Introduction

- One-third of children in Cambodia are stunted as a result of chronic malnutrition in early childhood.1,2,3
- Most Cambodians get their animal source food products (ASF) products, which are an important part of the local cuisine, from informal “wet” markets, where the many foodborne disease outbreaks are believed to begin.4
- The International Livestock Research Institute proposes to introduce a market-based intervention to reduce incidence of foodborne disease from animal source food products

Objectives

- Determine women’s perceptions of the risk of food safety and how it relates to diet and health
- Identify barriers preventing children and mothers from accessing safe animal sourced food products

Methodology

- Interviewed 24 women (6 grandmothers, 18 mothers) responsible for a child under 5 on family nutrition habits, perceptions of food safety and barriers to food safety. All women also agreed to participate in food security questionnaire
- Using PhotoVoice© approach, after initial interview, women were loaned a camera for 2-3 days to take photographs of their food, food preparation, and other aspects of their lives that affected their nutrition

Results

- Deep-seated fears of chemical contamination of foods affect how women feed their families
- Women prefer natural foods and would like to be able to grow their own vegetables, catch their own fish, and raise their own animals
- They feel that safer foods do exist, but are expensive and far away and therefore inaccessible
- Because resources to be able to grow their own foods or purchase safer foods don’t exist, they utilize a series of strategies to make foods safer for their families

Conceptual Framework

Fear that chemicals in purchased food negatively affects health of families

Preference to purchase food at supermarkets or grow/catch their own food

Resource Limitations:
- Time
- Money
- Access to land

Mitigation strategies to improve safety of food purchase from local vendors

Purchasing Strategies:
- Fresh, crisp vegetables
- Vegetables with holes, worms
- Lake, river fish

Preparation Strategies:
- Clean with water and salt
- Blanch
- Cook well

Safe, healthy food for families

Chemicals affecting health:
- “I’m afraid that it will affect the baby because of those chemicals in the vegetables. It is okay for us to eat them but the baby in the womb cannot handle all these chemicals.”
- “If we had vast plain land, we would dig a pond and raise fish by ourselves. It’s easy eating and there would be fish. If we had vast plain land, we’d grow food. Because...”

Chemicals affecting food:
- “Mostly of my concern, I saw the post on Facebook. Do you see, there is pus in pork and there are chemicals affecting health of families.”
- “If we had vast plain land, we’d grow food. Because...”

Conclusions

- Women see chemicals use in foods as the cause of foodborne illness
- Although many of the women went into detail about the use of chemicals on vegetables, women also believe that chemicals are affecting their animal source food products
- Interventions that wish to decrease rates of foodborne illness and increase animal source food consumption should also address the belief that the food system has been compromised by the addition of chemicals and pesticides

References

2. Demographic and Health Survey in Cambodia 2015.
4. Additionally, they would like to thank the researchers who participated in the study, funding for this project was provided by the Global Field Experience Grant from Rollins School of Public Health, Emory University, and USAID through the Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Livestock Systems.

Possible Sources of Beliefs

- Facebook:
  - “Mostly of my concern, I saw the post on Facebook. Do you see, there is pus in pork and beef.”
- Hearsay:
  - “I heard people say they’re full of chemicals and are needed to be cleaned to get rid of some of the chemicals. That’s why we blanch them, dear.”
  - “A lot of people got food poisoning. It’s hearsay, but it’s scary.”

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank CelAgrid, the partnering non-governmental organization based in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. In particular, they would like to thank the research assistants and translators. Additionally, they would like to thank the mothers and grandmothers who participated in the study.