access. VIP latrines are increasingly being connected by running water, as shown in Fig. 24 and 25. However, "dry" access is not possible everywhere during the rainy season and, as mentioned at the beginning, many are not barrier-free even during dry periods. There is a wide variety of facilities for washing hands. These range from water containers with taps that can be filled separately by a bucket to ultra-modern tiled facilities with a mains connection, a reservoir for supply failures, numerous taps, and even, as a luxury, real mirrors.

Regarding access to hygiene products, there are no clear guidelines – at least according to our conversations. A lot depends on special WASH projects connected to the schools. However, there is a general lack of sanitary facilities, which means that improvisation is required when necessary. The availability of hygiene products is not guaranteed. However, in the socio-cultural context of Cambodia – unlike in the case of Benin or Ethiopia, which were also analysed – this is not a criterion for girls' school attendance, as they are probably already equipped with the bare necessities from home.

Fig. 24 (*left*): A lot has been invested in the sanitary facilities of the schools over the last two decades. Some schools have now received additional latrine blocks for the second or even third time.

Fig. 25 (*right*): Instead of the simple latrines without a water connection, most schools today have facilities similar to this illustration, with water basins that can be filled from the internal water supply.





4.4 The Children, the Daily School Lunch and the Comparison with the Practice in the Families

Children from preschool classes and grades 1 to 6 of primary school are currently the main target group of the Cambodian SF. The representatives of the National Social Protection Council explicitly pointed out that it is not yet possible to consider extending SF to the two secondary levels because the current programme has to be in place first. In this respect, the target group for HGSF contributions for the foreseeable future will be children aged between 4 and 12 or 13.

This is an age at which pupils in upper years 5 and 6 can be involved in various activities and be called upon to perform numerous tasks. In a few schools, for example, there are older pupils who are involved in the preparation of the menu as pupil spokespersons. In addition, younger children are hardly able to collect food from a serving point without assistance. Therefore, either older siblings or the teachers help them. In some cases, a parent or a much older sister comes to school to help at the time the food is served.

Fig. 26 (*left*): The children queue for the food counter at the kitchen. The teachers help here.

Fig. 27 (*right*): In another school, it is mainly the older pupils who distribute the food. Teachers only supervise.

The **food** is only sometimes **served** in large pots from the kitchen, from a table in the canteen or measured according to the respective class size in the classrooms by the cooks or teachers, and often by older pupils (cf. Fig. 26 and 27). Considerable discipline was always observed here, i.e. there is hardly any pushing and allegedly not even when there are no visitors. However, some pupils in the small groups we interviewed complained that portions, especially of fish or meat, were not always allocated fairly (although this was probably not always due to bad intentions). However, we had the impression that the portions were measured very professionally, as even the last person in the queue got the same portion as the others, with no large leftovers.

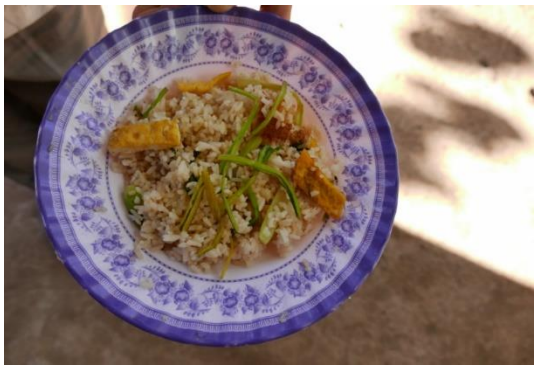
Appendix 3 shows the **meal times**, which are handled more flexibly compared to our earlier study from 2018. At that time, 7:00 a.m. was strictly adhered to everywhere, so that lessons could start at 7:20 a.m. instead of 7:00 a.m., with a slight delay. Today, with three exceptions in Battambang (starting at 6:00 or 6:30 a.m.), the times are between 7:10 and 8:30 a.m. (serving time). The school management, which usually sets the mealtime at 8:30 am, has scheduled the meal for the first break after the usual school start at 7:00 a.m. in more than half of the schools visited. According to several headteachers, this means that no teaching time is lost.

According to the plans available so far, SF is to be held at the beginning of lessons so that children who rarely receive breakfast at home do not have to sit in the classroom on an empty stomach. However, according to the headteachers interviewed, it has been shown in practice that many children can only eat a very little so early in the morning, while at 8:00 or 8:30 a.m., they all eat and leave virtually nothing behind. Some children also confirmed that they would always finish their food now, but that before the later time had been introduced, they would sometimes not have been able to touch the food at all. In one school, a flexible time was introduced for the reasons mentioned, i.e. the children can pick up their food not only before school starts, but also before the first break. However, the effort involved is so great that no other school visited follows this example.

The approximately 170 children who took part in our group surveys reported initially on the menus of the last two or three days. These were described very precisely as "fried rice with pumpkin and pork" or "sour soup with fish", "fried rice with egg", "spicy soup with water spinach and fish" or "koko"[1], a soup with lots of vegetables and pork, which incidentally was the most frequently mentioned favourite dish in answer to the following question: "What would you want if you had an absolutely free choice and the price didn't have to play a role either?". The children's other wishes were also very modest. Perhaps a dozen had wishes comparable to those of their German peers, such as "grilled chicken" or "roast pork" (we had to give them the examples, they couldn't come up with such "good" dishes on their own), but for most of them, "koko" or "fried rice with egg and cabbage" was already the best they could imagine,[23] "fried rice with ginger and pork", "spiced soup with water spinach and fish" or "sour lotus with fish" was the favourite dish, whereby it was implicitly meant that the piece of meat, the proportion of egg or the fish could be slightly larger than usual.

Fig.: 28 (*left*): Fried rice with fish and green beans served on individually brought plates, which should be replaced by metal plates with separate compartments if possible.

Fig. 29 (*right*): "Dessert", for which there was a special contribution from the parents: tapioca pudding with banana, berries and sugar.



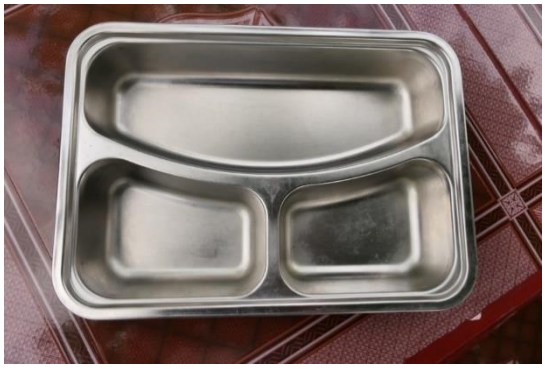
It was interesting to note that the meals served at home in the families only seem to differ slightly from those served at school. However, many children emphasised that the SF dishes varied more, and that they often had the same food at home. When asked about possible differences, it emerged that families often season their food more strongly and spicily and use more salt (e.g. in the fish sauce that is often used). "Taste" was often translated as seasoning,

[23] This refers to real white cabbage instead of the usual local "Chinese cabbage", which is not our German "Chinese cabbage", but a spinach-like, relatively inexpensive and, therefore, frequently served vegetable.

which indicates in Cambodia that a lot of glutamate and sugar is normally used in food at home. This seasoning, especially salt and chillies, and in several cases also sugar[24], was interestingly viewed critically by the majority of the children and some said that they had already complained at home because it tasted better at school without the spices. However, the opposite view was also stated.

Fig. 30 (*left*): The school inspector of a province together with the *mekhum*, a MoE cluster co-ordinator and the headmaster taste the dessert prepared once a month with a special payment from the parents.

Fig. 31 (*right*): The standard tray currently distributed by the WFP for the meal, which allows the separate serving of rice, sauce and, if necessary, fruit/dessert.



When asked specifically about the "better tasting food" at school or at home, the answer in most cases was "both taste equally good", but in some schools, the more common opinion was "at school". This answer, which we encountered in Benin and Ethiopia in very poor areas with acute hunger problems, surprised us somewhat in Cambodia, as we had expected a greater variety and quality of food at home in comparison with the SF. Even if we had to expect a certain politeness in the answers of the interviewees, who were only 11 to 13 years old, it is clear that more consideration is given at school to children who prefer less spicy food than in some parents' homes. This was also confirmed by the answers to our question regarding whether they would like something to be added to their food more often and if their parents had ever been asked to put less salt and chillies in their food.

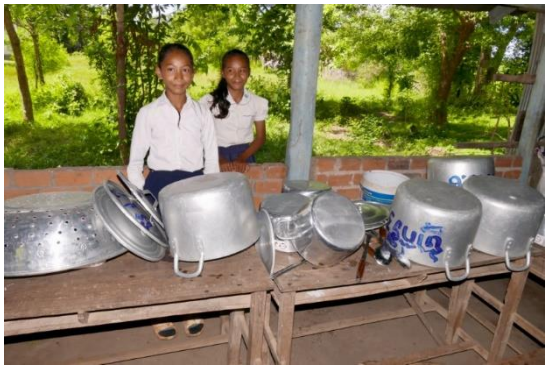
In response to the latter question, some boys and girls said that yes, their mother had reacted by saying that she would now put fewer chillies and salt or fish sauce in their food and instead put them out separately for them to help themselves. In response to the first question, older girls in particular (usually more self-confident and open in conversation than boys of the same age) replied that they had asked for more vegetables in their food, for example, by asking their mother or grandmother to "please cook some morning glory". The successes are assessed differently. Some of the children replied in the interview that their mothers would definitely take up ideas from school, but others were hesitant, particularly for reasons of cost.

When it comes to **hygiene in the hh** and especially in connection with food preparation, some children seem to apply what they have learnt at school at home. We were told several times that it was necessary to wash hands before eating and preparing food, and that

[24] In addition to hygiene issues, nutrition and the consequences of too much sugar in food are also discussed in school lessons. This may have influenced these statements, especially as individual headteachers explicitly stated that they would raise the topic on a massive scale in their school.

vegetables should be washed three times before cooking. The behaviour taught to children at school seems to be having an effect here, at least, where the school management and teachers, as they told us, take the issue of hygiene very seriously.

Fig. 32 (*left*): The two girls proudly show off the pots they have just scrubbed spotless.
Fig. 33 (*right*): Three boys are obviously having fun while cleaning the dishes.




Another relevant effect of SF can be observed: children of both sexes are treated equally regarding the **help** to be provided during SF in most schools. Figure 27 shows, for example, a slightly older girl serving the food to the younger children together with a boy. According to our observations, this is no exception. The fact that boys and girls (with the exception of the youngest children) have to wash their own dishes after eating also needs no explanation.

However, equal treatment also applies to the washing up of cooking utensils, which, in many schools (apart from the two large cooking vessels for rice and the sauce), is sensibly not assigned to the female cooks, as they would otherwise have to stay at school until the end of the meal service. The older classes share the work when it comes to washing up, with girls rather than boys appearing to take on the task voluntarily. The school management might implement a fairer distribution of tasks here. This could certainly be expected to be successful, as we were able to observe in two schools that boys had fun washing up the pots (cf. Fig. 33).

4.5 The Storekeepers and Cooks

If we have emphasised the school management as the main pillar of SF at school level, then the work of the *storekeepers* must be mentioned in second place, and particularly appreciated. The latter is because the time-consuming work, which is usually carried out by a teacher, is neither paid extra nor is the time spent by the incumbent compensated by a bonus, for example cancelling lessons. However, in some cases, the storekeepers were transferred to the library and no longer had to give lessons. In addition, hardly any schools have a laptop or tablet for the bookkeeping to be carried out via a computer programme, so that the majority of the warehouse staff interviewed stated that they had to use their own (usually old) laptop.

When the SF began on a larger scale in 2002-2008 and even in 2015/16, when it was intensified and became more "decentralised" due to local procurement, there were definitely volunteers among the teaching staff who were willing to take on the task even without remuneration or for a bag of rice a month. Even today, it is still emphasised that the task is taken on voluntarily by teachers and the office holders were all elected. However, there were usually no other candidates, and even those who were found do not all seem to have come to their office very "voluntarily", but quite obviously through appointment by the school

management. Almost half of the 28 camp administrators interviewed would be willing to pass on the job, but they said that no voluntary successors could be found.

Fig. 34 (*left*): Next to the kitchen of a school there is a small lockable extension for cooking utensils, a storage shelf for spices and – particularly important – a freezer (without electricity, i.e. for storing ice).

Fig. 35 (*right*): The rice sacks and a bag of salt packets are stored on a pallet in a corner of a prepared room; oil cans are stored on a concrete elevation and filled daily for the cooks.

The storekeepers' tasks *include,* first of all, the entire documentation of the food supplied and its use. A digital system has been introduced for this purpose, but various handwritten tables have to be filled in, some on a daily basis, such as the number of pupils present in each class and those (possibly different) who also took part in the SF each day. The exact amount of basic food distributed to the cooks must also be recorded. The data collected on perhaps 100 form sheets must be entered into the computer and the system monthly. The store manager may have to borrow a laptop for this if they do not have their own.

But that is not enough. Firstly, the storekeeper must always be present when food is delivered, i.e. the basic monthly delivery of rice and other items from the *trader* or the WFP, and daily, usually in the afternoon or early evening, when the fresh produce arrives for the next morning. On both occasions, however, a second person must also be present to check the goods, usually the headteacher, but, in some schools, also a cook (e.g. to take perishable goods home for refrigeration, see Box 4). Storekeepers, headteachers and cooks should, therefore, live as close to the school as possible. This proximity also determines who is present the most.

