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Article

The significance of the Food for Education Program: some findings from Chi Paing and Veal Malou primary schools in Tboung Khmum Province

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Abstract

The Food for Education program (FFE) operates in 65 countries across the world. This program provided school meals to 18.2 million children in 2014. In order to implement the FFE, the World Food Program (WFP) works with schools and Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs). This paper explores the importance of the FFE at rural primary schools in Cambodia by focusing upon enrollment student performance, operation of the FFE Program, and perception of the students towards quality and services. The research found (1) The phase-out of the FFE was a tragedy for students at the primary level in rural Cambodia because the program helped to improve their test score and class attendance due to sufficient nutrition. (2) Each student received the same items of food under the FFE. Students received different types of support such as rice, cash, study materials and bicycles. (3) The students were satisfied with all different types of food provided under the FFE including rice, canned fish, vegetables, cereal and clean water. (4) The annual budget from the government agencies helped to sustain the FFE because the programs implemented by international organizations and NGOs were not permanently available.

Key Words: Food for Education (FFE), primary school, rural education, and Cambodia

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1. Introduction

With the recent focus on universal primary education as a Millennium Development Goal (MDG), many developing countries have made dramatic improvements in primary school enrollment rates (Adelman *et al.*, 2007). Education is one of the key components of human capital asset which all the people need for their daily lives and future development. However, though basic education is compulsory for all children as a commitment of global leaders, millions of children in developing countries do not have the opportunity to enroll in school (Meng and Ryan, 2007). During 2000, the countries around the world made an international commitment to achieve eight ambitious development objectives. These eight goals were to eradicate extreme hunger and poverty; achieve universal primary education; promote gender equality and empower women; reduce child mortality; improve maternal health; combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; develop a global partnership for development; and ensure environmental sustainability (UNICEF, 2014). All of them were directly and indirectly contributing to education. It is now a post-MDGs era; Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were formulated; the countries around the world on September 25th 2015 adopted a set of 17 goals to end poverty, to protect the planet, and to ensure prosperity for all as part of a new sustainable development agenda. Each goal has specific targets to be achieved over the next 15 years (UNDP, 2016).

The new target of Education for All (EFA) is Goal 2; it is formulated to “end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round by 2030”, and “ensure that

all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes by 2030” (UN, 2015). The FFE program and School Meals Program (SMP) have been implemented to provide meal services in schools. It is considered a key mechanism for improving school enrollment, reducing absenteeism, as well as repeating grades, and drop-out rates, particularly in the rural areas (Cheung and Berlin, 2014).

The FFE delivering meals available at schools and/or take-home rations as a condition of attendance has recently received renewed attention as a policy instrument for achieving the MDGs of universal primary education and reduction of hunger in developing nations. As the result, the FFE has attracted children to schools in exchange for nutritious meals school participation (Adelman *et al.*, 2008). In particular, the FFE programs, which consist of meals available at schools and in some cases of take-home rations and de-worming programs are considered as a powerful opportunity to achieve this aim, particularly in areas where schools’ participation of children from poor families are initially low (Cheung and Berlin, 2014).

In Cambodia, the FFE started in 1999–2000 as a pilot project in Takeo province with only in-school feeding and was phased in during the following three years. It was first undertaken by the World Food Program (WFP) and the World Bank and Cambodia’s Ministry of Education Youth and Sport (MoEYS). This large-scale project was initiated by the WFP under the Relief and Recovery Operation (Cheung and Berlin, 2014). Cheung and Perrotta (2011) continued that meals for breakfast were delivered free of charge at primary school among the children grades 1 to 6. At schools under the program, children were provided with one meal per day (breakfast) before the start of class. The meal was delivered according to the WFP’s standard ration of rice, food grain, vegetable, fish and vitamins to ensure meeting minimal daily nutrition requirements for children (Cheung and Perrotta, 2011).

With its large contribution of enrollment of the children at primary schools, the FFE expanded its support in 2001 and 2002, and the program was undertaken in cooperation between NGOs and the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF). The FFE then expanded its operation to 407 primary schools and with approximately 291,593 children in four provinces, i.e., Kampot, Kampong Cham, Kampong Speu and Prey Veng. They were provided with free meals during the school day. In addition, the WFP launched a scholarship

program such as food or cash entitlements to the poorest households that have children in grades 4 to 6. Scholarships were awarded to the children who achieved attendance of at least 80.0% per month (WFP, 2017).

