



## PRESS RELEASE

### **Cambodia to host world's largest school feeding conference**

#### ***21st Global Child Nutrition Forum seeks to facilitate learning and address challenges in school meal implementation***

**SIEM REAP, Cambodia, 2 December 2019** – Celebrating its 21<sup>st</sup> edition, the Global Child Nutrition Forum will be held for the first time in Asia, a region that has seen many examples of how school feeding can act as a safety net and make a difference in the lives of millions of vulnerable children. The event is hosted by the Royal Government of Cambodia, together with the Global Child Nutrition Foundation (GCNF) and the World Food Programme (WFP) Centre of Excellence against Hunger.

As the largest annual international conference on school feeding in the world, the Forum will bring more than 350 delegates from some 60 countries. Over a five-day period, delegates from governments, UN agencies, NGOs, business and research institutions will share insights, successes, and challenges under the theme - *What we're learning: Enhancing value and exploring challenges and good practices in school meal programme implementation*.

"The Forum aims to highlight issues related to child nutrition around the world, foster cooperation between nations, and encourage countries to develop and improve school nutrition programmes that return multiple benefits and address multiple Sustainable Development Goals," remarked Arlene Mitchell, Executive Director of the Global Child Nutrition Foundation. "It is also a wonderful opportunity to raise public awareness about nutrition challenges facing children in all countries and to share experience and tools to address those challenges."

For over two decades, the Forum has brought together leaders around the world and helped them develop and implement country-operated sustainable school feeding programmes. Through intensive training, technical assistance, and planning, an informal worldwide alliance of leaders dedicated to advancing school feeding has evolved.

"School feeding programmes have the potential to unlock multiple benefits for school children, their families, communities, and entire nations," said Daniel Balaban, director of the WFP Centre of Excellence against Hunger in Brazil. "Gathering high-level officials from over 50 countries every year to discuss strategies to strengthen school feeding translates into stronger governmental commitment to school feeding and into positive impacts on education, health, and socio-economic indicators."

"Healthy and well-nourished school children learn better. However, there are still 73 million children go to school hungry, 10 million of them are in Asia," said Valerie Guarnieri, WFP Assistant Executive Director. "As a global catalyst for school feeding development, we believe the Forum will continue to play an important role in mobilizing stronger government commitment and push school feeding high on national, regional and global development agendas."

The Forum is hosted in a different country each year, affording participants an opportunity to visit local schools and see one another's school feeding programmes in action.

"The school feeding programme has been regarded as one of Cambodia government's priorities as stated in the national education strategic plan (2019-2023) as well as the national social protection policy framework and the fundamental to build human capital in the Kingdom of Cambodia," said HE Dr. Hang Chuon Naron, Minister of Education, Youth and Sport Cambodia. "Thanks to the long-



standing partnership with WFP and many other partners, we are now transitioning our school feeding implementation to fully home-grown, which means school meals will be more nutritious and diverse and, at the same time, smallholder farmers will be supported and local economies boosted.”

Countries expected to attend the Forum include:

African Union, Bangladesh, Benin, Bhutan, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Chad, China, Colombia, Congo, Cyprus, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea Bissau, Honduras, India Indonesia, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Laos, Libya, Madagascar, Mauritania, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Palau, Philippines, Russia, Rwanda, São Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United States of America, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

[www.gcnf2019.org](http://www.gcnf2019.org)

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The **Global Child Nutrition Foundation (GCNF)** is a global network of governments, businesses, and civil society organizations working together to support school meal programs that help children and communities thrive. GCNF provides training, technical assistance, and sharing opportunities to help governments build national school meal programs that are nutritious, locally-sourced, and ultimately independent from international aid.

The **WFP Centre of Excellence against Hunger** results from the joint engagement of Brazil and WFP to spur South-South cooperation and strengthen the global efforts to end hunger. The WFP Centre supports governments in Africa, Asia and Latin America to forge sustainable solutions of their own, via knowledge building, capacity development, and policy dialogue regarding food and nutrition security, social protection, and school meals. The WFP Centre currently supports some 30 countries in a long-term basis to help them create innovative approaches to address the multi-dimensional issues of poverty and hunger. [www.centreofexcellence.org.br](http://www.centreofexcellence.org.br)

The **Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport**, Cambodia

Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) is the government ministry responsible for promoting and regulating education, youth and sport development in Cambodia. Headed by HE Dr. Hang Chuon Naron, the Ministry’s mission is to ensure that all Cambodian children and youth have equal opportunity to access quality education consistent with the Constitution and the Government’s commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

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