



THE ACHIEVEMENT OF SOCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES IN CAMBODIA

2016-2025



The Kingdom of Cambodia, located in Southeast Asia, has an estimated population of 17 million as of 2024¹.

The nation continues to enjoy the benefits of peace, political stability, and macroeconomic resilience, achieving an average annual growth rate of 6.1% between 2010 and 2023².

Building on this strong economic performance, the government of Kingdom of Cambodia implemented the National Social Protection Policy Framework (2016–2025), which has played a critical role in preventing poor and vulnerable populations from falling deeper into poverty during times of crisis.

In 2017, the Government launched two flagship social assistance programmes: the Poor Student Scholarship Programme, supporting approximately 160,000 students from low-income households enrolled in public schools, and the Health Equity Fund, providing free health care to about 500,000 poor households, representing roughly 2 million individuals. Together, these two programmes have been supported by an annual national budget of approximately USD 234 million.

¹ Population Projection 2020-2033 Based on Age Restructure of National Population Projection 2019-2050 and CDHS 2021-22, July 2023

² National Social Protection Council. (2025). *National Social Protection Policy Framework 2024–2035* (p. iv).



During major emergencies, including the COVID-19 pandemic, inflationary pressures, and severe flooding, the government introduced targeted social assistance interventions to stabilise livelihoods and mitigate negative impacts. These included:



Cash Transfer Programme for Poor and Vulnerable Households during COVID-19



Large-scale Post-Closure Cash Support Programme



**The government
a total budget
USD 1.42 billion**

Cash Support Programme for Vulnerable Households during Inflationary Pressures



Cash Assistance Programme for Flood-Affected Households



To implement these four special assistance programmes, the government allocated a total budget of approximately **USD 1.42 billion³**.



economic growth
contribution

**0.55% in 2020 &
0.45% in 2021**

Evaluations by the World Bank, the National Social Protection Council, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) found that the COVID-19 cash transfer programme significantly supported the livelihoods of poor and vulnerable households. It prevented food insecurity, indebtedness, asset sales, and educational disruptions, while contributing to macroeconomic stability—with an estimated economic growth contribution of **0.55% in 2020 and 0.45% in 2021**. The programme also reduced unemployment (**0.57% in 2020 and 0.62% in 2021**) and poverty rates during these challenging periods⁴.

Assessments of the cash assistance programmes for vulnerable and flood-affected households revealed that approximately 97% of beneficiaries were satisfied with the interventions. The programmes reduced household food insecurity by 13%, supported 75% of households in maintaining savings, and helped many pay for essential utilities and services⁵.

³ Oun, P. M. (2025). *Welcome remarks at the opening ceremony of Cambodia Social Protection Week 2025 and the official launch of the National Social Protection Policy Framework 2024–2035*

⁴ Narith, J. (2024). *Report by H.E. Dr. Chan Narith, Secretary of State, Ministry of Economy and Finance, and Secretary-General of the National Social Protection Council* (p. 10). Ministry of Economy and Finance.

⁵ Narith, J. (2024). *Report by H.E. Dr. Chan Narith, Secretary of State, Ministry of Economy and Finance, and Secretary-General of the National Social Protection Council* (p. 10). Ministry of Economy and Finance.

By 2024, Cambodia's social assistance system had expanded to eight programmes, reaching approximately 2.8 million people—equivalent to 28% of the population—with a national budget of USD 285 million in 2024⁶. These include:



2.8 million people

28% of the population



A national budget

USD 285 million

1. The National Social Assistance Programme

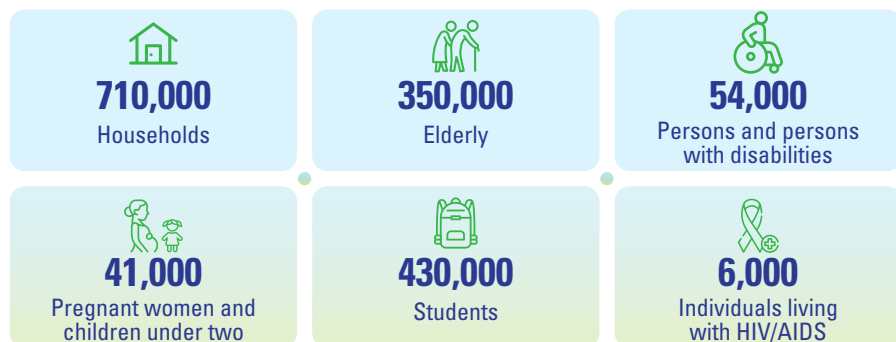
under the Family Package, launched in April 2024, which integrates existing cash subsidies and introduces four new programmes:

