



World Vision

**ENOUGH**

**Cambodia:**

**Our meals,  
our voice**





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## What's this about?

World Vision is leading the *School Meals Child-led Research* initiative, a unique effort that ensures children's voices are at the centre of shaping school meals programmes. Across 13 countries, children took the lead in asking questions, gathering stories, and sharing what matters most to them about school meals. They explored critical root causes, gaps and potential solutions, always through the lens of their lived experiences in schools.

The study used both qualitative and quantitative methods, including semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and surveys. The data collected by child researchers was analysed thematically, reflecting the priorities and perspectives of their peers.

In Cambodia, this child-led research is part of World Vision's ENOUGH campaign, which amplifies children's voices in national, regional and global advocacy efforts. By listening to children and learning directly from their experiences, this initiative highlights not only the challenges faced by children in Cambodia, but also their aspirations for a future where every child can thrive and enjoy nutritious meals at school.





## Who we are

We are students from Cambodia who wanted to understand what school meals mean to children like us. We spoke with 100 students aged 9 to 15, girls and boys – including children with different abilities – to find out whether the food we eat at school is safe, satisfying, and helps us to learn.

Our research is part of a global child-led research project where children share their experiences of school meals. We asked questions about what food is served, how safe and clean it is, how it makes students feel, and whether they are ever asked for their opinions about school meals.

## What we found out

Most students are very happy with the food they receive at school. Nearly everyone said they get enough to eat and that the **meals help them stay full throughout the day**. A few said that they sometimes miss out, but this usually happens because they arrive late, and the food has already been served.

Students said they think the meals are clean and safe. A lot said they feel better eating food made with **local ingredients, like vegetables from the school garden or nearby farms**. It helps to know where the food comes from and that it's fresh.

They also talked about how the meals make them feel. 66% said they're really satisfied with what they're given. The food is usually served on time, and it helps their families by saving money. They also feel safer eating at school instead of buying food from the street. Some said they used to buy snacks outside, but now they eat **at school – they know the food is cleaner and better for them**.



## Why school meals matter

Students said school meals help them pay attention in class and come to school more often. Some shared that in the past, children would miss school because they were hungry - but now they come because they know there will be food.

They also said the meals keep them healthy. The food is safer than what they might buy from the street, and because it's free and easy to eat at school, it helps them feel like they belong.



## What needs to improve

Even though most students were satisfied with the school meals, they had some ideas to make things better.

Some said the **food isn't always enough or doesn't always taste good**. A few added that the meals can feel repetitive and they'd like more variety, like fruits or desserts.

They also said that bad weather sometimes stops meals from being cooked, and some schools don't have a proper place for them to eat or wash dishes. When they serve themselves, the food can run out before everyone has had a chance to eat - especially for those served last. **Food should be shared more fairly.**

Some students also wanted the meals to better match their tastes - maybe through using local spices or ingredients. They asked for meals to be served even when staff are away, or food deliveries are delayed.



## Do adults listen to students?

Most students (85%) said that they've been asked about school meals before. But 15% said they hadn't. They'd really like to be involved in a way that feels welcoming and child friendly.

**Students want more chances to speak up.** They have ideas. They want to help make school meals better and feel like their voices are included in decisions that affect them.





## Our ideas and hopes

We're proud of what school meals have done for children - but **we also believe they can get even better.**

We hope schools can keep making meals safer, tastier, and more suited to what children enjoy.

**We want enough food for everyone, every day,** regardless of the weather or who is helping.

We'd love to see more local ingredients, more variety, and a chance to share our ideas regularly - not just once.

When children, parents, and teachers work together, school meals can be something we're all proud of.

These meals help us stay healthy, learn better, and keep coming to school. **When they're done well - with clean, tasty, safe food - they make school a better place for everyone.**

**Our voice matters. Our school meals matter. Our future matters.**

**- Child researchers from Cambodia**



## Acknowledgements

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For more information about World Vision's School Meals, visit the [ENOUGH School Meals](#) page.

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### CHILD AND ADULT SAFEGUARDING

World Vision ensured the safe and ethical participation of girls, boys adhering to World Vision's Safeguarding policy and protocols on data collection and World Vision's Code of Conduct.

Data collectors were trained on how to conduct interviews in an ethical and safe manner. Children were oriented on the possibility of withdrawing from the interview process at any moment. Informed consent was obtained for all photographs included in this report.



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