The third key element of school meals is the **cook**. There were 20 male cooks and 43 female cooks in our small sample. Two schools have only one cook for 60 and 170 children respectively (cf. Appendix 3). Conversely, one school has five cooks with a ratio of 133 pupils per cook; another has four cooks. Most schools have two or three cooks, with the number of children per cook ranging from 55 to 287.

Many cooks interviewed complained that they are not enough for the numbers of children. However, despite the small number of cooks, there are practically never any absences in a school. Even if the complaints about working conditions are not as frequent and insistent in any of the groups involved in SF as among the cooks, they take their work extremely seriously, regardless of the pay. If someone falls ill, which is surprisingly rare according to the information received, or has another important reason for not coming in, the work is done by the other kitchen staff, and if there are no other people for the kitchen, the sister, the husband/wife or even someone from the teaching staff takes over.

Box 4: The Storage Problems in Schools

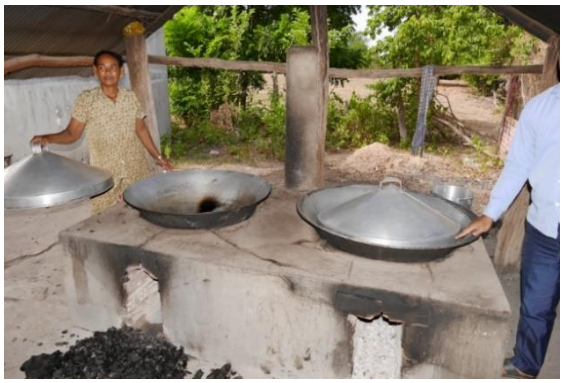
Schools in Cambodia are initially equipped with classrooms and, if possible, an acceptable room for school management and teachers, where documents, teaching materials and, if available in exceptional cases, information technology can also be safely stored. Newer schools also have a library room. However, the need to store food as part of the SF has not yet been considered. Accordingly, at the same time as preparing for kitchen activities, safe storage facilities must also be provided for the relatively long-life staple foods (rice, oil, salt) which are delivered monthly as well as the perishable foods delivered daily. Even after ten years and more, hardly any school currently has a special storage room. Furthermore, more or less suitable existing premises are used for storage, for example, older classrooms that have already been replaced by new buildings (cf. Fig. 35).

The need for proper storage facilities also includes the stocking of fresh produce, of which vegetables can manage without refrigeration for two consecutive days. We did not find an electric refrigerator for this purpose in any of the schools. Instead, a freezer provided by the WFP is used, for which ice has to be procured daily (Fig. 34). This costs money and is additional work for cooks and storekeepers. In one school, the cook receives the meat or fish the evening before it is to be used in the morning and takes it home where there is a fridge.

Similar to the school administrators, there was a great deal of voluntary work among the cooks at the start of the SFP, even if payment was usually lacking or limited to a few kilograms of rice per month (cf. Bliss 2018). This has changed in the meantime. Firstly, most of the cooks have been involved for a long time, and, even before that, the women involved were mainly middle-aged or older, thus, they would like to retire for this reason alone. But even among the poor population, there is hardly anyone willing to take on the work for US$ 25 or even US$ 50 a month. Younger and middle-aged women can earn at least US$ 5 a day as day labourers (= US$ 130 a month) and young women in the textile factories in Pursat, for example, are paid US$ 200 and more (with a current minimum wage in this sector of US$ 185). Accordingly, there are still more older cooks or those whose mobility is either limited or who can easily combine early morning work with other activities.

Fig. 36 (*left*): The cook shows the typical cooking vessels for preparing rice.

Fig. 37 (*right*): The "improved" stove is not sufficient for this school. It is still necessary to work with a locally produced replacement.



The employment and pay situation is serious and known to all stakeholders, including the *municipalities.* In almost all places where the state manages and finances the full HGSF, the heads of the rural communities and their councils have already earmarked US$ 50 per cook per month in the (sparsely equipped) budget, and where this has not yet been done, this rate will be targeted from 2024. By contrast, many cooks told us that a salary of around US$ 100 per month would be fair and appropriate for a job of 18–24 hours per week.

The fact that practically no cook has given up work in a situation where no successor has yet been recruited is due not only to the great sense of responsibility of those involved, but also to the fact that the volunteers at the time included many very poor people for whom there were few alternative jobs in the village. Working as a cook for the school meals meant a gain in social prestige for them and the associated recognition in the community.

There is an extremely urgent need for action by the local stakeholder groups regarding the kitchen staff due to the situation described, otherwise, the sustainability of the SF will be jeopardised.

5. Hybrid and Local Procurement

5.1 The Retailers Involved

In the schools which currently utilise hybrid procurement, the WFP continues to purchase the staple foods (rice and oil) provided for by the programme internationally, with financial support from various donors, or receives them from US aid deliveries in cooperation with the US Department of Agriculture, and distributes them to the schools still directly supported by the SFP using its own logistics infrastructure. This usually takes place monthly for the 10-month school year from January to October. The deliveries are meticulously recorded on arrival at the school, with two people usually checking and confirming the quantities together on receipt. All fresh produce, such as meat, fish, eggs and vegetables as well as salt, on the other hand, are procured locally following a bidding process to select traders, as described below.

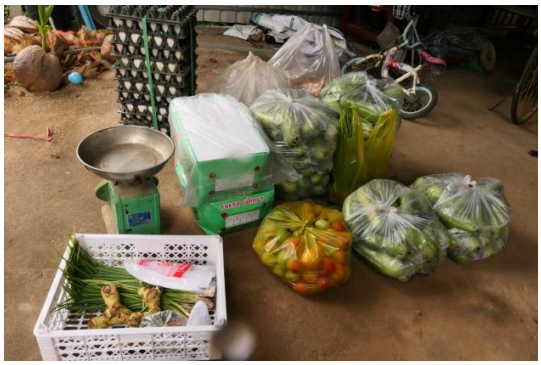
The supply of drinking water should at least be mentioned briefly at this point, since it has so far received little attention as part of the SFP and is on the agenda in two of the schools visited, independently of the SFP. In the communities concerned, the *mekhum* has managed to find a donor to finance the treatment of water due to the poor quality of tap-water in the region. As a result, the schools in all villages of the two communities receive a basic amount of bottled water in large polythene bottles on a regular basis and free of charge (Fig. 41).

Suppliers are responsible for the correct recording of food orders, the accurate quantity and quality of the goods required, and their punctual delivery to state-run schools with full HGSF. This also applies to fresh produce for schools with (still) hybrid procurement. See chapter 4.2 for tendering and commissioning. It should be added that although the *commune* organises both steps, de jure, the client, invoice recipient and institution paying for the deliveries is the supplied school, which also receives the budget for this from the WFP or the state.

The tendering procedure required is, of course, new for the potential traders or suppliers, who should always come from the same *commune* or the district in which the *commune* is located. The specific offer is based on the framework price lists of the MoA for the individual products. This is why the potential traders or suppliers receive training in the district capital, which should enable them to prepare realistic and comparably priced offers. They also learn how to create detailed delivery notes and issue invoices precisely for the individual schools, even if they have to supply up to ten schools a day with sometimes different goods. Hygiene aspects also play an important role in the training, i.e. handling fresh goods such as meat, fish and eggs with the utmost care (cf. Fig. 39).

When awarding contracts in the HGSF sector, there should actually be separate tenders for basic foodstuffs and fresh produce. The schools should tender and order together in a *commune.* This only applies to fresh produce in the hybrid system, as rice and oil are supplied directly by the WFP (cf. above). However, some communes in the HGSF system combine the two delivery packages, for practical reasons, because they only have to work with one supplier. The exact opposite also occurs: the *mekhum* in one *commune,* where there are eight or ten schools, considered the risk of the distributor failing to deliver to be too great, which is why the school supply was divided into several double packages for only two schools each.

Fig. 38 (*left*): Compilation of the delivery for two schools in the dealer's warehouse.
Fig. 39 (*right*): One of the hygiene requirements is that the duck eggs must be delivered washed.




A provider for one year of school supplies is well advised to find out exactly what the prices are on the market and the sources for the food required before preparing and submitting a tender. In addition, the MoA list must be carefully observed. The price difference between suppliers may only fluctuate within the price range of the Ministry's lists for vegetables. Underbids, i.e. economically incomprehensibly low offers, are too risky to accept because the suppliers could give up during the contract period, and it would be practically impossible to take recourse in Cambodia. Bids that are too expensive should be rejected due to the specified price lists.

The MoA lists and the prices set for agricultural products do not harmonise with the dates for preparing offers for the SF in November/December and there can be considerable movements in the market, particularly for rice and oil, consequently, these have recently led to considerable problems in schools with an already "full" HGSF. The price, for example, for rice at the end of 2022 was set at 2,100 Riel/kg in most contracts. In August 2023, however, it was already at 2,400 Riel, 300 Riel above the cost calculation, so that the traders are currently losing 300,000 Riel (US$ 75) per tonne. This amounts to a loss of 2.55 million Riel or US$ 637.5 for an 8.5 tonne delivery in one case from our survey. Fish has also become more expensive in this specific example, and a substantial profit can only result from pork and vegetables. The overall results for the suppliers are correspondingly ambivalent. After deducting purchase prices and distribution costs (mopeds, petrol), the net income in many cases was only around the level of the minimum wage with less than US$ 2,500 per year.

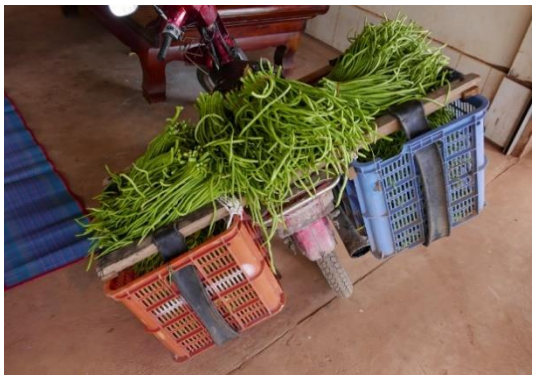
Suppliers who have their own rice mill (one person), own their own fishponds (two hh in our sample), grow their own vegetables (several in our sample in very different quantities) or are lucky enough to have a good base of vegetable producers, can get pork cheaply and have access to a large duck farm have better conditions. Those who were not in this situation in 2023 (or, as is often the case with vegetables, did not yet have this) and had to buy rice at market prices are likely to have earned even less than the estimated US$ 2,500. In addition, the supplier has the problem of having to finance the purchase in advance.

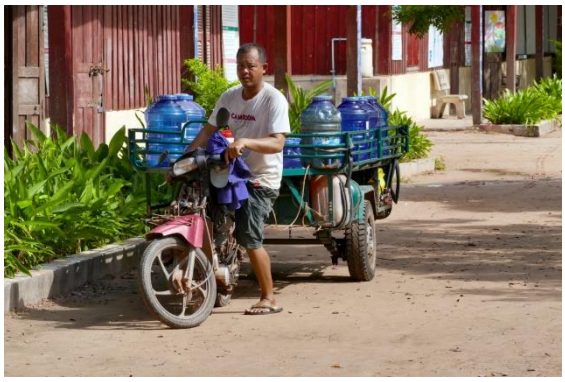
Rural hh in Cambodia are generally poor regarding liquid assets. **Loans** are quickly taken out for purchases. Financial service providers also engage in aggressive advertising, practically forcing loans on families ("*easy money*"). As a result, two out of three hh are in debt, many of them over-indebted (cf. Bliss 2022). Small entrepreneurs, such as the food suppliers targeted by the SFP, are no exception. Once they have received the order, they have to pay at least one month in advance, as the invoices can only be submitted to the schools at the end of

the month. The fact that the suppliers are sometimes able to pass on the pressure to the food producers, i.e. they can also buy from them on credit, extends the problem to a larger group of people. We were repeatedly told that payment was not even made at the end of the month, but that bills remained outstanding well into the next month. As a result, one person stopped delivery for a few days and lodged a complaint with the local authority.

Fig. 40 (*left*): The fresh produce is delivered in large plastic crates and almost exclusively by moped.

Fig. 41 (*right*): The free delivery of treated drinking water to some schools has received little attention so far in the context of the SF.





Some of the traders interviewed had sufficient capital for **financing in advance** because they run a shop, a large agricultural business or even a construction company as their main occupation and, thus, did not have to take out a loan. Others did not have this advantage and had to pay around 20 % interest p.a. on the loans (i.e. at least the value of a monthly delivery). In some cases, the interviewees stated that they had considered cancelling the contract several times, at least in 2023, for this reason and because of the miscalculation of the rice price through no fault of their own.[25] After the general increase in food prices, they expect that the calculation for 2023 will be adjusted to inflation or, alternatively, that the price of rice (and oil), at least, will be adjusted to market developments.

The suppliers always **deliver** the food by moped. Only one of the suppliers interviewed owns a car (pickup), but this is rarely available for transport. The use of mopeds has the advantage that practically every family member aged 13 and over (at least the children of better-off families of this age ride mopeds) can help out with deliveries. If the supplier is indisposed, the husband, wife (unlike in other SFPs examined!), siblings, parents or even the children can step in. This explains the almost uncanny reliability and punctuality of deliveries (cf. Appendix 6). In addition, even during the rainy season, mopeds are much better than cars at getting over the softened tracks.

