

Action brief

# An inclusive way to explore solutions and progress in national dialogues in Cambodia

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**Country:** Cambodia

**Themes:** Processes and events

**Sub-themes:** Food Systems Summit and Food Systems Dialogues

**Date:** 2023



## Overview



In advance of the 2021 United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS), Cambodia held national food system dialogues to reflect on progress, learn from successes and discuss what should be improved. These dialogues allowed for the exploration of new national solutions and improved the relevance and significance of the country's participation in international events. Cambodia is now seen as an advanced country when it comes to discussing food systems.



## Objectives of the action brief

This action brief aims to present how inclusive dialogues on nutrition can be a way to discuss and explore innovative solutions.

This action brief also aims to show how consultations on food systems can be organized at the national level.



## Period covered

Thirty-one dialogues were held from December 2020 to August 2021, with some unofficial dialogues continuing into 2023. The preparations for these events began in November 2020, just less than a year before the summit in September 2021.



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## What action was taken?

The Cambodian National Dialogues on Food Systems, organized in preparation for the UNFSS, represented an opportunity to reflect on food systems progress and the path forward. These dialogues were also part of a broader reflection on the third National Strategy for Food Security and Nutrition, which is due to be issued in 2024.

H.E. Sok Silo, as National Convenor for the Food Systems Dialogues, initiated and coordinated the events on behalf of the Council for Agricultural and Rural Development in collaboration with the SUN Networks and relevant Government agencies, and although we (FAO) did a lot of work to organize and report on the dialogues, we don't want to make it seem we were the only ones helping.

A delegation from Cambodia took part in online training organized by the UNFSS and then trained a further group of national facilitators to lead discussions at the dialogues. The facilitators were selected based on their interest and involvement or suggested by the SUN Networks.

Cambodia capitalized on its multistakeholder platform experience to engage a diversity of stakeholders in these events. These previous experiences helped build a diverse cohort of interested parties using established networks and communication channels, such as group chats and email and phone communication.

These dialogues lasted around three to four hours and included plenary and small-group discussions, the latter led by the facilitators.

### Outcomes and impacts:

- The national dialogues, which are available on the [UNFSS website](#), many topics, including food fortification, the involvement of youth and the private sector, local and indigenous food systems and more.
- The national dialogues gathered more than 2,000 participants from around Cambodia and resulted in the *Roadmap for Food Systems for Sustainable Development 2030*, which provided a way forward on food systems and concretized the engagement of Cambodia.
- The preparation for an international event such as the UNFSS resulted in stronger engagement on food systems questions from a broad range of stakeholders, including people who would not have been reached without the dialogues.
- The national dialogues increased the political attention granted to food systems in Cambodia.
- The dialogues underlined connectivity needs among rural provinces and districts. Cambodian provinces are now better connected through Provincial Working Groups for Food Security and Nutrition and have improved their computer literacy.
- The dialogues highlighted the relevance of communication among actors and strengthened stakeholder involvement in nutrition matters.



## What would the country do differently?

### Challenges:

- The inclusivity of the dialogues was limited by unequal internet access, at a time when COVID 19 restrictions restricted face to face gatherings and provincial travel. The subnational platforms, for example, were not able to participate widely, as they were not well connected and equipped. Some dialogues were adapted to reach people unfamiliar with computers by sending a facilitator on site.
- After one civil society coalition felt excluded from the dialogues, Cambodia listened to its input and proposed positive actions to dissipate concerns.
- Many participants, including high-level officials, were not familiar with online tools at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. With time, most of them got used to the various platforms. In-person dialogues were organized once restrictions were loosened.
- Breakout discussions were difficult to hold when more than a hundred participants joined the dialogues. This was overcome by adapting the structure of the sessions to replace breakout discussions with question-and-answer sessions or presentations.
- Reporting activities were difficult because of the standardized format and the consistency required. It was challenging to draw the dialogues to a close and draft the pathways document in time for the summit.



## What was the role of the SUN Movement in this good practice?

The SUN Networks enabled Cambodia to engage with a broader range of participants and simplified the communication. The SUN Civil Society Alliance and Hellen Keller International facilitated contacts with youth

through the Youth Nutrition Champions initiative, and the SUN Business Network convenor strongly supported the dialogues and encouraged the participation of representatives from the private sector.



## Adaptation and applicability

### Advice:

- **Make good use of online meetings but also be sure to hold face-to-face meetings to better reach the community.**
- **Encourage contributions from various organizations. Use supportive arrangements for dialogues to incentivize participation.**
- **Keep organizational requirements light.**
- **Share event recordings and attendance lists to gain insights into participants and encourage new stakeholder involvement.**



## Next steps

- In 2021 and 2022, the Prime Minister, Hun Sen, highlighted the importance of food systems transformation in Cambodia during National Nutrition Day. This high-level commitment has reinforced the importance of food systems issues, particularly at provincial and district levels. After the election in August 2023, advocacy efforts are underway to keep the momentum for food systems going under the leadership of the new Prime Minister Hun Manet.
- Going forward, Cambodia aims to continue holding multistakeholder dialogues to foster learning, discussion and progress. The country also is working on alignment between the road map and the Third National Strategy for Food security and Nutrition, set to be adopted in 2024.



## Further information

- [Official feedbacks of the events](#)
- [Food systems transformation in Cambodia](#)
- [Cambodia Roadmap for Food Systems for Sustainable Development 2030](#)



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**Scaling Up Nutrition Movement**  
c/o SUN Movement Secretariat  
Villa Le Bocage, Palais des Nations  
CH-1211 Geneva, Switzerland  
+41 (0) 22 917 7283  
info@scalingupnutrition.org  
www.scalingupnutrition.org