



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

Online Version: <https://www.feedthefuture.gov/article/women-lead-food-security-and-nutrition-groups-rural-cambodia>

Women Lead Food Security and Nutrition Groups in Rural Cambodia



HARVEST

Food security and nutrition groups in rural Cambodia provide opportunities for women to learn about good dietary and hygiene practices.

Through Feed the Future, Cambodian women are improving their agricultural productivity, increasing incomes and improving their status in their homes and communities.

A Feed the Future project funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development has helped establish 218 food security and nutrition groups, the first of their kind in Cambodia. To date, more than 5,000 people have registered as members, 93 percent of them women. The groups bring together community members who want to learn how to improve food security and nutrition in their families and communities.

Sam Sokhut is a member of one of the food security and nutrition groups in rural Cambodia. Since joining the community-based collective in early 2014, she and its 24 other members—all of them women—have helped kick-start a number of initiatives that are strengthening food security and funding microenterprise development in her village.

For example, the women helped start a savings fund that provides small loans to members, participated in cooking demonstrations that educate mothers about nutrition and hygiene, and helped build an inexpensive hand-washing station from readily available materials that can be replicated in households throughout the village.

“We’re making an impact in our community,” Sam says, “and we’re making our own decisions about how to do it.”

Many of these groups have begun planning community actions, in which they identify a need in their area and address it with training events or other activities. These activities promote a variety of important concepts, including food safety and growth monitoring, a technique that promotes the healthy development of children in the 1,000 days between pregnancy and age two.

The groups have also established 146 savings funds that support the development of nutrition-focused microenterprises. Members who make regular contributions to the fund can take out loans to support farming activities or small businesses. In just six months, the funds have accumulated more than \$50,000 in contributions, which have been leveraged to provide more than 1,400 loans and generated more than \$2,500 in interest, increasing the value of assets by five percent. Of the 2,440 fund members, 94 percent are women.

The funds are increasing access to credit for the poor by offering better interest rates than banks or microfinance institutions. Four savings funds in a particularly impoverished area in Cambodia's Pursat province, a Feed the Future target region, demonstrate the effectiveness of this model. Although modest, the funds provided loans to 24 members and increased the value of their assets by an average of 3.6 percent. Members used the money for activities such as raising pigs, buying fertilizer for rice and paying for medical care. These groups are now entering the second cycle of their activities and are recruiting new members.

Sam is the secretary of her group's savings fund, which has provided loans that helped establish fruit-selling businesses and expanded family farms. She has no doubt that her group is prepared to tackle future challenges.

"I'm sure we'll continue to make a positive impact for many years," she says.