5.2 The Producers of the Food

The local economic effects intended play an important role in the Cambodian concepts for school meals. In addition to the food suppliers, this refers primarily to the food producers and local traders. The latter include **butchers** and meat shops in the small central markets that can be found everywhere. While the butcher's trade is only practiced by men, we found almost

[25] However, in the event of price increases in the vegetable sector, there was a desire and the opportunity to switch to cheaper varieties, as we also noted at the time in 2018. Individual school management teams have also turned a blind eye to quantities when profits have obviously fallen too sharply.

only women at the meat stalls in the markets (cf. Fig. 42). Some of their customers are regularly buy from the same stall and others are the usual walk-in customers. Between 25 and 75 kg of pork are sold per day. If a supplier for the HGSF is added, sales can easily increase by 50 % two days a week.

Fishmongers and shops or market stalls selling **eggs** are also relevant for procurement in the SF context. Although there are duck farms in almost all provinces in Cambodia which additionally or primarily produce eggs, similar to vegetables (cf. below), duck farming depends on the availability of water, in this case, ponds with water all year round. However, these are often not available at a local or even district level, which is why several suppliers have to buy the eggs required in all meal plans, at least occasionally, exclusively from retailers at local markets. At best, a few animals are kept on private farms, which would not be able to cover the needs of one or more schools (e.g. 200–300 or more eggs on some days), even if the owners were to sell the eggs. There were also no egg producers among the suppliers interviewed.

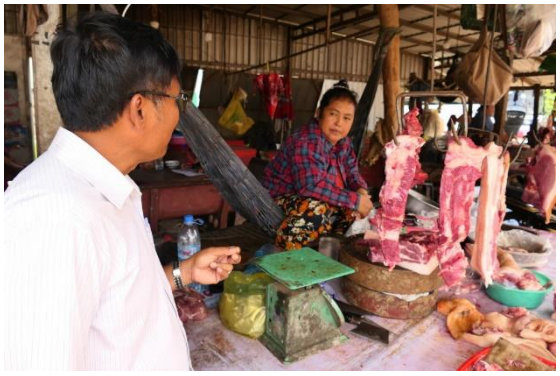
As newcomers to this business, suppliers also have to rely on shops or market stalls for **vegetables,** especially at the beginning of their activities, because vegetable production in the neighbourhood of the schools to be supplied is often geared primarily towards the subsistence of hh and less towards local trade (cf. below). As has been mentioned already, those suppliers who grow their own vegetables or can buy directly from the producers have a price advantage and, therefore, a higher profit, but this is initially not possible in many communities for the reasons mentioned, and even those with good relationships with local producers always have to buy some of their produce from retailers. This applies to the cauliflowers and carrots listed in the procurement lists alone, which are not (or cannot be) grown locally anywhere.

Pork is procured almost exclusively from local or provincial markets. Among the suppliers interviewed, there was only one who bred pigs himself but left the slaughtering to a butcher.

In some areas, there is hardly any or no **aquaculture** or there are no natural waters with fish, meaning that fish must be sourced exclusively from the trade, which obtains its goods from other regions of the country (cf. Fig. 43).

Fig. 42 (*left*): Conversation with a pork retailer. Sales can be increased by 25 % per day through close cooperation with a supplier.

Fig. 43 (*right*): A market stall with vegetables and fish.



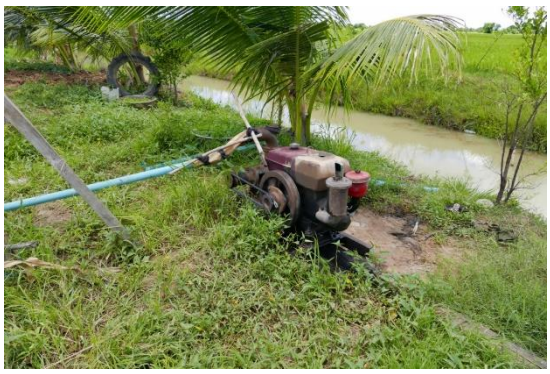
As the profit margin for rice is rather low, even before the price increase in 2023, suppliers have to try to get their hands on vegetables as quickly as possible, especially at low prices. If you go to urban food markets in Cambodia, you will be amazed at the quantity and variety of fruit and vegetables on offer. However, the goods at such markets come via national trade

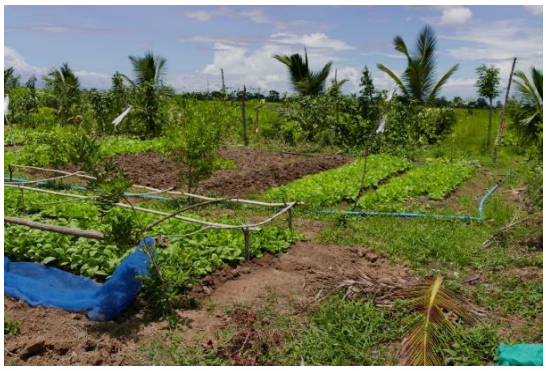
from all regions of the country and possibly also from neighbouring Thailand. The situation is different in many rural areas, where there is still a relatively good supply at the more centralised markets, but not at many local markets. This is due to the fact that vegetables require irrigation outside the rainy season, which is mostly reserved for the cultivation of rice and, in hilly areas, the production of manioc (cassava). This, in turn, depends on the existence of canals that carry water all year round and/or a groundwater table close to the surface. Even then, outside the dry season, a pump (diesel engine or powered by electricity) is required, which, in turn, requires some capital, or a farm that also irrigates during the rainy season and already has a pump (cf. Fig. 44).

On the one hand, growing vegetables is very labour-intensive, which can be done almost incidentally in the usually small and smallest home gardens that are watered with a watering can from a well. However, suppliers should have quantities in the range of 20 to 50 kg of different types of vegetables available per day and there should be no more than three or four suppliers in order to keep labour costs low. They should also grow their vegetables not far from their place of residence. As a result, a number of suppliers in many places are initially unable to buy vegetables from the farm and must first try to find willing women and men who are prepared to expand their subsistence production.

Fig. 44 (*left*): Water is channelled from a canal that carries water all year round to a large vegetable garden using this diesel pump.

Fig. 45 (*right*): The water is piped to the fields, here mainly water spinach (morning glory) and Chinese cabbage, over an area totalling more than 2,000 m². The farmer is expected to supply 30 kg of water spinach per day all year round, with a total sales value of US$ 3,900 for the SF.





Thanks to the activities from the NGO sector, the cultivation of vegetables is already being promoted in some communities with SF, so that even in places where few vegetables have been produced to date, there is already an impetus to expand cultivation. The support for the farms also goes one step further: The advice provided by the NGOs is not only aimed at expanding vegetable production in order to increase the families' income, but also at using organic cultivation methods. By being able to avoid the use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides, vegetable producers are responding to the desire of many SF managers in schools and communities to supply "healthy food", which is nothing other than a call for organic produce. This is a trend that we already observed in our earlier study from 2018. However, it was also often claimed in conversations that local products are fundamentally "healthier" than those bought on the market from other regions of the country, which is not true in the first instance if the organic production method cannot be assumed to be guaranteed.

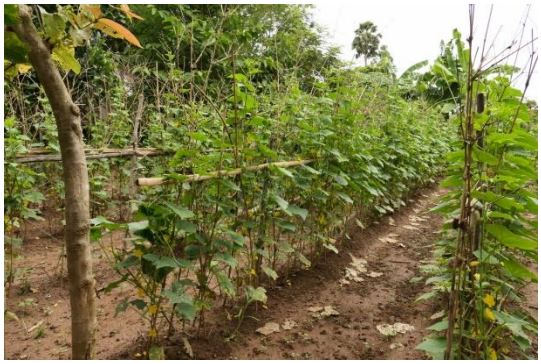
The target group of the NGO agricultural counselling is primarily women who do not yet have their own income. However, so far, there is no direct link between the NGO project and

the SFP, therefore, the concurrence of the HGSF-induced need for vegetables and the expansion of vegetable production as a result of the advice given to the women is more of a coincidence. The result is positive in any case, as we were able to see when we visited around a dozen of these producers in various provinces and municipalities.

Our dialogue partners are, in fact, often poorer women, but they must own a suitable piece of land. The plots are usually between 100 and 500 metres^2 in size. The smaller areas can still be irrigated with a watering can, the larger ones usually have a borehole, which is equipped with a hand pump in older systems, but is now operated with a small, cheap electric pump, since almost all villages are connected to the public electricity grid. A woman can manage the cultivation alone, often with the support of a neighbour who may also have a garden.

Fig. 46 (*left*): Green beans are grown here for the first time on a larger area due to the demand from the SF.

Fig. 47 (*right*): The women harvest water spinach, which is the backbone of the schools' vegetable requirements in many districts. The product is easy to grow, available all year round and is the cheapest vegetable for the schools.



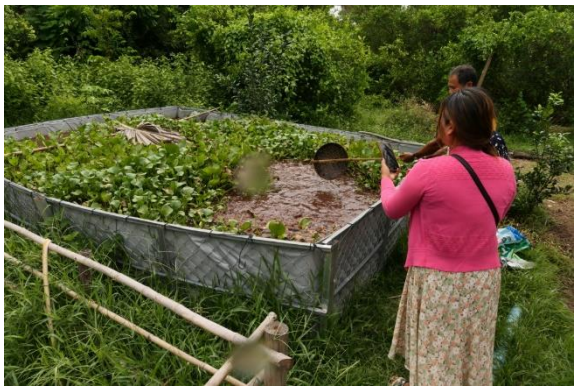
The costs for this type of cultivation are low, above all, the seed has to be purchased. As almost all hh, including the poorer ones, have a cow, manure is available, which is supplemented with compost and wood ash if necessary. Where the women have already received training, plant protection is carried out using tried and tested natural products, such as a decoction made from certain leaves. Sales are in the range of perhaps 5 to 10 kg of vegetables per day, which would amount to 10,000 to 20,000 Riel for water spinach (US$ 2.5 to 5 or US$ 75–150 per month) (cf. Fig. 47), and somewhat less for other vegetables, which, however, require less labour.

There are also regions with SF where vegetable cultivation has been practiced on a larger scale for some time. Here, too, the effects of the SFP have been positive, because, on the one hand, sales naturally increase due to the additional demand from the HGSF, on the other hand, certain vegetable varieties, such as green beans, which previously enjoyed a rather niche existence, are becoming more of a focus for farmers (cf. Fig. 46).

We were only able to visit two aquaculture operators as part of our study. In one case, the fish farm was set up by the supplier of the SFP for a larger cluster of schools specifically for the contractually agreed needs, but was expanded in its third year so that it can also produce for the general market. The woman has six mobile breeding tanks made of polythene film and two for rearing young fish (cf. Fig. 48).

Fig. 48 (*left*): The owner of the aquaculture facility feeds the fish with a fodder specially designed for the fish species being bred. The water hyacinths are intended to protect the tanks from the sun's rays.

Fig. 49 (*right*): On the tarpaulin are specimens of catfish, the main fish purchased by SF.



She can catch 10 kg of catfish for sale in one day, for which she earns 10,000–11,000 Riel/kg on the market. Suppliers who do not own fishponds and would have to buy the fish on the market are currently all paying almost exactly this price. However, since the selling price for fish at the end of 2022 was calculated at only 8,500 Riel when the contract was concluded on the MoA list, they are currently, i.e. in September 2023, forced to make a loss of up to 2,500 Riel per kg of fish delivered. At around 6,000 Riel per kg of fish produced, our fishpond owner still makes a profit of 2,500 Riel from selling to the SFP. If the price were to be raised to the current market price in 2024, they would make an impressive 5,500 Riel.

It should be noted regarding all information on food production that in the context of the SF, sales and deliveries relate to January to October of a year. Producers (and possibly also suppliers) have to look for other sources of supply in November and December during the school holidays. The gap of two months is not seen as particularly problematic by anyone. On the one hand, the local market is already receptive, especially for vegetables, because competing suppliers generally have higher costs due to transport. On the other hand, the question of origin seems to be becoming increasingly important – particularly in the case of vegetables – because, as has already been mentioned, "local" is increasingly equated with "healthy". Unlike with vegetables, the problem of a marketing break does not arise at all with

Box 5: The Food Deliveries: Five Case Studies

***Supplie*r 1 must compile the following goods and quantities for two schools for one day in August 2023 with the corresponding cost details:

- Pork 6.4 kg
- Chinese cabbage 2.6 kg
- Water spinach 4.9 kg
- Green papaya (as a vegetable) 6.6 kg
- Carrots 4.9 kg

The daily invoice for the delivery totalled 193,320 Riel (approx. US$ 48). The rice and cooking oil were delivered separately at the beginning of the month and invoiced accordingly.

rice, as it is a product that can be stored for a long time, and fish is in high demand everywhere, meaning that local production with short transport routes is always very competitive.

Supplier 2 is to deliver to seven schools in one day:

- 26 kg pork
- 85 kg vegetables
- 36 kg fish
- 397 eggs

Supplier 3 supplies two schools with the following order specifically for the preparation of "*koko*" planned for that day: 34.9 kg of fish and 76 kg of mixed vegetables.

Supplier 4 will deliver to four schools on the day of the survey:

- 20 kg fish
- 25 kg vegetables
- 15 kg pork
- 250 eggs

A total of 20 tonnes of rice, up to and including October 2023, will have been delivered.

