

UNICEF in Cambodia Country Programme 2019–2023



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CAMBODIA AT A GLANCE

With one third of its citizens under 15 years of age, Cambodia has one of the youngest populations in Southeast Asia. This young, dynamic and highly mobile population is poised to enter the work force and has the potential to be a major contributor to sustainable development and economic growth.

Following several decades of strong economic growth, by 2016 Cambodia had attained lower-middle-income status and is ranked the sixth fastest growing economy in the world. Economic growth has reduced the country's monetary poverty rate significantly, from 53.2 per cent in 2004 to 13.5 per cent in 2014.

Overall, Cambodia has achieved remarkable development in a short period of time. Between 2000 and 2014, the infant and under-five mortality rates both decreased by over 70 per cent, while the maternal mortality rate decreased dramatically from 472 to 170 deaths for every 100,000 live births. Improved antenatal and postnatal care, better immunization coverage and skilled birth attendance are some of the driving factors behind these improvements.

Since 2007, the number of children enrolled in early childhood education has more than doubled, while the number of children enrolled in primary education has also increased, from 82 per cent in 1997 to over 97 per cent in the school year 2017/18. Gender disparities in primary and secondary school enrolment have been largely eliminated.

The number of residential care institutions in Cambodia has declined by 35 per cent, from 406 in 2015 to 265 in 2018. According to 2018 data, there are 7,634 children living in residential care institutions, a reduction of some 54 per cent since 2015. Children are being reintegrated from residential care, institutions are better regulated with digital inspection mechanisms, and no new institution has opened since 2016—a significant achievement in a country where, until a few years

ago, the number of residential care institutions was spiralling out of control.

While progress is tangible, it has been uneven, with striking differences between rural and urban areas, between children with and without disabilities, and between wealthier and poorer families. Challenges remain for many children and women in Cambodia and everyday life can be extremely daunting.

While in 2009 Cambodia achieved the Millennium Development Goal of halving poverty, today around 4.5 million people remain near poor, with the majority of them living in rural areas and being vulnerable to falling back into poverty when exposed to socio-economic and natural shocks. Poverty is a multi-dimensional phenomenon that affects many areas of life, including health, education and participation. In Cambodia, multi-dimensional poverty has fallen, but much less quickly than economic poverty. Nearly half of Cambodian children remain multi-dimensionally poor.

Despite an overall increase, budget allocation for social services is insufficient, leaving critical programmes underfunded. While still largely rural, Cambodia is witnessing rapid urbanization. Projections suggest that by 2030 over one third of the country's population will live in urban areas. Failure to expand the urban social service infrastructure to match the increasing urban population will result in new dimensions of poverty.

Migration is prevalent in Cambodia, and there are an estimated 4.2 million predominantly internal migrants, of which 8.3 per cent are adolescents between 10 and 19 years of age. A growing concern is the number of children being left behind in the care of grandparents, who may not be able to care for them adequately. In Cambodia, one in two girls and boys under the age of 18 has experienced physical violence, one in four has suffered emotional abuse, and many are trafficked, forced to work, separated from

their families, and placed in residential care unnecessarily. A 2018 inspection report found that 68 per cent of children in residential care institutions had at least one living parent.

Cambodia is making steady but insufficient progress in meeting its water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) targets. Despite improvements in WASH systems at national and sub-national levels, today the country has the highest rate of open defecation in the region, with eight in ten of the poorest rural Cambodians defecating out in fields, in open bodies of water, or other open spaces, rather than using a toilet. This continues to be a dangerous challenge, as human waste near waterways and homes spreads disease quickly, putting children and families at risk.

Two in five Cambodians uses water from non-improved drinking sources, which means they do not separate human waste from human contact, while seven in ten pre-primary schools do not have access to WASH facilities. One in two rural healthcare facilities does not have sufficient water all year round.

Lagging behind all other social indicators, malnutrition rates among children under 5 years are among the highest in the region, with 32 per cent of children being stunted (too short for their age) and 10 per cent wasted (too thin for their height).