The objective of FFE was to promote households' investments in the human capital of their children. In 2015, the WFP reached 448,300 children across Cambodia. Since 2011, this program has been annually assisted of 840,000 children, the WFP's school feeding program included meals and scholarship programs i.e., cash or take-home rice entitlements granted as conditional transfers to children with at least 80.0% of attendance. The WFP's nutrition program aims to contribute to reducing malnutrition through improved young child feeding and public health measures such as staple food (rice) fortification (WFP, 2015).

In late 2011, the FFE provided cash scholarships in the amount of 20,000 Khmer Riels per month for a period of 10 months for each school year. For scholarship as food, each child was funded with 10 kilograms of rice per month, for 10 months in each school year dating back to 2004. Approximately 88,900 children from 4,275 primary schools (or 62.0% of all primary schools) in the 15 provinces during the school year 2012–2013 benefitted from food and cash scholarships (Cheung and Berlin, 2014). Unfortunately, the WFP stopped sponsoring the FFE in 2012 and many schools could not continue this program due to budget shortfalls from the RGoC. This research, accordingly, aims to stress the importance of the FFE program and moreover focus upon enrollment and student performance, under the operation of the FFE Program as well as the perception of the students towards quality and services.

2. Conceptualizing the Food for Education Program (FFE)

In recent years, the FFE has operated in 65 countries across the world; they include Asia, Africa, America, Europe, and the Middle East. This program helped provide school meals to 18.2 million children during 2014. The WFP has been a key agency to implement the program by providing financial and technical support in developing countries (WFP, 2017). The WFP initially started the FFE program in 1961 as humanitarian assistance. Then WFP's mission was to distribute food where needed, to save the lives of victims of war, civil conflict and natural disasters (WFP, 2012).

In general, the FFE is a program using food as a resource to improve educational outcomes; it is designed and implemented as part of

a larger effort to improve educational quality (Alderman *et al.*, 2010). They combine food with other education resources (i.e. materials, supplies, teachers and trainings) to enhance educational outcomes through integrated programming (Bergeron and Rosso, 2001). In Bangladesh, the FFE program began on a small scale in 1993 and expanded to cover 27.0% of the country's primary schools between 1994 and 2000 (CGIAR, 2006). The program has three expectations: (1) to enhance human capital to reduce long-term poverty; (2) to provide nutritional gains to poor families and to improve the targeting of government food subsidy programs; and, (3) to reduce the large leakages from the food grain rationing program.

The FFE started as a large-scale pilot program in 2000 and covered some 17,811 primary schools (27.0% of the total primary schools) of 2.1 million students (13.0% of all the children) in Bangladesh. The FFE covered state primary schools and included four of the eight categories of non-government schools (Meng and Ryan, 2009). Unfortunately, the FFE was terminated in 2002 and replaced by the Primary Education Stipend (PES) program, which provided cash assistance to poor families. Furthermore, the School Feeding Program launched in July 2002 (Ahmed, 2004) and provides a mid-morning snack to students, was (Sukontamarn, 2013). When nutrition of malnourished children improves while they learn, it may also increase their cognitive function. Therefore, the FFE was leading to greater investment in education primarily by subsidizing schooling costs (Adelman *et al.*, 2008). By 2015, the FFE or School Feeding Program initiatives reached 368 million children in 169 countries.

Not only do school feeding programs help ensure that all children who attend school remain healthy, participants were likely to have consistently better enrollment and attendance than non-participants. Breakfast programs at schools lead to better attendance, higher levels of nutrition, increased school attendance, lower dropout rates, and positive effects on academic performance (Korugyendo and Benson, 2011). The FFE is generally considered to be effective at increasing school participation because it initial attendance rates, school quality, and food transfer size (Dorward *et al.*, 2006). The program support includes the direct cost of school enrollment, fees, uniforms, and school supplies (Alderman *et al.*, 2012). The FFE that provides meals served in school and in some cases take-home rations and de-worming programs conditional on school attendance, are considered a useful means to

achieve this aim, particularly in areas where school participation is relatively low (Cheung and Berlin, 2015).