Farmer 1 delivered to the supplier on the day of our visit:

- Long beans 3 kg
- Aubergines 3 kg
- Pumpkin 4 kg
- Loofah 4 kg
- Amaranth 6 kg[1]
- Water spinach 20 kg.

However, the woman does not harvest and sell every day, but only twice a week, which brings in around 80,000 Riel, at least for today's delivery.

Farmer 2 delivered 3 kg of water spinach and 2.5 kg of loofah. She received 12,500 Riel (US$ 3.13) for this. The woman can deliver similar quantities almost every day, including aubergines or beans, depending on the season, each of which costs a little more.

Farmer 3 is harvesting "long beans" at the time of the interview and will be able to deliver approx. 5 kg on the day in question, plus 30 kg of water spinach. He will be able to earn a total of around 100,000 Riel (approx. US$ 25) for this.

6. Effects and Challenges of School Meals

6.1 Effects of School Meals from the Perspective of the Various Stakeholders

The interviewees from the **administrations of the rural municipalities are** initially unanimously satisfied with the selection of some or all their primary schools for the SFP, although they consider the full HGSF to be the more favourable solution for the commune in any case. On the one hand, they see a considerable increase in workload due to the new tasks within the framework of the HGSF, above all the co-ordination of the tender and the subsequent monitoring, but, on the other hand, the gain in prestige due to the transfer of responsibility for the "extremely important school meals". Without being able to go into detail, the impact of school meals on the children is consistently seen as positive and a substantial contribution to poverty reduction. It is emphasised that the SFP makes no difference in the inclusion of children from poor and better-off families.

The **school headmasters** see themselves as the most important supporters of the programme and, similar to the representatives of the local authorities, they are proud that their own school is one of those selected for the SFP. They are, therefore, fully aware of their responsibility and, at least, in the interview with our team, accept the additional time burden without criticism. The fact that the SFP is also very high on the headteachers' list of responsibilities becomes clear when they repeatedly report having to fall back on their own small school budget when there is a shortfall in income for firewood and food ingredients and a meal might have to be cancelled. Individual teachers told us that in such cases, the headteacher paid for a purchase out of his or her own pocket or contributed the ice for storing the fresh produce free of charge.

Both headteachers and the 100 or so **teachers** involved in the discussions did not always agree on the effects of SF on the children and their school performance. However, there was 100 % agreement on the very positive effects on school attendance discipline: after the introduction of school meals, the children were much more punctual for lessons and, above all, did not run home during the break because they were hungry and then not come back.[26]

The school meals had led to an overall increase in classroom discipline: girls and boys were following lessons better and more attentively. However, there was disagreement in the responses to the question of whether the teachers had noticed differences in the learning success of boys and girls. Some stated that there were no differences, but a majority of both female and male teachers stated that girls had achieved more positive results than boys through good cooperation in class. On the part of the headteachers, school statistics from the sixth grade confirmed that today there are virtually no girls who fail to complete the year, which was quite common before the introduction of SF. As our initial statistics in chapter 3.3.2 show, almost all girls, but not all boys, continue to attend junior secondary high school (grades 7–9) after primary school.

[26] This was also frequently cited as a particularly important result of the SF in the 2018 INEF study on HGSF. The children were simply hungry without having had breakfast before starting school. Those who did not receive pocket money for snacks simply ran home after the first few lessons to get something there. If they did not find a parent there and could not find anything to eat themselves, many of them did not return to school.

From the point of view of the **parents and grandparents** we interviewed, two effects of the SF take centre stage: (i.) It was unanimously stated that there are currently no longer any problems sending the children to school in the morning, which was often the case before the start of the meal service. It was also confirmed that the children were no longer seen at home before the end of the school day. However, it was emphasised more clearly (ii.) that the children were less ill than before the introduction of SF, which some teachers had also noticed.

As expected, due to their young age, it was not possible to get a statement from the **pupils** about their success at school, but they did say that they would like to go to school (of course, children in Year 5 and 6 were not able to cite a time difference, i.e. a comparison with "earlier"). They also denied that any of their classmates would walk home to eat during the break. Overall, the children were very satisfied with the school meals (cf. chapter 4.4).

Other stakeholders, such as **village chiefs**, members of the SSC or representatives of the **school clusters** or the **MoE school departments** in the provinces, also emphasised that the children would rather go to school because of the SF than previously, and that it could be observed that the children are healthier today than before. However, this relates mainly to those schools for which such a statement can still be made objectively with some probability, i.e. those that were included in the programme in or after the 2015–2016 school year.

From the point of view of the **research team,** it should be added that school meals explicitly benefit the children of migrant workers. It is easier to leave them in the village and, thus, at school while their parents are away because they receive school meals and are, therefore, less of a burden on their grandparents and certainly even more so on distant relatives or even neighbours or other caregivers. There are obviously a number of (extremely) poor hh for whom a hot meal a day is of considerable value, even in a "lower middle-income country" such as Cambodia. These include particularly those who do not migrate to Thailand or other countries for work and are, thus, able to take in their children. In any case, grandparents especially stated that they had ID Poor cards, i.e. that they were among the extremely poor.

The effects of the SFP also include those on the **local economy**. Here, too, the findings of the older INEF study from 2018 were essentially confirmed that the expenditure on school meals has a recognisable impact on trade and agriculture. The schools that have introduced full HGSF produce an average of 5 tonnes of rice, which is purchased locally. The few figures in Box 5 also show the extent to which one or two schools require meat, fish, eggs and, above all, vegetables, and the amounts of income that these seemingly small amounts add up to. A requirement of 85 kg of vegetables per day, amounts to 20.4 tonnes on 240 supply days. Taking into account the mostly small areas of the supplying farmers, this includes quite a large number of producers who all experience a considerable increase in income. Even if this were only US$ 3.13 p.d. for this micro-producer, it still adds up to US$ 750 per school year, which is almost a net amount, as only the seed has to be paid for.

We had already found some indications of the **social effects of the programme** in our earlier studies. The cohesion between the school, the municipal administration and the village community(ies) is certainly promoted. Although the SSC already existed in the past, the introduction of the SF has given the committee a permanent and important role, which is why local authorities are increasingly involved in individual committees. Some SSCs now even include the village chiefs, who, according to their own statements, are also involved in day-

to-day business, for example, in the supply of firewood to the school and, in three cases, stated that they had repeatedly organised this personally.[27]

Today, all heads of local government have declared (HG)SF to be a top priority and even take care of its implementation beyond their actual area of responsibility in the SF context, for example, when funds have to be raised for a kitchen or a canteen building. Although this is still only happening to a limited extent, it shows – similar to other countries in the INEF research project – the broad approval and appreciation of school meals in general.

Nutritional and physiological effects as well as **hygiene effects** beyond the target group of schoolchildren are only just beginning to emerge and should, therefore, be monitored more closely. In any case, discussions with parents and the pupils themselves show that parents are beginning to respond to their children's reports and requests, both in terms of the composition of the food (especially seasoning or more vegetables, as the example of "koko" shows) and slight improvements in hygiene behaviour when vegetables are washed better or hands are washed before eating at *home.*

6.2 Some Challenges

The current 2023 school year has not gone well economically for **food suppliers**, especially those who have to supply schools with full HGSF on the basis of contracts concluded at the end of 2022. Positive yields for meat and vegetables can generally compensate for the significant price increases for rice, oil and fish, but they have significantly reduced profits. Those who supply hybrid schools do not have the problem with rice and oil and achieve an average yield, which the interviewees rate as "satisfactory to good". With the exception of one supplier, who has been awarded a multi-year contract, all want to apply for the coming year 2024 at the end of 2023. Surprisingly, this also applies to those who performed less well as rice suppliers. However, both groups hope that the MoA will adjust the calculation for the individual delivery items for 2024 in line with inflation or, alternatively, that the price for rice (and oil), at least, can be adjusted in line with market developments over the coming year.

The only aspect on which there were predominantly critical comments and negative to very negative assessments during the survey was the **salaries of the cooks**, which only reach a level of US$ 50 p.m. for 10 months in some of the schools under full HGSF. Some municipalities only pay half this amount (US$ 25) and the schools that are still managed by the WFP pay even less because the only funds available here are from voluntary payments by parents and donations, which may also have to be used to pay for firewood and all the ingredients for the sauce.[28]

In view of the municipalities' tight budgets, which we were given as 40–70 million Riel p.a. depending on the number of inhabitants (i.e. around US$ 10–17,500), the current expenditure of US$ 50 p.m. each for the cooks' salaries at the HGSFs, which are fully managed by the state, represents a substantial **financial burden on the municipalities' coffers**. This amounts to US$ 1,200 for only two cooks, or, in the former case, 12 % of the annual budget. If three schools with two cooks each were counted, the same community would have to pay US$ 3,000 (= 60

[27] A village chief told us that after a bad collection among the parents, there was no more money to buy firewood. So, he took his *kuyun*, hitched up the trailer and drove from house to house to collect the logs he needed for the next few days.

[28] In some hybrid schools that continue to be managed by the WFP, both the local authorities and the schools themselves make a contribution from parental contributions or the school budget.

person-months at US$ 50 each) or 30 % of its total budget, even with the currently rather meagre wages. Another problem is that there are no substantial variable/discretionary funds in the budgets, as the salaries of some employees (e.g. the teachers of the preschool classes) are already fixed.

Reports on SF in Cambodia have not yet addressed an apparent side issue, the very common "**school kiosks**" and the **snacks** sold there. We found the "kiosks" were, even in the schoolyards, mainly simple open stalls, and in the form of permanently installed huts or even in school buildings, in several cases, equipped with grills and/or cooking appliances, in 22 of the 28 schools (cf. Appendix 3). This included two stalls in six schools, three in four others and even four stalls in one. This contradicts the Cambodian health policy for the school sector, which explicitly demands that the provision of sugary drinks and food should be prohibited in preschools and primary schools, although it is admitted that this requirement has not yet been fully implemented (KoC 2022: 4).[29]

However, some schools – whether in awareness of the guidelines or due to the health awareness we have repeatedly observed since 2017 (e.g. "buy healthy local products" and "our products are organic") – are already reducing the snack vendors' offerings by completely banning packaged sweets and stipulating that only fruit and homemade cakes or "*sticky rice*" wrapped in banana leaves may be sold.

The snack offers have the advantage for the schools that, on the one hand, cooks are given the opportunity to supplement their low salaries with a stall. Other headteachers emphasise that they deliberately tolerate the snack stalls because they can generate rental income, which in turn benefits the SF (cf. school 11 in Appendix 5, which generates 250,000 Riel per month).

Fig. 50 and 51: Snack stalls densely packed with children, both permanently installed in the schools and offering a wide range of food, drinks and, on the right, plastic toys and cheap costume jewellery in addition to school supplies.

There was a large **presence of women** (mothers and grandmothers) in all discussions, but, at the same time, the impression was reinforced that women were sometimes not represented at all on the boards of the various stakeholder groups and among the spokespersons of the committees, and, otherwise, to a much lesser extent than men. Women seem to play a particularly minor role in the SSCs, although in the families, for example, payments in the SSC context often have to be made jointly by the parents. In many cases, it is even the mothers who pay the contributions and give the children pocket money for snacks in the morning.

[29] The 2019 National Health Policy for Schools already calls for the establishment of health standards and their monitoring in educational institutions (GRC 2019: 3).

At the same time, we search in vain for **participative elements**, for example, in the contributions to be collected for the SSC. Parents are informed, but, for the most part, they are not consulted and certainly no vote is taken on the requirements of the school management or the SSC. Instead, they are informed in meetings about the amount of money required for the SF, the amount requested and how the money should be paid. At the same time, the parents are occasionally given rough information about the SF. Our question regarding whether more intensive discussions about nutrition and hygiene took place in everyday life with the parents was answered in the negative in the schools we visited, even by the parents.

The two evaluations of the USDA and KOICA contributions to the HGSF confirm that the programme promotes **gender equality** by supporting boys and girls in overcoming educational barriers (cf. WFP 2023a and WFP/USDA 2023). So far, however, little impetus has been given to gender equality in the SSC environment; the majority of the poorly paid work of cooks is done by women, and mothers/grandmothers are represented in the SSC to a much lesser extent than fathers/grandfathers. However, care must be taken to ensure that better-paid kitchen positions are not suddenly taken over by a majority of men, and women are forced out of the job.

Energy-saving cookers play an important role in SF as long as most schools in Cambodia (including all 28 schools in our sample) use **firewood as an energy source** for the kitchen. Consequently, the WFP or advisory NGOs endeavoured to introduce and use these facilities. In fact, almost all schools use improved cookers more or less exclusively, but not all of the systems installed are fully functional. It was found in some kitchens that the draught was too low because the internal structure of the cookers had an extraction channel that was too narrow. Corresponding quality controls ("technical acceptance"), therefore, do not appear to take place, or only to a limited extent.