Factors that hinder progress are improper feeding, poor WASH practices, poverty and a mother's lack of education. There are disparities here, as 42 per cent of the poorest girls and boys are stunted, compared with 19 per cent of the wealthiest.

Many girls and boys are not reaching age-appropriate learning standards: at the primary level, nearly 25 per cent of children in Grade 3 cannot write a single word in a dictation test. Key factors behind these challenges include: children being unprepared for school, lacking motivation to stay in school, violence against children in schools—with teachers being common perpetrators—financial constraints within households, and the poor quality of teaching and learning. This is compounded by high pupil-teacher ratios.

In 2019, an estimated 1540 children were in detention. Children who come into contact with the law are extremely vulnerable, and a judicial system that is not adapted to their needs can do them additional harm. There is growing momentum for Cambodia to introduce laws to protect children and women, however the country lacks a comprehensive child protection system on which

to base a national vision and framework to protect children from harm.

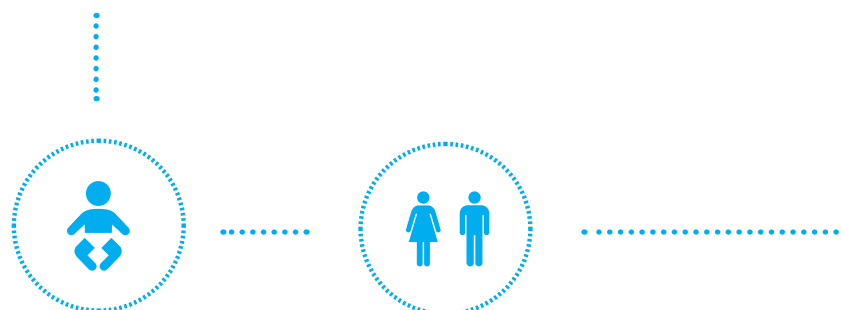
In the 2018 Gender Gap report, Cambodia ranked 93 out of 149 countries, despite distinct progress in reducing gender gaps in education, health and survival. Slow advances towards gender equity in political, economic and social participation are due mostly to socio-cultural norms, attitudes and practices.

Classified as the 8th most at-risk country in the world due to significant exposure to natural hazards and its limited coping capacity, Cambodia is increasingly vulnerable to climate change. This vulnerability jeopardizes the country's development achievements, including poverty reduction.

Children with disabilities are 'invisible' in mainstream development programming, which is exacerbated by a lack of quality data about them and their needs.

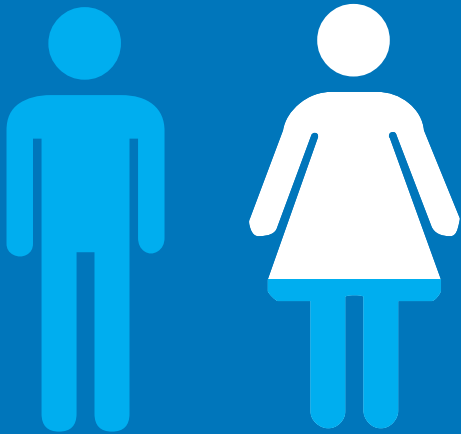
If current inequalities in Cambodia are not addressed, they will be passed down from generation to generation in a cycle that has widespread negative economic, political and social consequences.

UNICEF partners with the Government of Cambodia and civil society organizations to address these inequalities, so that children, especially the most vulnerable, can access care and protection and are better positioned to reach their full potential. Driven by quality, accessibility, equity, inclusion and relevance, our actions are structured into programmatic areas, as outlined in UNICEF's cooperation agreement with the Government of Cambodia (Country Programme 2019–2023). Building on lessons learned from the Country Programme 2016–2018, our vision is to contribute to national efforts so that all girls and boys, especially those most disadvantaged, progressively fulfil their basic rights to survival, care, protection, development and participation to reach their full potential.





