

Case Study 1C.

Cambodia – WASH-Nutrition working groups

Context

Cambodia has very high rates of undernutrition as well as poor WASH outcomes, by regional standards, and it is recognized that a substantial proportion of the undernutrition burden is likely attributable to WASH. Integrating efforts to improve WASH and Nutrition is therefore an emerging national priority. However, integration across such sectors as WASH and Nutrition is a major policy and implementation challenge. Prevalent challenges to cross-sectoral integration include siloed, sector-specific knowledge; different time and resource requirements for multi-sectoral compared with single-sector approaches; staff time, interest and technical capacity to work across more than one sector; sector-specific financing mechanisms and funding streams; separate design, implementation and monitoring processes; and a policy environment, as well as leadership and governance mechanisms, that are structured according to sector-specific approaches.

Nutrition and WASH actors should exchange information on current program priorities and project locations. Sector coordination efforts can be useful in establishing relationships at national and sub-national levels, whereas cluster coordination can be effective during emergencies. After the WASH and Nutrition actors have established coordination platforms, they can develop a memorandum of understanding, terms of reference or strategic work plan. Such agreements may include a WASH program engaging in infrastructure projects and a nutrition program introducing hygiene practices.

Activities

To optimize nutrition-sensitive elements, such as WASH, in Nutrition programming, Cambodia has established a new WASH and Nutrition Sub-working Group. The purpose of this group is to bring together WASH and Food Security and Nutrition sector actors to develop a shared vision for the future, improve learning from experiences in WASH and nutrition integration and sharing them, and establish synergy between the sectors to improve the quality of programming and services in tackling undernutrition.

The key sectors represented in the Sub-working Group include Rural Development, Food Security, WASH and Health staff from government agencies; development partners and NGOs working on water, sanitation, hygiene and nutrition programs; the convenor of the SUN civil society network; and other ministries such as Education and Youth, Women's Affairs, and Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, as required. The Sub-working Group is chaired by the Council for Agricultural and Rural Development (CARD) with Save the Children as co-chair representing development partners and NGOs.

The WASH and Nutrition Sub-working Group is linked to the existing Technical Working Group for Rural Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (TWG-RWSSH) and the Technical Working Group for Social Protection, Food Security and Nutrition (TWG-SP and FSN) through representative membership on the Sub-working Group and by reporting back to the separate TWGs on a regular basis. The TWG-RWSSH is chaired by the Ministry of Rural Development (MRD), and TWG-SP and FSN is chaired by CARD.

Results

The technical working group has been successful in bringing stakeholders together around a common vision and can be an effective forum for harmonizing sector strategies and policies, which should include integrated WASH, nutrition and food security activities.

Lessons

The national coordination mechanisms cannot be easily replicated at provincial level because the separate WASH and Nutrition TWGs have no structure at provincial level, and although the MRD has tried to establish provincial coordination, CARD also has no structure at provincial level. New provincial technical reference groups need to be set up to ensure effective coordination of integrated nutrition programs between provincial departments, civil society, development partners and private sector.