

# Cooperating with the Private Sector and Citizen Participation

JICA utilizes a wide range of approaches to work with private organizations and citizens for nutrition improvement.



## Cambodia Better Prenatal Nutrition

Health

Preah Vihear Province in Cambodia has the nation's worst nutrition indicators: 30.7 percent of underweight children, 44.3 percent of growth stunting, and undernutrition is rampant. The parents of these children often do not recognize that their child is underweight; moreover, the mothers lack knowledge about complementary feeding and feed them nothing but white rice gruel. To tackle this situation, this child health and nutrition improvement project is directly addressing the most important period in a child's life, the first 1000 days which develops the foundation for their future health.

JICA is working with Services for the Health in Asian and African Regions (SHARE), an organization that has worked for the past 10 years to improve the nutrition of children in Cambodia. Their rich experience is being applied to the project area and, together with the HC staff and VHSG<sup>\*1</sup>, they are conducting Integrated Growth Monitoring Services (IGMS)<sup>\*2</sup>. Together with the Women and Child Committee members, SHARE has developed the Cambodian complementary food recipe book which uses local food resources. "One of the problems was that many mothers had no concept of "complementary food," and their children dislike eating because the food is not appropriate for a baby. That is why mothers need to gain proper knowledge on complementary feeding at the class," said SHARE's Sei Morgan Mieko.

In order to secure the funding, which is vital for sustaining their activities, SHARE conducts workshops for Women and Child committee members using the funding made available by local government to increase their role and responsibilities. People in regional communities have begun to use their own initiative, and this

workshop has contributed to gaining community funding for Just One Time Cooking<sup>\*3</sup> activities in every single village where SHARE works. In the future, SHARE plans to cooperate with the various counterparts, from the provincial level to village level, and will continue working to bring smiles to mothers and children.

<sup>\*1</sup> Village Health Supporting Groups: village based volunteer and a part of health system in Cambodia  
<sup>\*2</sup> IGMS: promotion and prevention of child health services as a part of health center's community outreach program  
<sup>\*3</sup> Just One Time Cooking: SHARE's innovative complementary food cooking process



Training of the health center staff and VHSG who are provide Integrated Growth Monitoring Services.



A baby food class in session.

Infant health checkups are conducted by health center staff and Health Volunteers.



## Vietnam Fostering Vietnam's First Dietitians

Health

Vietnam has seen rapid economic growth in recent years. But while the country continues to grow more prosperous, obesity and other problems caused by overnutrition and an unbalanced diet are beginning to appear. "There were no nutrition specialists—no dietitians—in Vietnam, and there was no system in place to educate people about nutrition," said Kuriwaki Kei, who formerly worked at Ajinomoto's CSR<sup>\*</sup> Department.

Ajinomoto's research station decided to confront the problem, and in 2011 launched the Vietnam Nutrition System Establishment Project (VINEP) together with Vietnam's National Institute of Nutrition (NIN). The project bore fruit in September 2013, when Vietnam's first four-year bachelor in nutrition course was opened at Hanoi Medical University. The course trains dietitians in Vietnam, with the support of the Japan Dietetic Association, Jumanji University, and the Kanagawa University of Human Services.

In furtherance of JICA's role, since 2014 students of the dietitian course have been in-

cluded in a symposium on nutrition was also held in Vietnam, helping people to recognize the importance of having a national nutrition policy and dietary management. Thanks to such efforts, dietetics was legally recognized as a civil service profession in 2015, laying the groundwork for a system to further foster the discipline.

Activities continue through the Ajinomoto Foundation. The number of universities training dietitians has grown to ten, and further expansion with improved curricula is planned. The aim is not only to train more dietitians, but to help them to be more effective in society.

<sup>\*</sup>Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)



Vietnam's first dietitians graduate from the four-year bachelor in nutrition course Hanoi Medical University.



The first batch of students at Hanoi Medical University visiting Japan for training.



## Bangladesh Euglena Cookies to Save Children

Food and Agriculture

Bangladesh, where over half of the population—84 million people—live on less than USD 150 a month. In Dhaka, the capital, underdevelopment and low body weights are significant problems among children of low-income families living in slums, who are most likely to suffer from undernutrition.

Taking up the challenge is euglena Co., a company operating in Bangladesh. The company aspires to use the abundant nutrients in Euglena (a type of protist) to address the nutrition problem. Since 2014, the company has been delivering nutrient-rich Euglena cookies to schools mainly attended by the countries' poorest children. As of September 2019, this project, called the Euglena Genki Program, has supplied a total of 8.5 million cookies to school children.

However, a sustainable business model is necessary if the project to be sustained. JICA is cooperating with euglena Co. to study the viability of a system in which Euglena foods are

sold to upper and middle-class Bangladeshis, and the profits are used to subsidize Euglena cookies for the most poverty-stricken children. As part of the project, blood tests and body measurements were taken by a local medical survey organization to determine the extent to which the cookies improved the children's nutrition. "Although the results didn't show a huge improvement, we were able to discover that intestinal parasites might be preventing nutrient absorption," said euglena Co.'s Ebana Tomoyasu.

In a hygiene awareness survey carried out at schools participating in the Euglena Genki Program, it was also discovered that only 21 percent of children knew how to wash their hands correctly. The company is currently not only providing cookies, but is also working to improve hygiene standards, such as teaching correct hand-washing techniques.



Two boys delighted to get Euglena cookies.



Top: The blood tests primarily measure for anemia.



Bottom: Children learn how to wash their hands correctly.