**GENDER GAP
REPORT
2018**



CAMBODIA
RANKED **93** OF 149
COUNTRIES

**Investment in children
is not only connected,
but central, to human
development.**

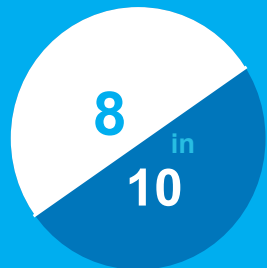
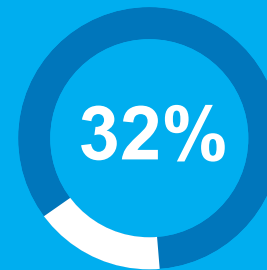
Children in Cambodia



35 out of 1,000 children die before reaching the age of 5



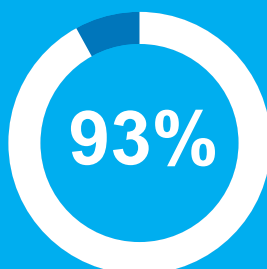
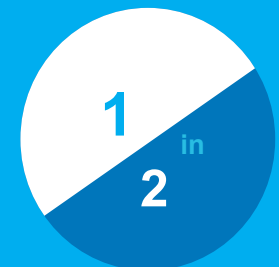
32% stunted 9% severely stunted



8 in 10 of the poorest rural Cambodians still practise open defecation



1 in 2 rural healthcare facilities doesn't have sufficient water all year round



93% of children were enrolled in primary school in the school year 2016/17

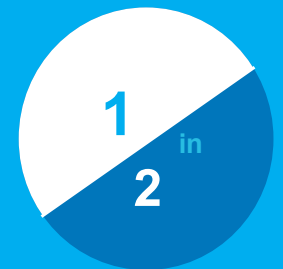




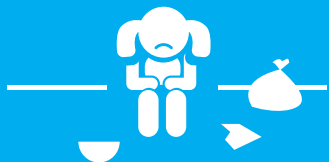
By the time they are 17 years old, **55%** of adolescents will have dropped out of school



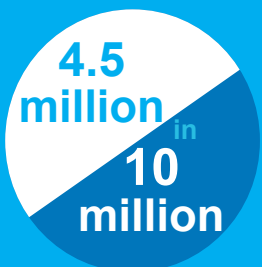
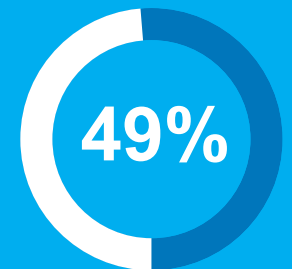
1 in 2 children has experienced severe beating



7,634 children were reported to be living in residential care institutions in 2018



Nearly **49%** of children are multidimensionally poor, i.e. they have at least 3 deprivations



Around **4.5 million** of the approximately 16 million population remain near poor



UNICEF in Cambodia

UNICEF began its work in Cambodia in 1952 and opened its first country office in 1973 at the height of the country's civil war. At the time, the organization's mandate was to provide humanitarian relief to children affected by conflict. UNICEF was one of the many international organizations expelled from the country in 1975, when the Khmer Rouge seized power.

After the fall of the regime in 1979, UNICEF was among the first organizations to return to Cambodia to provide emergency aid. Upon return, UNICEF worked to address critical challenges related to health, sanitation and aid distribution, such as the provision of safe drinking water and the distribution of essential education supplies for children to return to school.

Greater political stability in Cambodia came with the first democratic elections in 1993, which enabled UNICEF to strengthen its partnership with the government.

UNICEF is guided by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. With over 70 years of experience, UNICEF is the only organization specifically named in this Convention as a source of expert assistance and advice.

Also known as the CRC, this global agreement identifies what children need to survive and grow, and to live up to their full potential. It is the most complete statement of children's rights ever produced and the most widely ratified international human rights treaty in history.

The CRC has radically changed the way children are viewed, from passive objects of care and charity to right holders. Cambodia's official commitment to creating better opportunities and safer, healthier living conditions for children was cemented by its incorporation into the country's Constitution in 1993.

UNICEF Cambodia's main office is based in the city of Phnom Penh. This is backed by two zone offices in Kratie and Siem Reap provinces. While operating nationwide, UNICEF focuses on provinces with the highest disparities and worst child development indicators to ensure an equitable approach towards improving the lives of women and children.

