

## Improving children's nutritional health in Cambodia

### Introduction

Cambodia's poverty rate has significantly declined in the last decade. However, over six thousand children under the age of 5 years die from malnutrition every year in Cambodia. Maternal malnutrition, poor infant feeding practices, micronutrient deficiencies, stunting and wasting are some of the biggest risk factors for young children's malnutrition-related mortality ([United Nations, 2014](#)).

Poor sanitation in households and rural communities can also increase children's risk of gastrointestinal issues and infectious diseases, contributing to their chronic malnutrition. Malnutrition-related diseases have long-term impacts on children's physical health and cognitive development. Children living in rural areas are at a particular risk, where access to sanitation, health facilities and health education lag significantly behind urban areas. As the equity gap in Cambodia grows, it is more common for children in rural areas to be stunted than those in urban areas.



22% of children under age 5 are stunted, an indication of chronic undernutrition ([Cambodia demographic and health survey, 2022](#)).



75% of Cambodians live in rural areas ([World Bank, 2018](#)).



Cambodia has one of the highest death rates for children under five in Asia ([World Bank, 2020](#)).

## Our response

Too frequently, malnutrition is understood as simply being a consequence of not having enough food to eat. In reality, good nutrition is a combination between having enough food, having high-quality food and having good health and hygiene.

Alongside general community education and health interventions, AHC's community health action and engagement team combats childhood malnutrition in Cambodia. Every year, the team screens thousands of children for malnourishment, as well as provides ongoing breastfeeding, hygiene and nutrition education to children and caregivers. These measures help detect and treat childhood malnutrition while providing crucial information to prevent childhood illnesses.

To ensure the sustainability of their interventions, the community team trains village health support group volunteers to conduct malnutrition screening and community health education. This ensures their health interventions continue uplifting local communities long after AHC's team departs.

In January 2024, our community team began a new project in the Angkor Chum health operational district. Meanwhile, they're continuing their work in the previous health operational district, Kra Lahn.



## Our impact in 2024 so far

5,621

participants took part in our cooking demonstrations on how to cook nutritious meals

3,471

children were screened for moderate acute malnutrition and severe acute malnutrition

640

women attended our World Breastfeeding Week sessions in August

4,939

participants attended our hygiene education sessions



## Why is AHC well placed to help?



### Preventative education

AHC is more than a hospital, and we understand that good healthcare starts at home. Through simple, cost-effective health education, we're able to prevent illness and hospital admissions. In a stretched health system, these preventable measures are not only lifesaving but mean limited funds can be directed toward other aspects of healthcare.



### Commitment to sustainability

Our team is made up of Cambodians who understand the local healthcare landscape and are committed to the long-term health and prosperity of children in Cambodia. Rather than relying on short-term solutions, our team empowers local health workers with skills and knowledge to ensure the sustainability of community wellness.



### Holistic approach

Often smaller NGOs struggle to create lasting change in communities. Many adopt a piecemeal approach, covering one commune at a time. AHC adopts a holistic approach, covering the whole district with interlocking activities that address need at a number of levels. This approach is key to building a robust and sustainable healthcare system for all.

**Thank you for your continued support of AHC's community program**