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## Small Indigenous Fish Powder (SEP)



### The Problem:

Childhood malnutrition remains a significant concern in Cambodia, with high rates of stunting and wasting, and widespread micronutrient deficiencies among both children and women. Recognizing the importance of fish in the Cambodian diet, research is exploring the potential of small fish species, rich in essential micronutrients to be processed into affordable and nutrient-dense food products.



### The Solution:

Driven by the significant economic impact of malnutrition in Cambodia, WorldFish and partners have been developing and promoting fish-based products utilizing nutrient-rich small indigenous fish species for over a decade, with initiatives like small fish powder aiming to improve nutrition, particularly for young children.

Small fish are a vital source of macro and micronutrients crucial for the growth of young children and the health of pregnant and lactating women, yet their daily consumption among children in poor rural areas is limited due to concerns about bones and preparation time.

Small fish powder is a solution to increase access to animal source foods year-round. It is safe, nutritious, tasty, and accessible. Small fish powder is easy to make in four steps: washing, draining excess water, roasting, and pounding. It is easy to add to existing recipes for whole family, including pregnant women and children starting at six months. Small fish powder is ideal for children 6-23 months of age to support healthy growth and development.



### Target users:

Small Indigenous Fish Powder presents a promising solution to combat undernutrition in vulnerable groups, especially infants, pregnant and lactating women, and school-aged children. Reaching infants requires engaging mothers and pregnant women, while integrating fish powder into the existing School Meal Program offers a viable pathway to improve nutrition for older children.



### Barriers for adoption/ scaling:

Small Fish Power, produced seasonally by micro-entrepreneurs from fish caught in rice fields and community fish refuges, faces challenges in consistent year-round availability due to its reliance on the wet season. Limited consumer awareness of its nutritional benefits, coupled with a mismatch between production and demand, results in low sales. Furthermore, the absence of regular quality control and established pathways for integration into the School Meal Program hinder its wider adoption.



### Government support and policy adoption for impact:

The Cambodian government recognizes the crucial role of fish in healthy diets, evident in its inclusion in the Third Strategy for Food Security and Nutrition (2024 - 2028). Furthermore, the previous strategy (2019 - 2023) highlighted the importance of high-quality fish powder-enhanced and snacks in treating Moderate Acute Malnutrition.

The NOURISH project fostered stakeholder ownership by supporting informal commercialization, training 13 home producers to establish their own Small Fish Powder (SFP) businesses with skills in production, safety, marketing, and business management. To further enhance sustainability, the SFP Business Accelerator program equipped 15 women-led SMEs with advanced skills in marketing, finance and business ethics, leading to significant sales growth through a competitive challenge. Empowered with new skills and confidence, these SFP SMEs demonstrated a continued commitment to their businesses beyond the project's duration.

### Preliminary results:

- ✓ Through the GIZ-SARF project, WorldFish has been actively training producers in the small fish powder production process, including developing production, sales, and marketing strategies utilizing various channels. These producers have also been connected to promotional opportunities at national and provincial events, and WorldFish is expanding these efforts to scale commercial production and marketing through social media.
- ✓ The NOURISH project (2012-2022) successfully trained over 1,500 Community Agents to guide families in homemade Small Fish Power (SFP) production, utilizing community events and media to educate on its nutritional benefits and preparation. This initiative led to a significant 18% increase in small fish consumption among young children and a 23% reduction in underweight women. Furthermore, the project contributed to improved dietary diversity through increased consumption of nutrient-rich foods, including fish and fish powder.



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