UNICEF is supported by voluntary contributions from government donors, individuals, the private sector and UNICEF National Committees—a supportive network of independent, local non-governmental organizations that raise funds from the private sector and promote children's rights.



Key achievements for women and children



There has been significant progress for children in some key development areas, thanks to the joint work of the Government of Cambodia, UNICEF, non-governmental organizations, communities and development partners.

One of the most notable achievements to date is the dramatic reduction in the maternal mortality ratio, from 472 out of 100,000 live births in 2000 to 170 out of 100,000 live births in 2014. This can be attributed to improved antenatal care, as well as an increase in the number of babies being delivered by trained midwives in health centres.

Over the same period, Cambodia made significant progress in improving the health of its children. Under-five mortality decreased from 124 to 35 deaths out of every 1,000 live births. Improved postnatal care for newborns and better immunization coverage are some of the driving factors behind these improvements.

Clean drinking water and improved sanitation are contributing factors to a child's survival in the early years of life. The proportion of households with access to improved water sources, where human waste is separated from human contact hygienically, increased from 22 per cent in 1990 to 70 per cent in 2017, while access to an improved toilet increased from 46.8 per cent in 2008 to 58 per cent in 2014.

The country has made significant progress educating its children. More Cambodian children are entering school than ever before. The number of children enrolled in primary education increased from 82 per cent in 1997 to over 97.8 per cent in school year 2017/18, while enrolment in early childhood education (ECE) has more than doubled since 2007.

The increase in the number of children in residential care institutions, from 6,254 in 2005 to 16,579 in 2015, was addressed by several positive initiatives, including a mapping of residential institutions, enforcing inspections, applying minimum standards, and implementing the action plan for improving child care. This plan included reintegrating children from residential care to their families and communities, and as a result there are 7,634 children reported to be living in residential care institutions, a reduction of about 54 per cent since 2015. In 2014, the majority of Cambodian children (89 per cent) lived with at least with one parent, and no new residential care institution has opened since 2016. These, together with the digitization of inspections, are

promising signs towards reducing the number of children living outside of safe, nurturing, family-based care.

Child protection programmes, such as Positive Discipline, Positive Parenting and Cambodia PROTECT, are being implemented to protect children from violent discipline and family separation.

In 2017, Cambodia launched its first action plan to address all forms of violence against children, while interventions in Ratanakiri province to prevent child marriage and teenage pregnancy are being developed. On-going awareness raising that spreads messages on preventing violence is being done through partnerships with religious institutions, piloting positive discipline approaches in schools, and developing resources for both the health and education sectors.

Cambodia has seen increased momentum to introduce laws to protect children and women. The new Juvenile Justice Law, adopted in 2016, and the on-going development of the related three-year strategic and operational plan, are expected to address the increasing number of youths in prisons, and to contribute to better data and reporting mechanisms.

Following more than two decades of strong economic growth, Cambodia attained lower-middle-income status in 2016, with gross national income per capita reaching US\$ 1,070. Between 1990 and 2017, Cambodia's Human Development Index value—the average measure of basic human development achievements—increased by nearly 60 per cent, from 0.364 to 0.582. In 2009, Cambodia achieved the Millennium Development Goal of halving poverty and it is ranked as the sixth fastest growing economy in the world.

In 2017, the government adopted a new National Social Protection Policy Framework that maps out key social assistance schemes, such as cash transfers for children and pregnant women, scholarships and disability allowances, as well as a roadmap for their expansion.

In recent years, Cambodia has accomplished significant achievements for its children, but while progress is tangible, it has been an uneven journey towards the SDG principle of leaving no-one behind. As we celebrate successes, we are reminded that urgent challenges remain in ensuring that all children enjoy their rights and reach their full potential in life.

UNICEF Country Programme

UNICEF supports the Government of Cambodia to promote the healthy development of children, defend their rights and help them to fulfil their potential, from early childhood through adolescence.

UNICEF has entered a new period of cooperation with the government to build on the successes of the Country Programme 2016–2018. This marks a pivotal moment in UNICEF's support to Cambodia, in light of its recent transition to a lower-middle-income country.