7. Final Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 Findings and Conclusions

Based on the results of the study, there is no doubt that the Cambodian SFP should be continued and expanded. All expected and some unplanned results were achieved according to the interviewees. The expected results include:

- the relatively trouble-free implementation of both the hybrid and the full HGSF approach in general;
- the SF requires considerable commitment from the most important stakeholder groups in order to be implemented properly;
- a predominantly good level of information, particularly among state actors (DoA, school clusters, school headmasters and storekeepers, municipal employees) about the background to the programme (reasons and objectives) and their own role in its implementation;
- a well-organised and healthy supply of food to schools based on the specified standards, which far exceeds other country examples of INEF research;
- a comparatively helpful social environment for the schools, for example, the commitment of village leaders and parts of the population (including those with no connection to the school), which can mobilise donations of money and goods;
- a very positively developed infrastructure compared to previous years, especially in terms of connecting schools to the public electricity grid, and regarding the water supply including the availability of internal water networks almost everywhere, at least at school level;
- contractually loyal suppliers who continue to operate at a high level even in the face of price increases and the corresponding negative development of their own profit expectations;
- a positive to very positive assessment of the effects of SF on the pupils by the children's parents, the school management and the teaching staff;
- a high level of satisfaction among the children themselves, who rate the school meals on a par with the meals at home or even better (also taking into account niceness expressed during the interviews);
- recognisable effects of the SF accompanying measures in the WASH sector on the behaviour in the hh of the pupils in the area of hygiene and food preparation;
- good cooperation between the different stakeholder groups almost everywhere, whereby the interaction between parents and those responsible for SF can certainly be expanded; and
- an enhancement of the institution of the school as a whole as an important centre of social coexistence.

In the view of the study team, the following points should be addressed:

- more sustainable safeguarding of food supplies by strengthening suppliers through fairer contract pricing;
- in some communities, the expansion of offerings in the vegetable sector (higher local production) through the provision of funding opportunities (access to loans and, above all, advice). However, the promotion itself cannot be the task of the SFP;
- closing gaps in the connection of schools to a public drinking water network where available; where this is not possible, ensuring the water supply from their own sources and particularly the drinking water supply;
- relieving headteachers and storekeepers of unnecessary bureaucracy, especially where the prevention of corrupt behaviour is not involved;
- in general, expanding the opportunities for parents to participate in decisions about the SF at their children's school, introducing consultations, and, better still, enabling participation in decision-making;
- increasing the presence of women (mothers, grandmothers), especially among the members of the SSC and its spokespersons; and
- explaining the basics of SF better to parents with the aim of bringing important information about healthy eating and hygiene behaviour to families and contributing to changes there too.

7.2 Recommendations

→ ***Continue and expand school meals in the long term***: This is absolutely necessary to maintain the very good enrolment rate and, above all, the significant decline in dropouts. In addition, the continuation of the programme is the most frequently expressed wish of all stakeholders, from the *mekhum* to the village chiefs, school officials and parents to the children themselves.

→ ***Clarify the role of local authorities in SF funding***: The role of the municipalities would need to be clarified more clearly as part of the full HGSF. The central question would be: Are they responsible for paying the cooks? If so, it would be necessary to adjust their budgets so that they can pay all cooks roughly the Cambodian minimum wage for comparable work (cf. below).

→ ***Relieve the headteachers***: The headteachers should be relieved of the work they currently have to do in the context of SF to be able to continue to fulfil all tasks related to the management of a school with the same level of commitment. The storekeeper, for example, who is already involved with the menu, could take care of the deliveries together with a parent (?), so that the headteacher does not have to spend time on this every day. Whether headteachers really need to travel to meetings at district level so often to deal with bureaucratic matters in person should also be reconsidered.

→ ***Relieve the warehouse staff***: Warehouse staff are already heavily burdened with bureaucratic tasks, including the daily inspection of deliveries and the distribution of staple foods. The collection and processing of non-essential statistical data should be dispensed with to prevent the risk of no longer finding volunteers and having to appoint people who would be reluctant to fulfil this task. In addition, consideration should be given at a MoE level to

compensating teachers working as warehouse staff with several hours deducted from their weekly workload. A minimum of two hours per week should be set here.

→ ***Pay cooks in line with the minimum wage***: In order to encourage volunteering and motivate women and men to replace retiring cooks, similar to warehouse staff, salaries should be adjusted, i.e. increased more in some cases and generally appropriately. This could be done on the basis of an approach of, for example, 24 hours per week (24/40 of the minimum wage for people with comparable qualifications). However, care must be taken to ensure that the ratio of cooks to schoolchildren does not deteriorate further in view of rising costs.

→ ***Price adjustment of the base price for food in 2024:*** The following two adjustments would have to be made for the 2024 price calculation to maintain the circle of suppliers for food and, if possible, increase the number of applicants: Firstly, the MoA's specifications for the individual items should reflect the current market situation at the end of the year, and, secondly, it is recommended that a clause be included in the contracts that allows the company to react to substantial price increases on the national market for rice (possibly also for cooking oil) with an adjustment.

→ ***Promote the expansion and diversification of vegetable cultivation***: *Commune leaders* and *village chiefs* should be approached to motivate women and men with suitable plots of land to grow vegetables to extend the positive development of vegetable production in a number of communities to those that have too few producers or too little supply to date. Wherever possible, links to agricultural cooperatives could be established to make it easier for potential vegetable farmers to access favourable loans. Attempts should also be made to focus the advisory services offered by NGOs in organic horticulture specifically on the target group.

Literature

ASB. Asian Development Bank (2021): Cambodia Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Rural Development Sector Assessment, Strategy, and Road Map. Manila.

AU. African Union (2021): African Union Biennial Report on Home-Grown School Feeding (2019-2020). Addis Ababa.

Bekri, Mohammed et al. (2023): Effect of school feeding program on body mass index of primary school adolescents in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: A prospective cohort study. In: Frontiers in Nutrition 9. Source: https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36698481/ [11/2023].

BTI. Bertelsmann Transformation Index (2022): Cambodia Country Report 202. Gütersloh.

Bliss, Frank (2017): Home-Grown School Feeding as a "Good Practice" for Poverty Alleviation and Nutrition Security in Cambodia. AVE-Study 4/2017. INEF: Duisburg.

Bliss, Frank (2018): Healthcare for the poorest: The Heath Equity Fund (HEF) in Cambodia. AVE-Study 11/2018. INEF: Duisburg.

Bliss, Frank (2021): Local Procurement for School Feeding: The Home-Grown School Feeding Programme of the World Food Programme in Cambodia. In: Swensson, Luana F. J. et al. (eds.): Public Food Procurement for Sustainable Food Systems and Healthy Diets. Volume 2. FAO: Rome.

Bliss, Frank (2022): "Micro" financing in Cambodia: Developments, challenges and recommendations. AVE-Study 30/2018. INEF: Duisburg.

Bliss, Frank / Gutema, Tamene Hailegiorgis (2023): School feeding with local procurement in Ethiopia. AVE-Study 35/2023. INEF: Duisburg.

Brothwell, Patricia and Don (1984): Manna and Millet: A cultural history of nutrition. Mainz.

CEDAW NGO (2019): CEDAW and Cambodia: Men Still Benefit from Double Standards. Source: https://t1p.de/79lik [10/2023].

CIA. Central Intelligence Agency (2023): The World Fact Book Cambodia - Country Summary. Source: https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/ethiopia/summaries [9/2023]. Washington, D.C.

Cohen, Juliana E.W. et al. (2021): Universal School Meals and Associations with Student Participation, Attendance, Academic Performance, Diet Quality, Food Security, and Body Mass Index: A Systematic Review. In: Nutrients 13(911). Source: https://doi.org/10.3390/nu13030911 [9/2023].

d-maps. D-maps (n.d.): Cambodia: Borders, Provinces, Names. Source: https://www.d-maps.com/carte.php?num_car=5448&lang=de [3/2024].

Evans, Martin et al. (2023): Financing social assistance in lower-income countries post-Covid-19: An exploration of realistic options. ODI Working Paper. London.

FAO. Food and Agriculture Organisation (2023): The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2023. Rome.

Gaesing, Karin / Bliss, Frank (2023): School Feeding in Benin: Actors, Progress, and challenges. AVE-Study 34. INEF: Duisburg.

gcnf. The Global Child Nutrition Foundation (2019): gncf Global Survey of School Meal Programmes. Kingdom of Cambodia (for school year 2017/2018). Seattle.

gccf. The Global Child Nutrition Foundation (2021): gncf Global Survey of School Meal Programmes. Kingdom of Cambodia (for school year 2020-2021).

GRC. Gouvernement Royale du Cambodge (2019): Politique nationale sur la Santé Scolaire. Phnom Penh.

Greenhalgh, Trisha et al (2007): Realist review to understand the efficacy of school feeding programmes. In: British Medical Journal 335: pp. 858-861.

Hennecke, Rosa / Schell, Oliver / Bliss, Frank (2017): Land security to ensure survival: A study on the communal land titling programme for indigenous peoples in Cambodia. AVE-Study 3/2017. INEF: Duisburg.

Hennecke, Rosa / Bliss, Frank / Schell, Oliver (2018): Land allocation for the poorest: Studies on social land concessions in Cambodia. AVE Study 7/2018. INEF: Duisburg.

Hennecke, Rosa / Bliss, Frank (2018): Who are the poorest in the village? The ID Poor approach identifies the poor in Cambodia in a participatory and transparent way. AVE-Study 9/2017. INEF: Duisburg.

IWGIA. International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (2022): Indigenous Peoples in Cambodia. Source: https://www.iwgia.org/en/cambodia.html [11/2022].

KoC. Kingdom of Cambodia (1993): The Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia. Phnom Penh.

KoC. Kingdom of Cambodia (2016): National Action Plan for the Zero Hunger Challenge in Cambodia. Phnom Penh.

KoC. Kingdom of Cambodia (2017): Criminal Code of the Kingdom of Cambodia. Phnom Penh.

KoC. Kingdom of Cambodia (2019a): National Policy on School Health. Phnom Penh.

KoC. Kingdom of Cambodia (2019b): The Second National Strategy for Food Security and Nutrition 2019-2023. Phnom Penh.

KoC. Kingdom of Cambodia (2020): Cambodia Inter-censal Agriculture Survey 2019 (CIAS 2019): Selection of Thematic Maps. Phnom Penh.

KoC. Kingdom of Cambodia (2021): Cambodia's Roadmap for Food Systems for Sustainable Development 2030. Phnom Penh.

KoC. Kingdom of Cambodia (2022a): National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women 2019-2023. Phnom Penh.

KoC. Kingdom of Cambodia (2022b): Child Protection Sector Strategic Implementation Plan 2022-2026. Phnom Penh.

KoC. Kingdom of Cambodia (2022c): National Action Plan on School Health 2021-2020. Phnom Penh.

KoC. Kingdom of Cambodia (2023): Action Plan on Improving Alternative Care for Children 2023-2027. Phnom Penh.

KoC. Kingdom of Cambodia. The Royal Government of Cambodia (2017): National Social Protection Policy Framework. Phnom Penh 2017.

KoC. Kingdom of Cambodia. Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (2022): Joint Transition Strategy Towards a Nationally Owned Home-Grown School Feeding Programme. Phase 1: 2022-2025. Phnom Penh.

KoC. Kingdom of Cambodia. Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (2023a): Minimum standards for schools as a good example for school feeding programmes (original in Khmer, translation by INEF). Phnom Penh.

KoC. Kingdom of Cambodia. Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (2023b): Action plan for the implementation of school feeding programmes for the school year 2022/2023. (original in Khmer, translation by INEF). Phnom Penh.

KoC / JICA. Kingdom of Cambodia. Ministry of Women's Affairs / Japan International Cooperation Agency (2023a): Women's Economic Empowerment in Rural Areas of Cambodia. Phnom Penh.

KoC / JICA. Kingdom of Cambodia. Ministry of Women's Affairs / Japan International Cooperation Agency (2023b): Project on Gender Mainstreaming for Women's Economic Empowerment (PGM-WEE): Project Completion Report. Phnom Penh.

KoC / NIS. Kingdom of Cambodia / National Institute of Statistics (2018): Women and Men in Cambodia: Facts and Figures 2018. Phnom Penh.

KoC / NIS. Kingdom of Cambodia / National Institute of Statistics (2020): Report of Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2019/20. Phnom Penh.

Kosal, Nith (2019): Cambodian place in the International trade of Textile and Clothing: Threat and Opportunity. MPRA Munich Personal RePEc Archive. MPRA Paper No. 98591. Source: https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/98591/ [11/2022].

Leisering, Lutz (2017): Global social security policy. In: Yeates, Nicola (ed.): Understanding global social policy, pp. 319-344. Bristol University Press: Bristol.

Martens Jens / Obenland, Wolfgang (2015): The 2030 Agenda: Global goals for sustainable development. Bonn.

MRGI. Minority Rights Group International (2019): World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Groups. S.n. Cambodia.

OHCHR. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (2015): LGBT Rights. Source: https://cambodia.ohchr.org/en/issues/lgbt-rights-0 [20/2023].

OHCHR. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (2019): Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination reviews report of Cambodia, asks about nationality, land grabs and civic space. Source: https://t1p.de/rayjw [10/2023].

OPHI / UNDP. Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative / United Nations Development Programme (2022): Unpacking depreviation bundles to reduce multidimensional poverty. New York, NY / Oxford.

Prümm, Marie Florence (2023): The gender dimension of hunger: Development policy compact (KfW Development Research). Frankfurt.

SDSN. Sustainable Development Solutions Network (2023): Sustainable Development Report 2023: Implementing the SDSG Stimulus. Dublin.

Sokhan, Synoda (2015): Life Outside the Home. Interrogation Men's Understanding of Their Roles in Cambodia (MA Thesis). Wellington.

statista (2023): Cambodia: Population development from 1950 to 2022 and projections to 20250. Source: https://de.statista.com/map/asien/kambodscha/ [10/2023].