The WFP is the world's largest multi-country provider of in-school meals and take-home rations. It provides a good indication of the typology and popularity of the FFE programs. By 2005, the FFE reached 21.6 million children in 72 countries. In addition to in-school meals and take-home rations, the WFP also provided fortified biscuits for distribution at school teaching (Adelman *et al.*, 2007). For example, the WFP on primary school participation was implemented in Northern Uganda from 2005 to 2007. This program obtained rigorous estimates of the impact of the programs on measures of primary school enrollment, school attendance, age at school entry, grade promotion, and progression to secondary school for a random sample of school-age children living in the service area of the schools (Alderman *et al.*, 2010). In the late 1980s and the early 1990s, the Government of Bangladesh realized the importance of education and identified the development of human capital as a primary strategy for reducing poverty. The program aims to use targeted food transfers to encourage poor families to enroll children in primary school and to keep them there (Meng and Ryan, 2007).

The FFE can also helped Uganda fight malnutrition and hunger while broadening access to primary education. Whether these programs involve in-school feeding or take-home rations; they have to improve student school attendance and increase household food security (Korugyendo and Benson, 2011). According to (UNESCO, 2008), Sub-Saharan Africa from 1999 to 2004 raised its average net enrollment ratio by 26.0% for an annual increase six times higher than during the decade before in Dakar.

The increase in South and West Asia was also impressive, rising by 11.0%. However, there is still much work to be done. There are still countries where net enrollment rates of primary school age children are below 60.0%. Children from poor households often do not attend school or face major obstacles in access to good quality education.

3. Methodology and study area

The study applied exploratory and descriptive types to compare between male and female students at two schools where the FFE provided free breakfast under support from the WFP. A survey was conducted to collect quantitative data among children provided meals for education by

the WFP. The two schools selected for surveys were Chi Paing primary school and Veal Malou primary school. They are located in Ponhea Krek District of Tboung Khmum Province. Chi Paing primary school is located in Krek commune and is considered an urban area while Veal Malou primary school is in Veal Malou commune and viewed as a rural area. Both of them used to be supported by the FFE program by the WFP.

There were four female teaching staffs including three teachers and two non-teaching staff at Chi Paing primary school. This school accommodated 362 students with 180 females. Out of the total, 53 and 55 students were studying grade five and six respectively. At Veal Malou primary school; there were seven teaching staff (five females) and four non-teaching staff (one female). The total enrolment was 243 students (136 females); 45 students enrolled 5 and 36 student took grade 6. During field work, students at grade five and six who experienced with the FFE were contacted for the interview. In recruiting the students, the Yamane (1967) formula was used to calculate sample size. Therefore, the findings of this research was generalized the views and insights of the students at Paing primary and Veal Malou primary schools. The formula used to calculate sample size was based on a 6.0% standard error or level of precision. For selecting students, a random sampling design was used to recruit the grade 5 and 6 students (Table 1).

Table 1. Number of children interviewed and key informants

No.	Respondents	Population	Sample Size	Percentage
1	Chi Paing primary school	108	75	69.4
2	Veal Malou primary school	81	30	37.0
3	Principals		2	
4	District Office of Education Youth and Sport (DoEYS)		1	
5	Provincial Office of Education Youth and Sport (PoEYS)		1	
6	NGOs		1	
	Total		110	

The field work involved both primary and secondary second sources; they included online and existing publications in relation to FFE program. The secondary data were very useful to back up the quantitative data from the survey. Moreover, key informant interviews were made with educational officers, school principals, and NGO staff. They were asked related to overall situation of the FFE, scholarship support, policy and program as well as suggestions and recommendation to improve food for education program in the study areas. At each school, a group discussion was organized in order to let both parents and children interact regarding their benefits from the FFE program. For the analysis, the research applied various analytical tools: descriptive statistic, Chi-square, *t-test*, and Weight Average Index (WAI). Weighted Average Index (WAI) was used to rate the degree of satisfaction of the students regarding perception towards meals provided under the Food for Education Program. The five-scales were: (1) considerably less; (2) less; (3) moderate; (4) high; (5) very high. Independent-Sample T Test was applied to compare the mean scores of two groups on given variables (gender, for example). Situation analysis was used as a qualitative approach to crucially elaborate the impact of the FFE in Cambodia.

