

# CSHL NEWSLETTER

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## Cambodian Food Security Amidst the Impact of COVID-19

Over the past few months, Cambodia during a lockdown period, particularly Phnom Penh has been imposed an implementation of three-color zoning system – red, orange, and yellow against the outbreak of COVID-19.[1] This has largely been a dramatic shock to Cambodian markets concerning the needs of food commodities resulted from a negative source of income – mass layoff, working hours and wages reduction, travel and transportation of food restriction.[2]

As regards the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, Cambodian people shall be entitled to enjoy the right to an adequate standard of living, including but not limited to food, clothing, and housing as well as continuous improvement in its living conditions.[3] The Government of Cambodia shall undertake to comply to ensure that its citizen are free from hunger, and to achieve the most efficient distribution of food supplies in relation to such needs.[4]

In addition to impacts to food insecurity caused by COVID-19, under the three-color zoning system, Cambodian people have been hit hard from leaving their home and even purchasing food. At the time, food markets have been closed, and only food commodity from the Ministry of Commerce (“MOC”) was accessible and affordable. In the face of this crisis, the Government has mounted an impressive response, taking decisive actions and demonstrating its commitment to safeguarding and ensuring the well-being of its nation’s food supplies chain and living standard by proving relief to the most vulnerable groups where they are needed most – pregnant women, young children, older people, and people with non-communicable diseases; distributing a lower-than-market-price sales of foods to those groups in the three-color zoning system; and coordinating with other private sectors and NGOs to promote the food program to the near-poor people.[5]

Responding to this necessary needs, despite of in-person-distribution the sale to the three-color zones, the MOC also announced an online food program through <https://shop.moc.gov.kh/> for those in the red zone as well.[6] Moreover, the Phnom Penh Municipality, led and instructed by Phnom Penh Governor Khuong Sreng, created a Telegram group chat for people were facing food shortage and were in the need of emergency assistance to donate and distribute the food aid as requested.[7]

As the outcomes of this response, Cambodia is moving forward with its obligation to ensure as in accordance with the declaration of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights – the right to adequate food includes that everyone should have “physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or means for its procurement.”[8]

[1] United Nations (“UN”) Cambodia, Cambodia COVID-19 Lockdown: Food Security and Nutrition Brief (06 May 2021) (“Cambodia COVID-19 Brief”), p. 3.

[2] Cambodia COVID-19 Brief, p.4.

[3] International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (“ICESCR”), Article 11.

[4] Ibid.

[5] UNICEF, COVID-19: Socio-Economic Impact Assessment (July 2021), p.57-89.

[6] Notification No. 0873 on the Launch of the Ministry of Commerce’s Online Marketplace for Selling Essential Food and Groceries to People Living in the Red Zone, dated 21 April 2021.

[7] Ministry of Information, Notification on Emergency Food Assistance Telegram group created by National Commission for Management and Implementation of Lockdown (18 April 2021)

<<https://www.information.gov.kh/articles/40148>> accessed 27 November 2021.

[8] OHCHR, About the Right to Food and Human Rights

<<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Food/Pages/AboutHRFood.aspx>> accessed 28 November 2021.

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