UNICEF's renewed cooperation with the government is articulated in its Country Programme 2019–2023, which aligns with the government's Rectangular Strategy Phase IV and National Strategic Development Plan 2019–2023, and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework.

With the Country Programme 2019–2023, UNICEF renews its pledge to contribute to Cambodia's national efforts, so that all girls and boys, especially those most vulnerable and marginalized, progressively enjoy their rights to survival, care, protection and participation, and develop to reach their full potential.

In its work with the government, UNICEF promotes investment and public policies that focus on childhood and adolescence to enhance Cambodia's human capital as the basis for sustainable development. We place particular focus on adolescents, working

with and for them. Combating child marriage and violence, while promoting life skills, child-friendly juvenile justice, safe menstrual hygiene management and inclusion of marginalized children, are at the core of our work to build a better, stronger future for Cambodian children.

The government leads the cooperation and is UNICEF's main partner. We collaborate with government agencies at all levels, from national to local. Other partners include civil society and non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations, the private sector, the media, UN agencies and international organizations operating in Cambodia.

Over the next programme cycle, UNICEF aims to strengthen its partnerships with academia, research, training institutions, the private sector and those representing excluded children in order to maximize the expertise, capacities and resources of all those involved.

To address children's multi-dimensional deprivations, our work is structured into five inter-related programmes: Health and Nutrition; Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH); Education; Child Protection; and Policy and Public Financing for Children. Cross-cutting issues, such as early childhood development, adolescents, gender equality, humanitarian action, disability, communication for development, urban poverty and migration, help connect the different programme components together.

The five programmatic areas in the Country Programme 2019–2023 align closely the Sustainable Development Goals, as outlined below:



UNICEF is committed to supporting the successful implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in Cambodia. We work with partners to put children at the heart of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to see that the Goals deliver results for every child and for generations to come. In the descriptions of the following programme areas, relevant Sustainable Development Goals have been identified with icons.

Health and nutrition

No child or mother should suffer or die from preventable causes, yet this is exactly what happens in Cambodia every year.

These deaths could be because a woman did not have the right care during her pregnancy, or because a baby did not receive postnatal care or proper nutrition in the early months of life.

The Health and Nutrition programme focuses on equitable access to sustainable, inclusive, adequate and affordable health and nutrition services from birth to adolescence. These can have a profound impact on a child's ability to survive, grow, learn and rise out of poverty. Emphasis is placed on pregnant women, mothers, newborns, children under 5 years and adolescents, especially in the more marginalized north-eastern provinces of Cambodia.

UNICEF continues to work with the government to address policy and budget gaps, gather and use data effectively, promote the training of health staff, and change people's perceptions about child protection, health and education. Nutrition is a priority, and UNICEF promotes locally sourced nutrition products while supporting the government to develop policies on food and health.





Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)

Clean water, proper toilets and good hygiene are essential to the survival and development of children.

For children under 5 years, water-borne and sanitation-related diseases are among the leading causes of sickness and death. Instilling in children the importance of washing their hands with soap and water, along with providing them with clean drinking water and adequate toilets, are the most effective ways to save their lives and ensure they develop in a healthy way.

The WASH programme focuses on improving WASH financing and coordination to achieve compelling results in children's survival, health and education. It gathers and analyses data that inform programme decisions, it makes villages more climate resilient by developing WASH-specific preparedness plans, and it identifies appropriate sanitation and water products that are affordable and accessible.

UNICEF particularly targets un-served children and their communities who are often poor, geographically or socially marginalized, and live in areas vulnerable to environmental risks.

Improving water, sanitation and hygiene for children in Cambodia requires a concerted, holistic and systematic approach, where interventions in WASH, health and education are interlinked and mutually reinforced. Emphasis is placed on boosting access to safe sanitation and hygiene in schools, health centres and homes, while generating awareness to encourage people to change the way they perceive, and act, in relation to hygiene, safe water and sanitation.





Education

All children have the right to learn, whatever their circumstances, and adequate support to learning is crucial if children are to develop to their full potential. Quality and inclusive education is central to the overall development of inclusive societies.