4. Findings

4.1. Enrollment and student performance

In Tboung Khmum province, educational institutions were operating for developing human resources with quality and effectiveness. All kinds of educational services were accessible to be in line with the framework of provincial strategic plan, national strategic plan of the MoEYS, and national development plans of the RGoC. In 2016, the educational support program was provided with equity, quality, and relevance as well as effective leadership and management of educational staffs at all levels. This province employed 4,140 educational staff (1,955 females) broken down into 3,372 teaching staff (1,723 females) and 768 non-teaching staff (232 females). There were 648 schools devised into 23 upper secondary schools, 54 lower secondary schools, 396 primary schools and 176 levels with 4 separated pre-schools. In 2016, there were 163,550 students (80,775 females) broken down into, 9,594 students (4,790 females) at pre-school, 117,806 children (56,975 females) at primary school, 13,013 students (7,013 females) at lower secondary school; and, 23,137 people (11,997 females) at upper secondary school (MoEYS, 2016). Table 2 shows that the education in Ponhea Krek District

significantly improved, for example the total number of schools was now 115 schools or 796 classrooms, 912 staff (including 461 female); and, 29,304 students (14,688 females) were enrolling. There were 37 pre-schools (73 classes, 2,230 students); and, 67 primary schools (571 classroom, 19,857 students). At the secondary school, there were 4 upper secondary schools (4,726 students) and 7 lower secondary schools (2,491 students) (MoEYS, 2016). According to the annual report (2011–2012) made by the Ponhea Krek District Office of Education, there were 16 primary schools in this district received the FFE program. Under the WFP, 3,831 students (1,888 females) benefitted from the program, having been provided with breakfast at school.

Table 2. Enrollment, promotion, repetition and drop-out rate, 2008–2016

Year	Enrollment		Repetition		Drop-out
	Total	Female	Total	Female	
2008–2009	134,946	64,672	12,812	5,669	10.1%
2009–2010	136,415	65,575	10,236	4,307	11.5%
2010–2011	134,102	64,533	7,942	3,302	11.9%
2011–2012	128,810	61,977	6,371	2,735	8.0%
2012–2013	131019	62499	5587	2346	10.4%
2013–2014	126261	60902	5360	2299	5.9%
2014–2015	119771	58202	5451	2210	7.5%
2015–2016	117806	56975	7853	3026	

Source: Provincial Office of Education in Tboung Khmum, 2016

In Cambodian society, Khmer literature, mathematics and science are the most popular topics. In Table 3, the interviewed students provided their views regarding their academic performance; there were four most important subjects: Khmer literature, mathematics, social science and science. More than half of the interviewed students (60.6%) were good at Khmer literature while half of them were bad at mathematics. In terms of gender, female students performed better in Khmer literature but male students were good in mathematics (42.9%). During the interview, the students were asked to list the subjects where they performed poorly and well.

Overall, the students were good at Khmer literature; but, they were bad at math. Both girls and boys were fairly good in Khmer literature; but, boys had better performance in math. According to the Provincial Official of Education, Youth and Sport (2016), math and science were considered as the most difficult subjects for Cambodian students. Some of the students took tutoring classes in order to improve their understanding (pers. comm., December 2016).

Table 3. Subjects with good and bad performance

Subjects	Male		Female		Overall	
	n=49		n=55		n=104	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Good performance						
Khmer	28	57.1	35	63.6	63	60.6
Mathematics	21	42.9	18	32.7	39	37.5
Science	0	0.0	2	3.6	2	1.9
Poor performance						
Khmer	16	32.7	11	20.0	27	26.0
Mathematics	20	40.8	33	60.0	53	51.0
Social science	6	12.2	8	14.5	14	13.5
Science	7	14.3	3	5.5	10	9.6

Every school day, the parents gave children some money; they mainly spent for snack or/and tutoring a class tutoring. In the study areas, the children received 2,076 Khmer Riels per day from their parents (Table 4). Comparatively, female students received slightly more than male students. In Cambodia, parents believe that boys waste a lot of money for going out so they do not wish to give them much. (School Principal at Chi Paing, pers. comm., November 2016). Out of the total, more than half of their daily stipend was allocated for snack while 25.9% and 19.9% went to extra class and other things (including saving) respectively. Comparatively, boys and girls shared similar patterns of spending on snacks and extra classes; but, girls could save more money than boys. At

school, the students may be required to take an extra class after school because it could help them to be more confident in examinations (School Principal at Chi Paing, pers. comm., December 2016)

