

UNICEF Environmental Action Fellowships 2024 (Cambodia)

Title: UNICEF Environmental Science Fellowship
Level: Fellowship

Reports to: Chief of Health and Nutrition Team, UNICEF Cambodia Country Office

Duration: 6 months
Dates: Jan 1– June 30, 2024
Location: UNICEF Country Office Phnom Penh, Cambodia

1. Purpose and Objectives:

If you are a committed, creative and passionate about making a lasting difference for children, the world's leading children's rights organization would like to hear from you. For 70 years, UNICEF has been working on the ground in 190 countries and territories to promote children's survival, protection and development. The world's largest provider of vaccines for developing countries, UNICEF supports child health and nutrition, good water and sanitation, quality basic education for all boys and girls, and the protection of children from violence, exploitation, and diseases. More recently, UNICEF has elevated action on healthy environments for healthy children. UNICEF is funded entirely by the voluntary contributions of individuals, businesses, foundations and governments.

Cambodia is among the countries in Southeast Asia that ranked the highest on three environmental risk factors—ambient pollution, indoor pollution and lead exposure.¹ In Cambodia, the number of children with elevated blood lead levels (BLLs) above 5 ug/dL is 3,171,259 children (more than 50% of children under 18 in Cambodia).² Regarding the impact on the population, Cambodia's estimated Disability-Adjusted Life Years (DALYs) of lead exposure is 40.89 per 100,000³, which is the highest in the Southeast Asia region. For household air pollution, Cambodia's DALYs is 2422 per 100,000, which is the third highest in the region. Past studies, 2018 and earlier, showed concerning levels of mineral and metal contamination, such as arsenic in groundwater and rice. Cambodia's high environmental burden of disease, coupled with the socioeconomic impact of the ongoing pandemic, threatens to undermine child health development gains of the past decade, including impacting learning outcomes⁴ and urgent action is needed.

Recently, UNICEF supported the Government of Cambodia to carry out the country's first Children's Environmental Health (CEH) assessment. This effort involved over 29 Ministry departments at national and sub-national level, including the Ministries of Health (MoH), Environment (MoE), Mines and Energy (MME), Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), and Industry, Science, Technology and Innovation (MISTI).

The CEH assessment provides a comprehensive overview of the current state of children's environmental health in Cambodia. It highlights the major environmental health risks that children face, including exposure to air pollution, water and food contamination, toxic metals, pesticides, and

¹ Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) global estimates, 2020

² Idem

³ Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) global estimates, 2020

⁴ Association of Arsenic Exposure among Secondary School Children's Academic Scores in Kandal Province, Cambodia, <https://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/doi/abs/10.1289/isee.2016.2952>

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hazardous waste. Among the key recommendations from the assessment was the need for more research and studies to better understand the scope of and validate levels of toxic metals in children's blood, particularly lead.

UNICEF has created a unique opportunity graduates with relevant technical skills and competencies to make a concrete and significant contribution to UNICEF's environmental action for children in Cambodia. 1-2 fellows will support the design and implementation of new research and studies on children's environmental health.

Programme Summary

Each UNICEF Environmental Action Fellow will travel for up to six months to UNICEF's Cambodia country office in order to support the development of a research and study plan with Government and other stakeholders, this includes identifying methodology, sample size, data analysis plan and some steps in implementation related to tools and training materials development, training of data collectors and data collection/analysis.

Expected results: (measurable results)

Output 1: Support the design of a survey or country screening assessment to measure toxic metal levels, including lead, in children's blood.

- Participate in technical discussions with UNICEF HQ, Government departments, research partner institutions and other local experts
- Help prepare meeting agenda, meeting minutes
- Review relevant global standards, protocols, guidelines, and other country reports conducting similar surveys
- Work with UNICEF and Govt to develop a study plan and protocol – which includes sample size, data collection and analysis methods
- Collect data and information related to costing for the survey and supplies, equipment needed
- Supporting documentation for submitting ethical clearances as needed

Output 2: Support the capacity building of Government staff on conducting research related to CEH

- Development of training materials and tools for data collection and M&E, including those for the blood survey and screening assessments
- Participate as a co-facilitator in training of survey methods, including laboratory and data analysis
- Support data collection and quality assurance in the field, including support to qualitative assessments where needed (e.g. focus group discussions)
- Support conducting a detailed landscape analysis of laboratory, surveillance and research capacities for CEH in Cambodia, including mapping of key private and public expert institutions and facilities

Output 3: Support the awareness raising and engagement of health workers and targeted communities in children's environmental health issues in UNICEF supported program sites

- Provide technical input to the development of advocacy messages, technical documentation, and tools to improve awareness on CEH and mitigative, preventative actions – working with relevant UNICEF sector teams, Government counterparts and development partners
- Review monitoring processes and tools of UNICEF's health program to identify and strengthen M&E on children's environmental health

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Ethical considerations:

- Successful fellow will need to agree to meet the standards set in the UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis
- Successful fellow needs to comply with the Child Safeguarding Policy, and Prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA)
- Ethical review will be undertaken if necessary.

Country Office Orientation

On arrival in the participating UNICEF Country Office, the Environmental Action Fellow will undertake an orientation including security briefing to learn about the full range of UNICEF's programme and partnerships in Cambodia.

Workplan

Ref.	Deliverables	Timeline 2024					
		J	F	M	A	M	J
1	Output 1: Support the design of a survey or country screening assessment to measure toxic metal levels, including lead, in children's blood.						
2	Output 2: Support the capacity building of Government staff on conducting research related to CEH						
3	Output 3: Support the awareness raising and engagement of health workers and targeted communities in children's environmental health issues in UNICEF supported program sites						

2. Recruitment Qualifications

Education	Must be enrolled, within the past year, in a graduate degree program. Majors with direct relevance to the assignment are welcome, e.g., environmental science and/or environmental health, research, biochemistry social and economic development, or related areas
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Competencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strong analytical skills to synthesize and communicate concepts clearly.• Ability to conduct research and draft reports.• Good command of statistical software and analysis• Capacity to work independently on multiple assignments simultaneously and adapt to changing demands and circumstances.• Strong oral and written communication skills in English.• Familiarity with the core human rights instruments, in particular Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) as well as Cambodia's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) 2020 and the child-focused Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is an advantage.• Must uphold and demonstrate the UNICEF core values of Commitment, Diversity, and Integrity.
Language Requirements	Fluency in English is required.

3. Remuneration

UNICEF will not make any remuneration to selected Fellows, or be liable for any expenses for the selected Fellows during their assignment. The successful candidates must be supported with a monthly stipend for the duration of this internship under agreed arrangements by affiliated institution or agencies such as the China Scholarship Council. There is no expectancy of employment at the end of the internship. UNICEF will provide support for visa application. In case of emergency, UNICEF will not be liable for any expenses relating to repatriation of the Fellow to China.

4. Insurance

UNICEF will not be responsible for costs arising from accidents and/or illness incurred during the volunteer's service. Therefore, the selected candidate must provide proof of enrolment in a health/accident plan prior to starting the internship.

Candidates must apply by October 15, 2023. The University will make an initial selection of applicants to be submitted to UNICEF no later than October 1 for written assessment and interview, prior to final selection by November 15. Start of the assignment ideally is January 2024.