Swensson, Luana F. et al (2021): Public Food Procurement for Sustainable Food Systems and Healthy Diets. Volume 2. Source: https://doi.org/10.4060/cb7969en [5/2023]. FAO et al.: Rome.

The Global Economy (2023): Cambodia (various keywords). Source: https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/ [10/2023].

Tradingeconomics (2023): Cambodia GDP: Forecast. Source: https://tradingeconomics.com/cambodia/gdp [10/2023].

UN. United Nations (2015): Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. New York, NY.

UN. United Nations in Cambodia (2022): Gender Equality Deep-Dive for Cambodia: Common Country Analysis. Phnom Penh.

UN. United Nations in Cambodia (2023): Annual Result Report 2022 Cambodia. Phnom Penh.

UNDP. United Nations Development Programme (2021): The Gender Wage Gap in Cambodia. Phnom Penh.

UNDP. United Nations Development Programme (2022a): Human Development Report 2021-22 Uncertain Times, Unsettled Lives: Shaping Future in a Transforming World. New York, NY.

UNDP. United Nations Development Programme (2022b): Socioeconomic Impacts of the COVID-19 Cash Transfer Programme in Cambodia: Micro and Macro-Level Evaluations. Phnom Penh.

UNICEF (2023): An Analysis of Sustainable Development Goal 4 Benchmark Indicators: Cambodia Socio-Economic Surveys 2015-2019. Phnom Penh.

UNODC. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2022): Violence of any kind is not how you show love! - spreading the message on getting help after experiencing gender-based violence in Cambodia. Source: https://t1p.de/s8fw9 [10/2023].

UN Women (2023): Cambodia. Source: https://data.unwomen.org/country/cambodia [10/2023].

USAID (2023): Cambodia: Education and Child Protection. Source: https://www.usaid.gov/cambodia/education [10/2023].

USAID et al. (2018): Cambodia Atlas of Gender and Environment (by The Asia Foundation). San Francisco.

US Embassy in Phnom Penh (2022): Cambodia 2022 Human Rights Report. Source: https://kh.usembassy.gov [10/2023].

US Embassy in Phnom Penh (2023): Trafficking in Persons Report June 2023. Source: https://kh.usembassy.gov/2023-trafficking-in-persons-report-cambodia [10/2023].

WB. World Bank (2022a): World Bank Open Data s.n. Cambodia. Source: https://data.worldbank.org [11/2023].

WB. World Bank (2022b): Cambodia: Overview. Source: https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/cambodia/overview#1 [11/2023].

WB. World Bank (2023a): Cambodia Economic Update: May 2023. Washington, D.C.

WB. World Bank (2023b): Data for Cambodia. Source: e.g. at https://data.worldbank.org/?locations=KH-VN-MM [10/2023].

WB. World Bank (2023c): Gender Data Portal: Cambodia. Source: https://genderdata.worldbank.org/countries/cambodia/ [10/2023].

WFP. World Food Programme et al. (2018): Home-Grown School Feeding: Resource Framework, Technical Document. Rome.

WFP. World Food Programme (2022a): Introduction à l'analyse "Combler le déficit en nutriments". Rome.

WFP. World Food Programme (2022b): State of School Feeding Worldwide 2022. Rome.

WFP. World Food Programme (2023a): Midterm Activity Evaluation of the KOICA supported Home-Grown School Feeding Programme in Cambodia in Kampong Thom, Kampong Chhnang and Pursat Provinces: Decentralised Evaluation Report. Rome.

WFP World Food Programme (2023b): Cambodia. Source: https://www.wfp.org/countries/cambodia [11/2023].

WFP / USDA. World Food Programme / United States Department of Agriculture (2022): Midterm Activity Evaluation of USDA Local and Regional Food Aid Procurement Grant (LRP-442-2019-011-00) for WFP School Feeding in Cambodia. Decentralised Evaluation Report. Rome.

Willetts, Juliet et al. (2023): Gender, water, sanitation, and hygiene: Three opportunities to build from recent reporting on global progress, 2020-2022. In: PLoS Med 20(10): e1004297. Source: https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1004297 [11/2023].

Previously published in the series:

Publications are available in the language of the title listed. Publications marked with an asterisk are additionally available in French.

AVE Studies

AVE-Study 1/2017	Mahla / Bliss / Gaesing: Wege aus extremer Armut, Vulnerabilität und Ernährungsunsicherheit. Begriffe, Dimensionen, Verbreitung und Zusammenhänge
AVE-Study 2/2017	Bliss / Gaesing / Mahla: Die Verstetigung von Armut in Entwicklungsländern. Ursachenanalyse und Gegenstrategien
AVE-Study 3/2017	Hennecke / Schell / Bliss: Landsicherheit zur Überlebenssicherung. Eine Studie zum Kommunalen Landtitelprogramm für indigene Bevölkerungsgruppen in Kambodscha
AVE-Study 4/2017*	Bliss: Home-Grown School Feeding as a "Good Practice" for Poverty Alleviation and Nutrition Security in Cambodia
AVE-Study 5/2017	Heinz: Benachteiligte Gruppen in der internationalen Entwicklungszusammenarbeit
AVE-Study 6/2017	Mahla / Gaesing: Der Selbsthilfegruppen-Ansatz am Beispiel von Kitui in Kenia. Armutsbekämpfung durch Empowerment
AVE-Study 7/2018	Hennecke / Bliss / Schell: Land Allocation for the Poorest. Landzuteilung für die Ärmsten. Untersuchungen zu Sozialen Landkonzessionen in Kambodscha
AVE-Study 7b/2018	Hennecke / Bliss / Schell: Land Allocation for the Poorest. Investigations Into Social Land Concessions in Cambodia
AVE-Study 8/2018	Mahla / Gaesing / Bliss: Maßnahmen zur Ernährungssicherung im entwicklungspolitischen Kontext
AVE-Study 9/2018	Hennecke / Bliss: Wer sind die Ärmsten im Dorf? Mit dem ID Poor-Ansatz werden die Armen in Kambodscha partizipativ und transparent identifiziert
AVE-Study 10/2018	Gaesing / Mahla: Hunger Safety Net Programme. Soziale Sicherung in Turkana County im Norden Kenias
AVE-Study 11/2018	Bliss: Gesundheitsfürsorge für die Ärmsten: Der „Health Equity Fund" (HEF) in Kambodscha
AVE-Study 12/2018	Mahla: Förderung von Agropastoralismus. Armuts- und Hungerbekämpfung durch integrierte ländliche Entwicklung in Samburu/Kenia
AVE-Study 12b/2018	Mahla: Promotion of Agropastoralism. Combating Poverty and Hunger Through Integrated Rural Development in Samburu, Kenya
AVE-Study 13/2019	Gaesing / Gutema: Bodenfruchtbarkeit und Ernährungssicherheit in der Amhara Region in Äthiopien
AVE-Study 14/2019	Bliss: Zum Beispiel Soja. Eine erfolgreiche Wertschöpfungskette im westafrikanischen Benin
AVE-Study 15/2018	Heinz: Verstetigte Armut als Herausforderung für die Entwicklungszusammenarbeit. Gibt es eine Kultur der Armut?

AVE-Study 16/2019	Bliss: Soziale Sicherung in Dürregebieten in Äthiopien durch das Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP)
AVE-Study 17/2019	Gaesing / Bliss: Entwicklung, Landrecht, Gender und Bodenfruchtbarkeit in Benin
AVE-Study 18/2019	Gaesing / Gutema: Reduzierung der Vulnerabilität durch nachhaltiges Ressourcenmanagement: Das Sustainable Land Management Project (SLMP) in Äthiopien
AVE-Study 19/2019	Herold: Improving Smallholders' Food Security and Resilience to Climate Change: The Building Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Extremes and Disasters (BRACED) Programme in Burkina Faso
AVE-Study 20/2019	Gaesing / Agbobatinkpo-Dahoun: Förderung der Bewässerung im Tal des Flusses Ouémé in Benin
AVE-Study 21/2019	Herold: Förderung der Reisproduktion durch die Inwertsetzung von Talauen in Burkina Faso
AVE-Study 22/2020	Gaesing: Zugang zu Land und Sicherung von Landrechten in der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit. Analysen und Empfehlungen
AVE-Study 22b/2020	Gaesing: Access to Land and Securing of Land Rights in Development Cooperation. Analyses and Recommendations
AVE-Study 23/2020	Herold: Landwirtschaftliche Wertschöpfungsketten in der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit. Analysen und Empfehlungen
AVE-Study 23b/2020	Herold: Agricultural Value Chains in Development Cooperation. Analyses and Recommendations
AVE-Study 24/2020	Bliss: Soziale Sicherungssysteme als unverzichtbarer Beitrag zur Bekämpfung von extremer Armut, Vulnerabilität und Ernährungsunsicherheit. Analysen und Empfehlungen
AVE-Study 25/2020	Bliss: Soziokulturelle Aspekte von Entwicklung, Partizipation und Gender. Analysen und Empfehlungen
AVE-Study 02/2021	Bliss / Gaesing / Mahla: Die Verstetigung von Armut in Entwicklungsländern (2. aktual. Auflage)
AVE-Study 02b/2021	Bliss / Gaesing / Mahla: The Perpetuation of Poverty in Developing Countries (2nd updated edition 2021)
AVE-Study 26/2022	Rieber / Bliss / Gaesing: Nachhaltige finanzielle Inklusion im ländlichen Raum
AVE-Study 26b/2022	Rieber / Bliss / Gaesing: Sustainable Financial Inclusion in the Rural Area
AVE-Study 27/2022	Rieber / Kiplagat / Gaesing: Sozialunternehmen in der Landwirtschaftsförderung – Das One Acre Fund Modell in Kenia
AVE-Study 27b/2022	Rieber / Kiplagat / Gaesing: Social Enterprises in Agricultural Promotion – The One Acre Fund Model in Kenya
AVE-Study 28/2022*	Gaesing / Koumaré / Koné / Rieber: Sozialunternehmen in der kleinbäuerlichen Landwirtschaftsförderung – Das myAgro Modell in Mali
AVE-Study 29/2022	Bliss: Ganzheitliche Landwirtschaftsförderung in Madagaskar. Ein Fallbeispiel aus der deutschen Technischen Zusammenarbeit
AVE-Study 30/2022	Bliss: „Mikro"finanzierung in Kambodscha: Entwicklungen, Herausforderungen und Empfehlungen

AVE-Study 30b/2022	Bliss: "Micro" Finance in Cambodia: Development, Challenges and Recommendations
AVE-Study 31/2022	Rieber / Okech: Der Nexus Formalisierung von Landrechten und Zugang zu Finanzdienstleistungen – Private Mailo und traditionelle Landrechte in Uganda
AVE-Study 31b/2022	Rieber / Okech: The Nexus Between Formalisation of Land Rights and Access to Financial Services – Private Mailo and Traditional Land Rights in Uganda
AVE-Study 32/2023	Bliss: Mikrofinanzierung in Usbekistan. Das Länderprogramm der deutschen Sparkassenstiftung
AVE-Study 33/2023*	Gaesing / Bliss: Die Situation der Agrarfinanzierung in Benin. Bedarf, Herausforderungen und Akteure
AVE-Study 34/2023*	Gaesing / Bliss / Agbobatinkpo-Dahoun / Dahoun: Schulspeisung in Benin. Akteure, Fortschritte und Herausforderungen
AVE-Study 34b/2023*	Gaesing / Bliss / Agbobatinkpo-Dahoun / Dahoun: School Feeding in Benin. Actors, Progress and Challenges
AVE-Study 35/2023	Bliss / Gutema: Schulspeisung mit lokaler Beschaffung in Äthiopien
AVE-Study 35b/2023	Bliss / Gutema: School Feeding with Local Procurement in Ethiopia
AVE-Study 36/2024	Bliss: Schulspeisung mit lokaler Beschaffung in Kambodscha

Good-Practice-Series

Good-Practice 00	Handreichung zur Good-Practice-Reihe
Good-Practice 01	KENIA: Mitunguu Smallholder Irrigation Project
Good-Practice 02	KAMBODSCHA: Das Kommunale Landtitelprogramm für indigene Bevölkerungsgruppen
Good-Practice 03	KAMBODSCHA: Schulspeisung mit lokaler Beschaffung
Good-Practice 04	KENIA: Der Selbsthilfegruppen-Ansatz in Kitui
Good-Practice 05	KAMBODSCHA: Verbesserung der Ernährungssicherung ehemals landloser und landarmer Haushalte
Good-Practice 06	KAMBODSCHA: Gesundheitsfürsorge für die Ärmsten durch den „Health Equity Fund“
Good-Practice 06B	CAMBODIA: Health Care for the Poorest Through the „Health Equity Fund“
Good-Practice 07	KAMBODSCHA: Wer sind die Ärmsten im Dorf? Erfahrungen mit dem ID Poor-Ansatz
Good-Practice 07B	CAMBODIA: Who Are the Poorest in the Village? Experience with the ID Poor Approach
Good-Practice 08	KENIA: Hunger Safety Net Programme – Soziale Sicherung in Turkana County im Norden Kenias
Good-Practice 09	KENIA: Diversifizierung der Existenzgrundlage durch Agropastoralismus
Good-Practice 10	ETHIOPIA: Landwirtschaftliche Produktion und Nahrungssicherheit in der Amhara Region