Table 4. Daily stipend received by the interviewed students

Indicators	Male		Female		Overall	
	n=49		n=55		n=104	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
<i>Daily stipend</i>						
1000 and below	10	20.4	5	9.1	15	14.4
1001 to 2000	24	49.0	31	56.4	55	52.9
2001 to 3000	11	22.4	16	29.1	27	26.0
3001 and above	4	8.2	3	5.5	7	6.7
Average	2,020.4		2,125.5		2,076.0	
<i>Daily expenditure</i>						
Snack	1153.1	57.1	1098.2	51.7	1124.0	54.1
Extra class	500.0	24.7	572.7	26.9	538.5	25.9
Others	367.4	18.2	454.6	21.4	413.5	19.9

4.2. The implementation of the Food for Education (FFE)

According to the Executive Director of Kampuchean Action for Primary Education (KAPE), many schools were operating the FFE in Ponhea Krek District; students were provided with free breakfast by the WFP. Between 2002 and 2014, the KAPE operated the FFE at around 300 primary schools throughout Kampong Cham and Tboung Khmum provinces. Every morning, the children were ready to go to schools with plates, spoons and bags; they were so excited to have breakfast and play with their peer before the start of class. In addition, the parents were worry free about their children' hunger, malnutrition diets or snack with expired date during schooling (School Principal at Chi Paing primary school, pers. comm., November 2016).

The program was vitally important for the children because they would enjoy the breakfast and wanted to go to school every day. As a result, that program attracted very attention from schools and parents; this campaign drew an enrollment of almost 100% of children. In addition this program helped to reduce child labor, improved students' attendance, reduced drop-outs, and minimized families' expenditure, and increased

students' nutrition, vitamins, and proteins. Moreover, the school principal at Veal Malou primary school suggests that the FFE helped to alleviate poverty and ensure regular schooling of the children. The Head of the Provincial Office of Primary Education emphasizes that this program were very helpful for the poor children to attend class regularly, to feel more comfortable, and to have good class performance. At school under the FFE program, the WFP supplied food such as rice, cooking oil, tinned fish, and iodized salt and the KAPE provided cooking materials and ingredients. At the same time, each school and the communities were supplied vegetables and firewood.

All of the interviewed students received support from school under Food for Education (FFE) program (Table 5). But types of support obtained varied from one to another or between male and female students. At the two schools studied, all of the students received breakfast followed by study materials (54.8%), cash (17.3%), rice (10.6%) and bicycle (1.9%). Comparatively, male students received more cash and rice while female students obtained more rice as a means to encourage them to stay in school.

At Chi Paing primary school, the program started in 2003 and Veal Malu primary school began in 2008. The food was provided to students every morning, Monday through Saturday (School Principal at Veal Malou primary school, pers. comm., November 2016). All the students were given similar food including rice, vegetables, canned fish and cereal. According to the Executive Director of KAPE, some schools arranged the students to grow vegetables and they were used to supply the food nutrition (pers. comm., December 2016). During the field work, all the students agreed on the importance of the FFE and all of them expressed that the program helped them a lot during their study. As their parents could not pay for breakfast; free meals under the FFE program helped to provide children with enough nutrition. When there was breakfast available at school, the students were eager to attend all the class every day (An Executive Director of KAPE, pers. comm., December 2016).

On average, the interviewed students received 2.7 years of breakfast before the phase-out of the projects in 2012. The female students seemed to get it a bit longer than male students. The program was targeting the primary students because they were not comfortable to take class if they didn't have breakfast. In the rural areas, many parents

could not afford breakfast for their children doing their schooling (School Principal at Chi Paing, pers. comm., November 2016).

The Head of Provincial Office of Primary Education in Tboung Khmum province suggested some challenges when carrying out the program. The quality of rice given was not very good quality. Some students did not enjoy breakfast because of food flavor and preference of food by each student. In relation to food management, it was not transparent. The school principal raised some issues of being difficult to recruit a chef and students' dissatisfaction over the meal delivery.