The Education programme focuses on strong leadership at government and school level, quality teaching, and a healthy school environment to ensure children go to school and stay in school. It also includes supporting the government with specialized training for teachers, so they can provide better instruction to children. To ensure that every child learns, emphasis is placed on equitable and inclusive access to education for children with disabilities, children from ethnic minorities, and children living in rural and urban poor areas.

Collaboration continues with international partners to strengthen the government's planning, management and financing of education. UNICEF provides technical support to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport in its efforts to revise the national curriculum, so that 21st century skills are integrated into the Cambodian education system.





Child protection

No child should be exposed to violence, abuse and neglect. Girls and boys vulnerable to and exposed to violence, and those separated from their family, or at risk of separation, have the right to be protected by laws, social services and a supportive community environment.

The Child Protection programme focuses on building a child-friendly legal framework to protect children in Cambodia, supporting children and adolescents with measures that prevent and respond to crime, and fostering a culture of non-violence by transforming the social attitudes and beliefs that perpetuate violence itself.

Emphasis is placed on strengthening child protection in the health, education, justice and early childhood sectors. This includes supporting the government to develop a Child Protection Law, the consolidation of a comprehensive Child Protection Information Management System, and the training of social workers in health, education, justice and child protection.

UNICEF works with partners to train teachers and religious leaders so that they have the knowledge and awareness they need to protect children. UNICEF runs campaigns to change people's behaviour and their perceptions of discipline—campaigns that champion positive discipline and challenge existing thinking that perpetuates unnecessary family separation.



4 QUALITY EDUCATION



5 GENDER EQUALITY



8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS





Policy and public financing for children

The consequences of poverty can last a lifetime. Rarely does a child get a second chance at an education or a healthy start in life. While child poverty threatens individual children, without adequate intervention it is likely to be passed on to future generations, entrenching inequality in society.

The Policy and Public Financing for Children programme focuses on reducing multi-dimensional child poverty in Cambodia, particularly for children living in urban and rural poor areas, children from ethnic minorities, and children with disabilities. UNICEF uses a multi-sectoral approach, where social protection activities are integrated with other programmes, such as health and nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene, education and child protection.

UNICEF continues to support the government with the implementation of the National Social Protection Policy Framework 2016–2025 to ensure that children and women in Cambodia receive the social protection they need. Equally, we provide technical support to the Ministry of Planning and the Ministry of Economy and Finance to finalize and implement the National Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy, so that Cambodia's monitoring and evaluation systems are solid and reliable. This collaboration continues to formulate, implement and monitor budgets for social investment programmes in a clear and effective manner.



THE WAY FORWARD

UNICEF, in partnership with the government, civil society, non-government organizations, donors, academic institutions, the private sector, the media and local authorities, will build on past successes to make additional strides towards fulfilling children's rights in Cambodia.

To translate vision into action, we have incorporated transformative strategies into the Country Programme 2019–2023. One of these strategies is adopting a holistic approach that considers education, health, hygiene and nutrition as imperative levers for early childhood development.

Looking ahead, greater emphasis will be placed on making the voices of children and adolescents heard, and on delivering quality, accessible and equitable services, including in marginalized communities.

UNICEF will support the innovative generation of evidence and the collection, analysis and use of quality data to inform policy change. We work at multiple levels—national, sub-national and community—to ensure our actions are complementary and achieve maximum reach.

Through enhanced coordination and monitoring, and with strategic planning to scale up projects, we are better equipped to maximize resources to reach every child. By transferring skills and sharing knowledge, we pave the way for sustainable services in health, nutrition, water and sanitation, child protection and education.

All UNICEF programmes incorporate actions to strengthen the resilience of children, families and communities, including disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness. A gender focus and an adolescent-sensitive approach are applied to address the barriers that hinder girls and boys realizing their rights.

The proposed funding for the implementation of the Country Programme 2019–2023 is US\$ 121, 656, 000. UNICEF in Cambodia is supported by generous contributions from a network of UNICEF National Committees, governments, and individual and private sector donors.

unicef  | for every child

UNICEF CAMBODIA

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