Good-Practice 10B	ETHIOPIA: Agricultural Production and Food Security in the Amhara Region
Good-Practice 11	ÄTHIOPIEN: Livelihoods for Transformation (LIFT) in der Oromiya Region
Good-Practice 12*	BENIN: Wiederherstellung der Bodenfruchtbarkeit im Norden Benins
Good-Practice 13*	BENIN: Das Beispiel Soja. Die Förderung einer Wertschöpfungskette in Benin
Good-Practice 14	ÄTHIOPIEN: Das nachhaltige Management natürlicher Ressourcen verringert Armut und Vulnerabilität
Good-Practice 14B	ETHIOPIA: Sustainable Management of Natural Resources Reduces Poverty and Vulnerability
Good-Practice 15	BENIN: „Positive Abweichung“: Arme Haushalte und trotzdem gesunde Kinder. Bekämpfung der Mangelernährung
Good-Practice 16	TSCHAD: Trinkwasserversorgung in Eigenregie der Bevölkerung
Good-Practice 17	ÄTHIOPIEN: Soziale Sicherung in Dürregebieten. Das Productive Safety Net Programme
Good-Practice 17B	ETHIOPIA: Social Security in Drought Areas. The Productive Safety Net Programme
Good-Practice 18*	BURKINA FASO: Bodenverbesserung durch den Bau von Steinwällen
Good-Practice 19	BURKINA FASO: The Building Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Extremes and Disasters Programme (BRACED)
Good-Practice 20	BURKINA FASO: Gut organisierte Frauenverbände zur Karitéverarbeitung
Good-Practice 21	BURKINA FASO: Förderung von Wertschöpfungsketten – Das Beispiel Mango
Good-Practice 22	ETHIOPIA: The R4 Initiative as a Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management Strategy to Build Rural Resilience in Tigray
Good-Practice 23	VIETNAM: Forstprogramm Vietnam. Schutz von Wäldern in Verbindung mit nachhaltiger Armutsminderung
Good-Practice 24*	MADAGASKAR: Ganzheitliche Landwirtschaftsförderung im Rahmen Technischer Zusammenarbeit
Good-Practice 25	KAMBODSCHA: Landwirtschaftliche Genossenschaften und Agrarfinanzierung
Good-Practice 25B	CAMBODIA: Agricultural Cooperatives and their Contribution to Agricultural Finance
Good-Practice 26	USBEKISTAN: Ländliche Finanzierung
Good-Practice 27	ÄTHIOPIEN: Nutzung von Landtiteln als Sicherheit zur Erlangung von Krediten im ländlichen Raum
Good-Practice 27B	ETHIOPIA: Use of Land Titles as Collateral to Obtain Credit in Rural Areas
Good-Practice 28	SAMBIA: Förderung der Agrarfinanzierung
Good-Practice 28B	ZAMBIA: Promotion of Agricultural Finance
Good-Practice 29	SAMBIA: Klimarisikoversicherungen Wege

Good-Practice 29B	ZAMBIA: Climate Risk Insurances
Good-Practice 30	SAMBIA: Förderung der Mechanisierung
Good-Practice 30B	ZAMBIA: Promotion of Mechanisation

Appendices

Appendix 1: Basic data of the schools included in the study: **School infrastructure (**1 = yes; 0 = no).

No.	Prov.	Commune	Water Net	Water Pump	Electricity Net	Solar Power	Garden in m²	Forest	Canteen	Start SF / Start HG
1	Bat	Thipadey	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2012
2	Bat	Thipadey	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2012
3	Bat	Don Ba	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	2012
4	Bat	Don Ba	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	2012
5	SR	Angkor Chum	1	1	1	1	100	0	1	2004
6	SR	Ta Saom	0	1	1	1	300	0	1	2016
7	SR	Preah Dak	1	1	1	0	160	0	1	2005
8	SR	Rumchek	1	1	1	0	600	0	0	2005
9	SR	Konk Thiok Kraom	0	0	1	0	50	0	0	2005
10	SR	Chamsor	0	1	1	0	56	0	1	2003/2021
11	SR	Popel	0	1	1	1	100	0	1	2006/2022
12	SR	Lvea Krang	0	1	1	0	50	0	1	2003/2023
13	SR	Srae nouy	0	1	1	0	200	1	1	2002/2023
14	KC	Thma Edth	1	1	1	0	300	0	1	2007
15	KC	Thma Edth	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2008
16	KC	Peani	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	2006
17	KC	Kraing Dei Meas	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	2016
18	KC	Svay Chrum	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	2010
19	prt	Bakan	?	1	1	1	30	0	1	2015/2022
20	prt	Kandieng	0	1	1	1	100	0	0	2009/2022
21	prt	Sya	0	1	1	1	400	0	0	2012/2019
22	prt	Sna Ansa	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	2016/2022
23	prt	Tnoat Chum	0	1	1	0	56	0	0	2004/2020
24	KT	Tbeang	0	1	1	0	36	0	1	2002/2017
25	KT	Tbeang	?	1	1	0	0	1	1	2002/2017
26	KT	Kampong Kor	0	1	1	0	120	1	1	2002/2017
27	KT	Ngean	1	1	1	0	150	1	0	2011/2022
28	KT	Ngean	1	1	1	0	64	1	1*	2011/2022

Note: * School uses the canteen as a classroom because it would otherwise be missing.

Appendix 2: Basic data of the schools included in the study: **Number of pupils** (by m = boys and f = girls).

No.	Province	School	Pre m	Pre f	Pre Σ	Prim m	Prim f	Prim Σ	6 m	6 f	6 Σ
1	Battambang	254	24	20	44	103	107	210	9	16	25
2	Battambang	469	20	48	78	206	185	391	33	27	60
3	Battambang	60	0	0	0	21	39	60	2	7	9
4	Battambang	160	15	15	30	71	59	130	9	16	25
5	Siem Reap	379	32	36	68	173	139	312	25	25	50
6	Siem Reap	192	16	17	33	64	75	139	12	8	20
7	Siem Reap	711	71	71	142	276	293	569	39	41	80
8	Siem Reap	365	21	24	45	181	139	320	25	22	47
9	Siem Reap	179	15	18	33	75	71	149	11	10	21
10	Siem Reap	204	9	12	23	85	82	167	6	10	16
11	Siem Reap	314	19	31	50**	135	129	264	22	17	39
12	Siem Reap	366	39	23	62	157	147	304	19	29	48
13	Siem Reap	778	36	47	83	384	311	695	39	37	76
14	K. Chhnang	371	29	36	65	156	150	306	31	30	61
15	K. Chhnang	164	15	19	34	130	60	70	7	8	15
16	K. Chhnang	574	41	44	85	257	232	489	35	41	76
17	K. Chhnang	665	87	73	160	260	245	505	37	30	67
18	K. Chhnang	336	42	25	67	159	110	269	27	18	45
19	Pursat	336	16	17	33	148	155	303	28	38	66
20	Pursat	289	27	27	54	114	121	235	12	18	30
21	Pursat	301	30	23	53	141	107	248	13	11	24
22	Pursat	176	18	13	31	76	69	145	18	13	31
23	Pursat	493	61	49	110	193	190	383	24	40	64
24	K. Thom	288	23	15	38	111	139	250	9	11	20
25	K. Thom	204	18	35	53	80	71	151	2	8	10
26	K. Thom	343	24	26	50	137	156	293	11	21	32
27	K. Thom	205	10	16	26	87	92	179	17	15	32
28	K. Thom	475	36	44	80	193	202	395	24	22	46
		9.651	**794**	**824**	**1.580**	**4.173**	**3.875**	**7.931**	**546**	**589**	**1.135**

Notes: * School is out of the ordinary due to a clear surplus of m. ** There are a number of schools where more children attend preschool and Year 1 than are registered. In this school, there are twice as many children in preschool as officially registered.

Appendix 3: Basic data of the schools included in the study: **Other basic data of the schools** (f = female, m = male).

No.	Province	Classes	Shifts°	Teach-er Σ	Teach-er f	Teach-er m	Cooks f	Cooks f	Child-ren / Cook	Shops for Snacks	Eating Time
1	Battamban g	7	1	8	6	2	2	1	85	2	6-6:40
2	Battamban g	17	1	18	11	7	3	1	117	1	6-8:00*
3	Battamban g	6	2	4	4	0	1	0	60	0	7:00
4	Battamban g	6	1	7	5	2	2	0	80	0	6:30
5	Siem Reap	8	2	16	9	7	2	0	137/51**	2	7:40
6	Siem Reap	7	2 **	9	1	8	2	0	96	0***	8:20
7	Siem Reap	20	2	20	5	15	1	1	150	3****	7:45
8	Siem Reap	9	1	9	8	1	3	0	122	0+	7:00
9	Siem Reap	7	2	9	6	3	1	1	49	0	8:30++
10	Siem Reap	7	1	8	6	2	2	0	51	1	7:30
11	Siem Reap	9	1	9	3	6	2	1	103	2	6-7:00
12	Siem Reap	?	2	14	8	6	2	1	150	3	8.30
13	Siem Reap	?	2	27	21	6	2	0	160	3	7.45
14	K. Chhnang	11	2	9	2	7	2	1	124	2	8:30
15	K. Chhnang	4	1	5	1	4	2	0	82	0***	8:30
16	K. Chhnang	15	2	12	5	7	1	1	287	0	8:30
17	K. Chhnang	16	1	26	18	8	4	1	133	2+++	8:30
18	K. Chhnang	8	1	13	7	6	0	2	168	2	8:30
19	Pursat	10	2	8	3	5	0	1	170	1	8:30
20	Pursat	9	1	9	7	2	1	1	130	1	7:00
21	Pursat	7	1	7	4	4	0	2	150	2	8.30
22	Pursat	6	1	10	3	3	0	1	176	1	8:30
23	Pursat	12	2	18	15	3	2	0	150	1	7.10
24	K. Thom	8	2	10	4	7	1	1	75	1	8:30
25	K. Thom	7	2	6	4	2	1	1	55	1	8:30
26	K. Thom	8	2	10	6	4	1	1	125 (?)	3	8:30
27	K. Thom	7	2	9	4	5	2	0	75 (?)	4	8:30
28	K. Thom	12	2	14	12	2	1	1	165	1	7:50

Notes: The shifts are usually organised like this: Preschool always and 1st grade almost always in Shift 1, then the other classes alternate fairly so that at least half always get food. * Pupils are allowed to choose the time because some of them can't eat so early but should definitely eat; ** Only one class (6th) in shift 2. *** Explicitly do not allow snacks. But always offers before school. **** Large "bazaar" in the very large canteen hall > 20 x 40 m) with 3 large shops for plastic toys, school accessories and all kinds of bric-a-brac. + 3 shops opposite the entrance, kids are allowed to go there during breaks from school. ++ At the instigation of the headmaster, who had observed that at 7.00 a.m. many children had not eaten / had hardly eaten anything. +++ Only allowed to sell home-made food (which we had tasted as very good).

Appendix 4: Compilation of the menu.

No.	Compilation of the menu by:
1	School management with camp director (f) meet monthly with Commune and the other school directors
2	School management with camp manager (f) etc.
3	School management with camp manager (f) etc.
4	School management with camp manager (m) etc.
5	School headmasters, head of camp (m), teachers, pupils, *school cluster* with the headmasters of all schools and traders monthly during the teaching months, led by DoE, but mostly not present
6	School management with camp manager (m) etc.
7	School management with camp manager (m) etc.
8	School management with camp manager (m) etc.
9	School management with camp manager (m) etc.
10	Head teachers of all primary schools in addition to camp director (f) monthly
11	School management and camp manager monthly school-specific
12	School management with camp director (m) and vice headmaster school
13	School management from 9 schools and camp leaders (m+w). Here, this is supposed to take place with the involvement of the student council, i.e. 24 students from grades 4 to 6; the latter are asked at the end of the month what they would like to have
14	School management with camp manager (m) etc.
15	Headmaster (m), who is also the camp director, etc.
16	Headmaster (m) with camp manager (m) etc.
17	Headmistress (f) with camp manager (m) etc.
18	Headmaster (m) with camp manager (m) etc.
19	School management of 4 schools with camp leaders (m) monthly
20	School management with camp directors monthly
21	Head teachers of all primary schools (2 out of 5) and camp leaders (m) monthly
22	School management of three primary schools together with (especially one) camp leader (male in this case) monthly + 1 supplier from all three schools
23	School management of three primary schools, of which at least in the school visited the vice principal without the camp manager monthly and the trader for three schools
24	School headmasters from 8 schools and warehouse managers (m+w) on a weekly or monthly basis. The SFIS digital system calculates the *monthly purchase order* from this.
25	Like school 24
26	School management of 4 schools together with warehouse managers (m+w) in the presence of the retailer
27	School management of 2 schools together with warehouse managers (m) in the presence of the dealer
28	School management of 2 schools together with warehouse managers (m) in the presence of the dealer

Notes: In many municipalities, identical menus are created for all schools with regard to the supplier and its procurement. The same meals are served on the same days of the week. At other schools, school-specific meal plans are created "so that the suppliers do not buy the market empty".

Appendix 5: The role of school management in school meals.