The Executive Director of KAPE also raised concern that the communities did not supply enough firewood, ingredients, and vegetables. Moreover, there were some small cases of loss of rice and tinned fish, and the utensils (i.e., dishes, spoons, and glasses). The Director of KAPA suggests that the program could possibly be renewed if schools and communities worked together to mobilize local resources and national budget. The communities may raise the FFE as a priority in the commune investment plan for annual budget while the schools are also proposing annual budget from the MoEYS. The combined sources of budget will sustain the long-run FFE program. In addition, the schools are working to mobilize additional resources from local NGOs, individual humanitarians.

Table 5. Motivation of students to regular schooling

Attributes	Male		Female		Overall	
	n=49		n=55		n=104	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
<i>Student Motivation for regular schooling</i>						
Yes	49	100.0	55	100.0	104	100.0
<i>Number of years students are in the the FFE</i>						
1	1	2.0	0	0.0	1	1.0
2	14	28.6	14	25.5	28	26.9
3	31	63.3	41	74.5	72	69.2
4	3	6.1	0	0.0	3	2.9
Average	2.7		2.8		2.7	

4.3. Perception of the students towards the FFE

The students were so happy when they could get free breakfast every morning before their classes; they all rated high and very high degree of their satisfaction on all the attributes. The students felt that all the types of food were in very high quality if compared to the available food at home and communities and male and female students shared similar views. During the breakfast serving, the students always said yummy and may I have more food. Most of the students did not want to leave school because they were enjoying the day with food and study. During Sundays or holidays, the students were not happy and they did not have a meal to eat in the morning (School Principal at Chi Paing, pers. comm., December 2016). According to the Executive Director of KAPE, breakfast is important for children because it provides children with needed nutrition. The rural households could not provide their children with the same quality food as that provided by the FFE (pers. comm., December 2016).

Table 6. Perception of the students towards breakfast quality and services

Attributes	Male		Female		Overall		P-Value
	n=49		n=55		n=104		
	WAI	OA	WAI	OA	WAI	OA	
<i>Perception of the students towards breakfast quality</i>							
Rice	0.96	VH	0.97	VH	0.96	VH	0.332
Fish can	0.92	VH	0.98	VH	0.95	VH	0.005**
Vegetable	0.92	VH	0.96	VH	0.94	VH	0.049*
Cereal	0.92	VH	0.96	VH	0.94	VH	0.049*
Clean water	0.75	H	0.69	H	0.72	H	0.114
<i>Perception of the students towards breakfast services</i>							
Timely services	0.93	VH	0.92	VH	0.92	VH	0.649
Similar food amount	0.83	VH	0.81	H	0.82	VH	0.599
Clean and hygienic	0.89	VH	0.89	VH	0.89	VH	0.906

Note: WAI= Weight Average Index measured on a five-point scale [Considerably Less (CL) = 0.00-0.20, Less (L) = 0.21-0.40, Moderate (M) = 0.41-0.60, High (H) = 0.61-0.80, Very High (VH) = 0.81-1.00]; OA = Overall Assessment; *Significance at the 0.05 level; **Significance at the 0.05 level.

The students were very optimistic on the services provided for their meal; they were highly satisfied. The students agreed that food was provided on time and the same amount among all the students. In the same time, the food was very clean and hygienic for them. During the interview, the students felt that the food at school was much better quality than what was cooked by their parents at home (School Principal at Veal Malou primary school, pers. comm., November 2016).

Since 2012, the program has not operated anymore because of the phase-out of the WFP; the two study schools could not continue the program because there was no budget from the MoEYS. As a result, 74.0% of the students agreed that the phase-out of the FFE affected their education. When there was no breakfast provide anymore, the students were reluctant to go to school. In addition, their parents may cook for them or paid them with little money to buy some breakfast. But, the majority of the students did not have properly breakfast anymore because their parents were unable to pay for it regularly (An Executive Director of KAPE, pers. comm., December 2016). When knowing the importance of the FFE, all the interviewed students appealed for the renewal of the program in their rural areas. According to Provincial Official for Education, Youth and Sport (2016), the program came to an end before the schools could run the program by themselves. In particular, the MOEYS has not yet been able to allocate extra budget for the program, while the parents could not afford to pay for the breakfast program (pers. comm., December 2016).