- Cash support for pregnant women and children under two years old (initiated in 2019 and later expanded with doubled benefits).
- Scholarships for poor students in both primary and secondary education.
- Cash support for elderly citizens from poor households.
- Cash support for persons with disabilities from poor households, using an inclusive, rights-based approach.



⁶ Narith, J. (2024). *Report by H.E. Dr. Chan Narith, Secretary of State, Ministry of Economy and Finance, and Secretary-General of the National Social Protection Council* (p. 10). Ministry of Economy and Finance.

As of August 2025, this Family Package Programme has supported more than 710,000 households—benefiting over 350,000 elderly, 54,000 persons and persons with disabilities, 41,000 pregnant women and children under two, 430,000 students, and nearly 6,000 individuals living with HIV/AIDS⁷.



2. The Community Agricultural School Feeding Programme, initiated in 2020, aims to enhance child nutrition and education in vulnerable areas while supporting local economies. It now covers 1,114 schools and approximately 300,000 students.

4. The Health Equity Fund has expanded to include poor and at-risk households, cyclo drivers, national athletes, entertainment workers in informal sector, and other informal workers. Currently, about 4.8 million people receive free public health care through this fund.

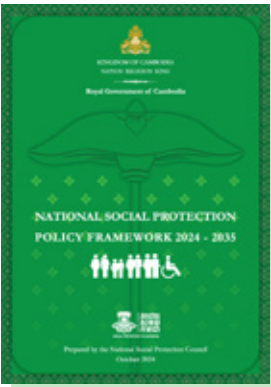
3. The Social Assistance Programme for Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) supports 70,000 young people, including 20,000 trainees from poor and vulnerable households enrolled by October 2024.

5. The Cash Transfer Programme for Pregnant Women and Children under Two for National Social Security Fund female members began in 2018. Since August 2023, the programme has increased allowances and added health services for mothers and children up to age two. The programme now includes female civil servants, interns, and contract officials, benefiting over 770,000 women and children by September 2024.

⁷ National Social Assistance Fund. (2025, September 10). *Press release on the results of the implementation of the Family Package Social Assistance Program for August 2025*

Lately in July 2025, the government launched another social assistance programme Cash Transfer Programme for Imprison Pregnant Women and Children Under Two Years Old Living with Their Mothers in Prisons. This programme aims to improve maternal and child health care, address nutritional deficiencies, and support early childhood development — particularly during the critical first 1,000 days of life of imprison pregnant women and children under two years old living with their mothers in prisons. The programme also seeks to reduce the financial burden on affected families and ensure protection for children who have committed no crime but live in prison with their mothers.

Looking ahead, Cambodia’s long-term vision—outlined in the Pentagon Strategy (Phase I) of the 7th Legislature—aims to transform the country into an upper-middle-income by 2030 and a high-income by 2050. Central to this vision is the continued strengthening of human capital and social protection system to ensure that no citizen is left behind.



Building on the foundation of political stability, economic growth, socio-economic development, and progress in the advancement of the social protection system, the government of Kingdom of Cambodia has decided to launch the National Social Protection Policy Framework 2024–2035. This framework aims to further develop the social protection system and ensure life-cycle protection against various risks. Its objective is to continue strengthening and expanding social protection by focusing on building resilience and maintaining flexibility to effectively respond to climate change, emergencies, and crises, as well as to broader economic, social, and demographic changes.

#588, Monivong Blvd. Phnom Penh,
Cambodia

Tel/Fax: (+855) 23-726-086

Email: info@mosvy.gov.kh

Website: www.mosvy.gov.kh

Supported by:



Implemented by:



Co-financed by:

