



Sokhat, 13, (right) and her friend Sreydin serve up breakfast as part of Plan International's school feeding program in Siem Reap, Cambodia.

# FOOD SECURITY

**NUTRITIOUS FOOD IS CRITICAL FOR EVERY CHILD'S CHANCE TO LEARN, PLAY AND GROW**

## OUR CHALLENGE

For children, prolonged hunger and malnutrition are devastating, often stunting their physical and mental development. According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in 2016 around **815 million people – about 10.7% of the world's population – were chronically undernourished**. Malnutrition increases the risk of disease and mortality, especially child mortality. The United Nations reports that hunger is the underlying cause of **7.6 million deaths a year, and 3.1 million of these deaths are a result of undernourished children**. The majority of those suffering from hunger and malnutrition are smallholders or landless people, mostly women and girls living in rural areas without access to productive resources. The challenge is compounded in conflict and natural disaster situations. The United Nations' **Sustainable Development Goals** has addressed global hunger as **Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture**.

## OUR RESPONSE

At Plan International Australia we use a rights-based approach to prevent and manage malnutrition and food crises - saving lives, supporting early recovery and building resilience among children and their communities. Our work involves integrated food and nutrition assistance, as well as livelihood recovery program activities such as malnutrition prevention and management, food distribution, school feeding in support of primary education to ensure that no one is left behind, agricultural activities, cash and voucher-based support.

Food Security and malnutrition are often most pronounced during conflict and natural disaster. We work to reduce the dependency of beneficiaries and to link emergency response to longer-term recovery. Programs vary depending on the political, environmental and situational landscape of each country. In areas affected by disasters, such as floods and droughts, programs focus on life saving measures. This involves direct distribution of food and essential non-food items, including targeted provisions to malnourished

children under five and lactating and pregnant mothers. In relatively stable areas, we work with its partners to build community resilience and preparedness, integrating longer-term community asset generation and preservation activities into food and nutrition programs, such as school attendance, feeder roads, and community gardens.

Plan International Australia recognises the importance of gender equality in issues of food security promoting women's active participation in decision-making in household and community roles, thus contributing to better gender equality in the community. In schools, all meals are

**“Good nutrition is the bedrock of human well-being. Without good nutrition, people's lives and livelihoods are built on quicksand.”**

UNICEF Global Nutrition report

distributed equally to boys and girls to ensure all children are given the opportunity to receive a meal and in turn focus on their school work. Where households receive food aid, non-food items and agricultural training, men, women (particularly female-headed households) and people with disabilities are included to ensure supplies are distributed amongst families equally and to the most vulnerable.

## OUR PROGRAMS – AFRICA AND ASIA

We support our Plan International Country Office partners to ensure all children have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food at all times.

Currently, we collaborate with Plan Country Offices, and a range of UN agencies to implement Food Security programs in six countries in Africa and Asia (**Cambodia, Central African Republic, Myanmar, South Sudan and Zimbabwe**) with a portfolio value over **AUD \$78 million for 2014-2018**.

Grant support is received from a variety of institutional donors including the **Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), WFP, Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), UNICEF, International Office of Migration (IOM) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).**

In **Cambodia** basic education, child health and malnutrition are persistent barriers to children's development. Together with the WFP, we are seeking to address this gap through the **School Feeding program**, integrating education and food activities, targeting vulnerable children and their families through schools. The program helps to increase the number of children attending school and improve their cognitive development - providing them and their families with meals. Complementary activities include improving water, sanitation and hygiene, school gardening, and providing education on nutrition.

Partnerships with WFP also support **Food Security** programs in **Myanmar** and in the **Central African Republic**. In Myanmar, the program supports the **internally displaced Rohingya population (IDP)** of Rakhine State, providing food assistance to approximately 38,522 people (on average 52% female and 48% male) whose livelihoods are totally dependent on food aid. In the Central African Republic, food assistance is provided to over 182,300 vulnerable people whose livelihoods have been affected by war. Children are also supported to continue their education through the provision of meals at school.