Table 7. The importance and proposed future of the FFE

Attributes	Male n=49		Female n=55		Overall n=104	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
<i>Appeal for a renewal of the FFE</i>						
Yes	49	100.0	55	100.0	104	100.0
<i>Affecting performance of the students</i>						
Yes	36	73.5	41	74.5	77	74.0
<i>Proposed responsible agency for the FFE</i>						
MoEYS	1	2.0	1	1.8	2	1.9
NGOs	48	98.0	54	98.2	102	98.1

The parents of the children still believed that only NGO could make the FFE possible because NGOs have worked closely in the communities. They also provided many types of social services which were not provide by the school and government agencies. According to the School Principal of Chi Paing primary school, primary school could not run breakfast without support from NGO because the school and the community did not have sufficient resources. (pers. comm., November 2016).

Furthermore, the Head of Provincial Office of Primary Education reveals that the FFE could probably renew if the MoEYS and NGOs work together to redesign the program. Moreover, the Executive Director of KAPE suggests that the WFP phased out this FFE because the livelihoods of the parents of the two study schools were getting better and better. In particular, the WFP already asked for a commitment from the central government to continue the program after the FFE's phase-out.

5. Suggestions, planning, and policy implications

The Food for Education is one of the most important programs to improve student performance at primary schools in the rural areas through providing breakfast. Recommendations are provided as the followings:

The Royal Government of Cambodia (RGoC). The breakfast is very important for the children enrolling at primary school; but, their parents are not able to afford it; so the MoEYS may consider continuing this program through providing some annual budget monies to each school for re-operating this program. Alternatively, the MoEYS may work with international organizations and NGOs again, for example the World Food Program (WFP) to provide funding to the schools in rural areas for operating the food for education program (FFE). Without giving daily breakfast, the students are not able to concentrate on their studies and have insufficient nutrition.

The Provincial and District Offices of Education Youth and Sport. The education offices at the sub-national level should consider this program as one of the highest priorities. Therefore, both Provincial and District Offices of Education Youth and Sport should include this program into the annual provincial/district plans to mobilize financial resources from the government and international organizations. The Provincial and

District Offices of Education Youth and Sport also should work with NGOs to seek for funds to support schools which are in need of help in order to provide daily breakfast to the students.

The School Management. Schools currently are not included in the budget from the government to operate breakfast. Schools should consider alternative ways to continue the program. First, schools may consider seeking small monthly contributions from the parents for the program operation. Schools could also grow some vegetable and other edible foods which can supply for breakfast for the students. Since support from international organizations and NGOs are not sustainable; schools may consider more sustainable mechanisms such as annual budget from the government and small monthly contribution from the parents.

The World Food Program (WFP). Obviously, the WFP already completed its mission to provide such support, but the WFP should reconsider if it could select some remote and marginalized rural schools to continue support. It was so early for the WFP to phase out its project and it may have impacts on the program. In order to help the students to sustain at primary school and have sufficient nutrition, the WFP should continue to work with its partners such as NGOs and schools to operate the program again.

The Parents of the Students. The parents should consider breakfast very necessary for their children so they should provide their children with sufficient food for the breakfast by cooking themselves or pay for their children to buy breakfast. The parents could probably wish to pay to school for arranging the breakfast for their children. By doing so, the children also can eat with other peers in which they could build friendlier environment.

6. Conclusion

The Food for Education program (FFE) is very significant for the children at primary schools in the rural areas of Cambodia. The provision of breakfast for the students not only provided the children with sufficient nutrition, it also enabled the children to concentrate on their studies for better performance at school. The research found that (1) the phase-out of the FFE was a tragedy for students at primary level in rural Cambodia because their program helped the students to sustain at schools with good concentration and sufficient nutrition. The majority of students

agreed that the FFE motivated their education. As a result, most of the students appealed for the continuation of this program. The students believe that NGOs could help rural schools continue the program. (2) The students received the same items of food under the food for education program; but they received different types of support such as rice, cash, study materials and bicycles. The students received equal amounts of rice, vegetable, canned fish and cereal for their breakfast. On average, the students obtained 2.7 years of breakfast before the phase-out of the projects by the WFP in 2012. The female students were more likely to be in the program longer than male students. (3) Most of the students satisfied with all types of food provided under the FFE including rice, canned fish, vegetable, cereal and clean water. The food was provided before class timely and daily. The students liked the types of food provided; they assessed that the food was very high quality. Male and female students shared similar views. (4) The annual budget from the government agencies helps to sustain the FFE because that program cannot be sustained permanently by NGOs or other international organizations.

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