No.	The role of school management in school meals
1	1. ***general supervision and responsibility for the implementation of all aspects of school catering*** including hygiene and sanitation. 2. to acquire, manage and monitor in detail own contributions. 3. as children are often too small, also organisation of food distribution and washing up (older pupils, teachers, cooks). 4. preparing the meal plan, alone or in co-operation with the other schools within the same *commune*. 5. financial responsibility for any funds contributed from the school budget. 6. coordinating the use of the school garden where available. 7. finally, if necessary, organisation of firewood and payment of water costs.
2	Like 1, but also direct contact with Village Chief = Chief of the School Support Committee (SSC) if ***firewood*** is needed. The latter mobilises people, but most of them only pay, ***as more and more people in the village are cooking at home with gas.*** Until 2020, a *kuyun* was rented twice a year and families were driven away for wood. The school management would like to receive 1,000 Riel per month as a subsidy. The village has long since stopped paying in kind. 60-70% really pay. The school management doesn't have to worry about anything regarding the technical running of the SF, it works perfectly with the *storekeeper* and the 4 cooks (including a chef).
3	Like 1, plus 2,000 Riel / month ***personal contribution***, almost all pay. SSC is not supposed to help with the provision of wood (they explicitly state this as an important service)
4	Like 1, plus 2,000 Riel / month ***personal contribution***, almost everyone pays.
5	Management of the process of compiling the menu with the other school directors, initiative function in terms of contributions from the village population (firewood, ingredients, cash / donations in kind), management of the tender for food, monitoring through three-monthly meetings with WFP and district "to indicate results and benefits to the health of the students". Important: Hybrid school, i.e. rice and cooking oil supplied by USDA. Teachers run a small school garden and lessons on cultivation and nutrition. Monitoring the quality of the food with *storekeepers* and cooks
6	Same as 1, plus 10,000 Riel p.a. ***own contribution,*** mainly for the purchase of firewood (expensive due to abandonment of firewood in the hh). The school is very active in the SSC and the *commune committee*.
7	Same as 1, check supplies, run ***educational garden*** and possibly additional area in dry season (but unclear if, as SSC seems to be completely inactive). Allegedly collect no money (parents have never heard of it), but take ***fee for running snack bazaar*** at school. It is unclear where they get 220,000 Riel a month for firewood and spices (cf. below). Only the cook says that all hh should actually pay 20,000 Riel a year to be able to buy firewood.
8	Like 1, head teacher also accepts mostly produce due to nearby house. Actively involved with **school garden** from Year 4, but sells produce so they can buy inputs and run ridges.
9	Like 1, headmaster always accepts the goods because of the proximity of the house. Only run school garden in dry season, put the (small) harvest yield into the SF. Leave the issue of firewood mainly to the SSC (under *village chief*).
10	As in 1, head teacher with overall supervision of all activities and the required materials, meetings with parents and/or caregivers as required (*community contribution*). Receipt of ***food***

	deliveries from WFP, hygiene education for example as part of the morning roll call. Approval and signing of required documents incl. cheques to suppliers, participation in selection of suppliers, meeting with *commune* on target achievement and challenges (monthly general meeting with key people from *commune*)
11	As 1, overall supervision of the entire process incl. hygiene aspects of food and kitchen, crockery, cooking, etc., communicating the importance of SF to parents and pupils, collecting parents' own contributions for firewood, crockery for the children and for cooking, electricity, until 2 years ago also rice for compensation of the cooks, etc. ***Receiving 250.000,- Riel*** p.m. ***from snack stands.***
12	Like 1, in addition to the usual here also looking for ***funds to build a kitchen and canteen***. In addition to the regular meals, ***adding a healthy snack*** in the form of fruit once a week (test initiated by WFP recently at the last *quarterly coordination meeting*). In July, 351,000 Riel was collected from parents on a voluntary basis. Just enough for an extra snack. Now this is to be stabilised. The idea is 500-1000 from parents / week + contributions from teachers. Other actors from *commune are* to be recruited, but without further support from WFP, for example. PLAN (NGO supports this school) is not mentioned. ***Beautiful school garden*** managed by SSC head, who is also vice headmaster of the school.
13	Same as 1, incl. participation in selecting traders. The teachers are very ***active in teaching hygiene***, have the children line up in front of the hand-washing station, each class teacher is also responsible for distributing food and washing up for their class. The head teacher looks after everything, including the vendors and deliveries.
14	Like 1, school garden (only intended as a demo) not currently used, no clear responsibility. For firewood and spices, 500 Riel per week and student are planned and demanded by SSC, 15% tend not to pay, in individual months the majority do not pay. This is why additional money is paid from the school budget. The head teacher refers to **ruinous** ***wedding parties*** in the families, where those invited have to bear the costs of the wedding and become poor in the process. So it's not just the really poor who don't pay, but also the parents ***who have been plundered in*** this way.
15	Like 1, no school garden, but the ***headmaster = storekeeper***. Parents pay 500 Riel/week each for wood and spices, wood should be brought in on request (which is confirmed: photo). ***Most pay, but usually only once if there are several children.*** **General problem** in the schools.
16	Like 1, no school garden because the school is located on ***pagoda grounds*** and cannot be fenced in. Parents' contribution 200 Riel p. week for firewood and 100 Riel (decided separately) for **dessert**. About 65% pay, the rest are too poor. Close co-operation of the head with SSC. ***So far best headmaster and most active SSC, informed, organised etc.*** Children have to do almost everything themselves in terms of serving food and washing up, the older children help the younger ones.
17	Like 1, ***tiny school garden, produce only sufficient for one day of school meals***. Parents' contribution 1,500 Riel p.m. paid at 90% for firewood and spices, additional 500 Riel collected for 2 x p.m. dessert. Dessert. Very large school with little direct communication with parents via leaflets and SSC / *mephum*. Children have to participate in many things, serving food, washing up, cleaning the dining hall.
18	Like 1, ***abandoned mini-school garden, completely pointless***. Teachers distribute the food in various places on the grounds and in classes, as the small dining hall is not big enough and there is a lack of chairs and tables. It is important to the school that attention is paid to hygiene, which is also communicated to the parents. Children have to wash up, but have not washed their hands before eating today. ***Provincial representative for SF programme tries the food today and is very satisfied***.

19	Like 1, are involved in *supplier selection.* 2 teachers help head teacher with data entry. The school garden is currently being expanded. Currently harvesting in the school garden on Mondays and Fridays. Creation of a work plan for pupils in Years 3 to 6 for 2 days a week to ***support the cook*** in his work.
20	As 1, general supervision of the implementation of the SF programme. Control of payment flows, management of reporting, involvement in dealer selection (not carried out in the last cycle because ***WFP selected this district as a pilot for multi-year contracts with the dealers*** and therefore extended the existing contract.
21	Like 1, head teacher and teachers help with serving food and washing up, look after kitchen, firewood, water for washing up and hands, "collect and keep utensils", raise own contributions (1.000,- Riel / pupil p.m. "*for ingredients and cook incentive*" (the money does not always come in on time, but it is enough for the cooks) plus firewood and kitchen construction as well as other needs. Participation in the selection of dealers.
22	As 1, school management exercises formal overall supervision of all SF processes at the school.
23	Like 1, headteacher has delegated everything to the vice-principal. These and teachers remind children to bring eating utensils, give hygiene lessons in the classes, remind children to eat regularly at school and to avoid snacks. Participation in serving meals and cleaning dishes in preschool and grades 1 and 2. The older children do this themselves. Operation and teaching in the small educational garden. Contribution 500,- Riel / week for firewood, "*cook incentives*, *ingredients*". ***Poor families pay nothing, better-off families sometimes pay more***. In addition: *awareness raising* on the importance of education and regular school attendance, also to escape poverty (this together with the local authorities), also counselling on scholarships for ID-Poor children. The ***kiosk for snacks on school grounds*** pays 20,000 Riel p.m.
24	As 1 regarding formal supervision. Together with the SSC, reconciliation of incoming and outgoing payments with the supplier's accounting documents at the end of the month before payment with correction of any inconsistencies, occasional checks on compliance with the cook's hygiene regulations, support (and checking of SK, spot checks). Explain to parents at meetings the ***importance of regular school attendance*** and eating at school ("nutritional value better than at home, especially for poor families"). Selection supplier with all head teachers, supported by SSC, *commune leader, commune secretary*, *village chief*. Calculation of *community contribution* of 3,000 Riel p.m. / pupil, of which they receive approx. 90%. Expenditure on *ingredients* 200,000 Riel p.m.; wood 120,000 Riel p.m.; water 130,000 Riel p.m.; cooks 150,000 Riel p.m.
25	As 1, management of the entire process incl. documentation, collection of personal contributions in cash 1,500 Riel p.m. / child.
26	As 1, management of the entire process, cooperation with SSC. All classes 4 to 6 use the educational garden for lessons. The produce is used in the kitchen. No production this year because the ***school is busy building a canteen*** and erecting a fence around a water pond and the school grounds.
27	As 1, plus ***checking the snack stand for "healthy" food***. The role of the school management and teachers is detailed: to ensure that children eat at school and ***do not buy unhealthy food***, distribution of food to children, management of educational garden also for the kitchen. Pupils pay 10,000 Riel p.m., families with three children 25,000 Riel. They only receive the contributions from 60% of the parents. This is only enough for about 5 months. Then the school budget is used. Last month, the *commune leader* contributed an ***ox cart of wood from his own pocket.*** The village leaders have capped the contribution per family at 20,000. Parents and villagers have so far contributed 900,000 Riel for the construction of the kitchen and

	dining hall. 11.650 million Riel come from a state organisation, 3 million from the school budget. There is still a shortfall of 7 million Riel (excluding chairs and tables).
28	As 1, general supervision incl. hygiene and sanitation. Checking and partial participation in all SF-related processes (e.g. reporting, receipt of goods), acquisition of own services with the support of a not very active SSC. ***The school is responsible for four villages***. Each village pays 20,000 Riel per month for the cooks as well as firewood and *ingredients*. This is done by the village chiefs, who are all in the SSC. They do not take any fees from the snack stall as the cook runs the stall and donates on special occasions. Participation in the selection of traders. Teachers and older children do the food distribution.

Appendix 6: Assessment of punctuality and quality of food delivery.

Lfdt. No.	Yes / No	Notes
1	Yes	Never delivered too late, always good quality
2	Yes	Only once an hour late, otherwise punctual and always good quality
3	Yes	In tight time frame, if late they call, always good quality
4	Yes	In tight time frame, if late they call, always good quality
5	Yes	Never too late and always good quality
6	Yes	In tight time frame, if late, they call and always good quality
7	Yes	Both suppliers deliver at roughly the same time, always good quality
8	Yes	Within approx. 1 hour with call (both suppliers)
9	Yes	In time mostly, if later they call. Once "smelling fish" was accepted, was "still good" and could not be delivered until the morning, but this was posted on **facebook** and never happened again.
10	Yes	There were occasional delays, but no cancellations. Always good quality
11	Yes	Always works well and always good quality
12	Yes	Delivery always on time, but the quantity is sometimes not enough, therefore only rated "good" (which is not due to the retailer, but to the quantity ordered). Always good quality
13	Yes	Deliveries are ok so far, but sometimes there are cancellations when payments to dealers are delayed. The only supplier for 9 schools stopped deliveries in mid-February because it had not yet received the payments for January. Always good quality
14	Yes	Always within a time frame of 10-15 hours after notification by telephone. Always good quality
15	Yes	In a tight time frame, if late they call, always good quality
16	Yes	If possible at the end of the 1st shift (11.00 a.m.) and always good quality
17	Yes	Always on time in tight time frame from 14-17 clock, if late they call always good quality
18	Yes	Always on time so far
19	Yes	The inspection of deliveries by the *storekeeper* led to the rejection of the delivered goods in very few cases. Punctual delivery
20	Yes	Always on time and always good quality
21	Yes	Regular delivery, quality and quantity always good

22	Yes	No failures, only minor delays at best. Delivery in the morning around 5 a.m., immediate processing (everything nice and fresh).
23	Yes	No failures so far, neither in terms of quantity nor quality, on time and always good quality
24	Yes	In tight time frame, if late they call, always good quality
25	Yes	Quantity, time, quality, all three good (but after initially "very good" corrected to "good" in the course of the interview)
26	Yes	Always punctual and good.
27	Yes	Always on time and always good quality
28	Yes	At the beginning of the year, the SF was down for 4 days because WFP did not deliver and the warehouse was empty

The Institute for Development and Peace (INEF)

The Institute for Development and Peace (INEF), which was founded in 1990, is an institute of the University of Duisburg-Essen (Faculty of Social Sciences) with a strong focus on policy-related and policy-relevant research. It closely collaborates with the Development and Peace Foundation (SEF), Bonn, established in 1986 at the initiative of former German chancellor and Nobel peace prize winner Willy Brandt.

INEF combines basic research with applied and policy-related research in the following areas: Global Governance and Human Security, Fragile States, Crisis Prevention and Civilian Conflict Management, Development, Human Rights and Corporate Social Responsibility.

The specific approach of INEF, as the only German research institute to combine basic with applied research in peace and development research, is also reflected in the range of third-party funding bodies. INEF carries out research programs and systematically explores available international expertise and world reports, often in cooperation with national and international partners. INEF also conducts smaller projects for NGOs and NGO networks. The institute is integrated in a strong and viable international research network.

UNIVERSITÄT DUISBURG ESSEN

Open-Minded

Institute for Development and Peace INEF

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

Institut für Entwicklung und Frieden (INEF)
Lotharstr. 53 47057 Duisburg, Germany
Telefon +49 (203) 379 4420
Fax +49 (203) 379 4425
E-Mail: inef-sek@uni-due.de
Homepage: http://www.uni-due.de/inef

AVE Study 36b/2024

ISSN 2511-5111