We work in four States of **South Sudan** to help the most vulnerable households and school children to access food aid and support to sustain their livelihoods. In partnership with the WFP and IOM, we're providing life-saving food aid and essential non-food items to returnees to the country and IDPs affected by the civil war. In more stable areas food is distributed via the **'Food for Assets' and 'Food for Education' initiatives**; encouraging community members to take part in rebuilding their communities, cultivate crops during the dry season in exchange for food and ensuring children, especially girls, attend school. Together with FAO and UNDP agricultural inputs are distributed including: seeds, fishing hooks and farming equipment, together with agricultural training as a livelihood recovery measure. The program reaches over **300,000 people annually (women, men, boys and girls).**

In many parts of southern **Zimbabwe** rainfall is limited and irregular over the rainy season, significantly affecting agricultural production, particularly where crops are planted. We work to improve the food security of the most marginalised households in Zimbabwe (approximately 110,000 people), particularly those headed by women, by providing farming households with agricultural training and support to increase their food production. Immediate relief is provided in partnership with the WFP alongside integrated development packages to vulnerable households. We also support the wider community and government staff to improve extension services for the most food insecure households, helping to increase yields, and promote the inclusion of women in household and wider community decision-making.

## OUR KEY PARTNERS

Plan International Australia's primary partners are Plan International Country Offices in developing countries where our programs are based. The offices develop strong partnerships with local governments, civil society as well as other community based organisations. Central to the Food

Security portfolio is our significant and longstanding partnerships with United Nations agencies including WFP, FAO, UNICEF and IOM. Together we work in partnership with communities, with a strong emphasis on actively involving children and young people, to address immediate lifesaving needs, as well as building resilience.

## OUR HIGHLIGHTS

The following are some examples of the outcomes achieved to date within the Food Security program:

- We have supported over 636,400 people in five countries throughout Africa and Asia through food and nutrition assistance, and livelihood activities.
- In South Sudan, our partnerships with WFP, IOM, UNICEF and FAO have enabled vulnerable children and their families to receive life-saving measures, as well as longer-term integrated food and nutrition support and livelihood recovery activities.

## OUR IMPACT

Sustainability is key to ensuring that programs have a lasting and positive impact. The successful School Feeding program in Cambodia has gained the attention of donors and the Government of Cambodia, As a result the program has been extended and redesigned with a strong focus on capacity building, continuing for another five years (2016-2021), after which time the international presence will phase out and the responsibility for the program will be absorbed by the Government of Cambodia and local communities. In countries impacted by conflict such as South Sudan between 2016-2018 including during the famine declared in 2017, Plan International Australia in partnerships with UN agencies of WFP/UNICEF/FAO/UNDP-OCHA reached about 2.5 M people.

**Last year Plan International Australia and the WFP provided 172,787 primary school children in Cambodia with nutritious school meals helping to ensure they attend school.**

## OUR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

With the aim of saving lives and promoting livelihood recovery, we are implementing Cash Transfer Programming (CTP) together with the WFP. This involves the provision of vouchers, cash, and cash for work modalities as a means of distributing food, restoring livelihoods and investing in community assets. CTP is recognised as a dignified way of assisting people, whilst supporting the local economy.

Our approach to food/nutrition assistance and livelihood recovery programming is backed by research to ensure the quality of program design or develop tools so food is used as resource to address long term and outcome based objectives in line with our and global strategy of advancing child rights and equality for girls. We use the food as modality for change framework as a tool for program development. The approach is being implemented in countries like South Sudan and Zimbabwe and even influencing our UN partners, for example the project development template of WFP.

## OUR FUTURE PRIORITIES

Over the coming year Plan International Australia will work together with our partners in-country to see the following key developments within the Food Security program:

- Support and strengthen integrated food and nutrition assistance and livelihoods recovery in partnership with UN agencies in, Central African Republic, Myanmar, South Sudan and Zimbabwe.
- In Cambodia, together with the WFP, United States Department of Agriculture and the Government of Cambodia, improve primary school education through a five years integrated food assistance program.
- With the growing risk of drought, floods and extreme weather with El Nino, respond to the emergency food and nutrition needs starvation, particularly in the Pacific, Southern Africa and the Horn of Africa.

### Institutional Donors

As an accredited NGO with the Australian Department for Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) many of PIA's projects are supported by Australian Aid through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program' (ANCP).

PIA's food security projects are supported by the World Food Program.

