




Until we are all equal



Annual Report

July 2023 – June 2024





Plan International is a development and humanitarian organization that advances children's rights and equality for girls, and does not tolerate any form of violence against children, young people and program participants.

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Country Director Message



As we reflect on another year of impactful work, I am proud to share the accomplishments highlighted in our Fiscal Year 2024 Annual Report. This report showcases the collective efforts of our team, partners, and communities in advancing the rights and well-being of children, especially girls, adolescents, and young women across Cambodia. In FY24, we made remarkable progress in promoting gender equality, enhancing early childhood education, and supporting health and nutrition for children in our target areas. We launched key initiatives such as guidelines for pre-schools attached to primary schools, pre-school textbooks, guidelines for open defecation-free verification, the National Guiding Principles for Nutrition-Sensitive WASH interventions, Implementation Manual and Activity Manual on the School Learning Garden and Kitchen in Cambodia and the Guidebook for Action Plans in Learning Gardens and Kitchens for Primary Education, Safe School Guideline in alignment with the Comprehensive School Safety Framework 2022-2030 and a comprehensive study on Child Early and Forced Marriage and Union (CEFMU). The CEFMU study significantly contributed to the development of a comprehensive National Action Plan to eliminate CEFMU.



These achievements are more than just milestones; they are steps towards creating lasting change. Through partnerships with line ministries, NGOs, and community leaders, we continue to address the systemic challenges that hinder children’s full potential. Yet, there is still more work to be done. As we strive towards our strategic goals, I invite you to reflect on how we can collectively sustain and amplify our impact.

Your continued support, whether in the form of advocacy, funding, or community engagement, remains vital. Together, we are not just changing lives—we are building a future where every child can Learn, Lead, Decide and Thrive. Let us continue to champion the rights of children and young people, ensuring they have the knowledge, skills, and confidence to shape their own futures.

Thank you for being part of this journey. 

Warm regards,
Gwynneth Wong
Country Director
Plan International Cambodia



Almost 5 million children and young people received support from Plan International Cambodia from Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 to 2024 to have voice and support them in gaining knowledge, skills and confidence they need in order to realise their rights and reach their potential. In particular, almost 500,000 people (more than 235,000 children) benefited directly and indirectly from our intervention in the FY2024.

Healthy Start



The Healthy Start Program supported more than 322,000 girls, boys and young people to be healthy, well-nourished, and achieve optimal early learning and development through gender-responsive, social and behavior change initiatives, accessible and quality services, and efforts to eliminate open defecation in Siem Reap, Stung Treng, and Ratanakiri Provinces.

18
community
pre-schools

2,000+
children
aged 3 to under 6

14,500+
children
(7,370 girls)
were screened

4,800+
received
routine
immunization

**Standard
model
pre-school
&
guideline
of pre-school
attached in the
primary schools**

In Stung Treng and Ratanakiri Provinces, 18 community pre-schools have been newly constructed, renovated, and equipped with inclusive and friendly WASH facilities. Teaching and learning materials have been provided to more than 70 community pre-schools, benefiting over 2,000 children aged 3 to under 6. Additionally, 30 community pre-school teachers have received pre-service and in-service training to meet the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) standards. Eleven pre-schools have met the MoEYS minimum standards, while six others have been verified by the Provincial Office of Education, Youth and Sport.

Over 14,500 children (including more than 7,370 girls) were screened. More than 500 identified with Moderate Acute Malnutrition were rehabilitated, and nearly 80 recovered from Severe Acute Malnutrition.

Around 340,000 community members received COVID-19 vaccinations, and more than 4,800 received routine immunizations and other essential health services through Risk Communication and Community Engagement interventions in Kandal, Kratie, Stung Treng, and Preah Vihear.

Almost 400 model farmers have been trained in homestead food production, including home gardening and animal raising. More than 270 households received crops/materials, animals, and husbandry support. Some households have started small food shops for income generation, growing vegetables, and raising animals for children's nutrition.

We have successfully supported MoEYS in launching the standard model pre-school and the guideline for pre-schools attached to primary schools. The guideline outlines how to set up pre-schools within primary schools to increase enrollment. Pre-school textbooks were officially launched and will serve as a roadmap for improving the quality of early childhood education. These textbooks incorporate key pedagogical themes related to gender equality between boys and girls, covering both theoretical and practical teaching methods at all levels of pre-school to develop children's abilities in areas such as physical and mental health, moral and cultural development, psychological, social and emotional growth, thinking and comprehension, and language skills.



**National
Guideline
Principles for
Nutrition
Sensitive
WASH**

850
poor households
received
SMART subsidies



The Council for Agriculture and Rural Development (CARD) developed and shared a nutrition-sensitive WASH case study. Additionally, the National Guideline Principles for Nutrition Sensitive WASH have been developed and disseminated to relevant ministries nationwide, including development partners, UN agencies, and INGOs, with 216 participants (52 females).

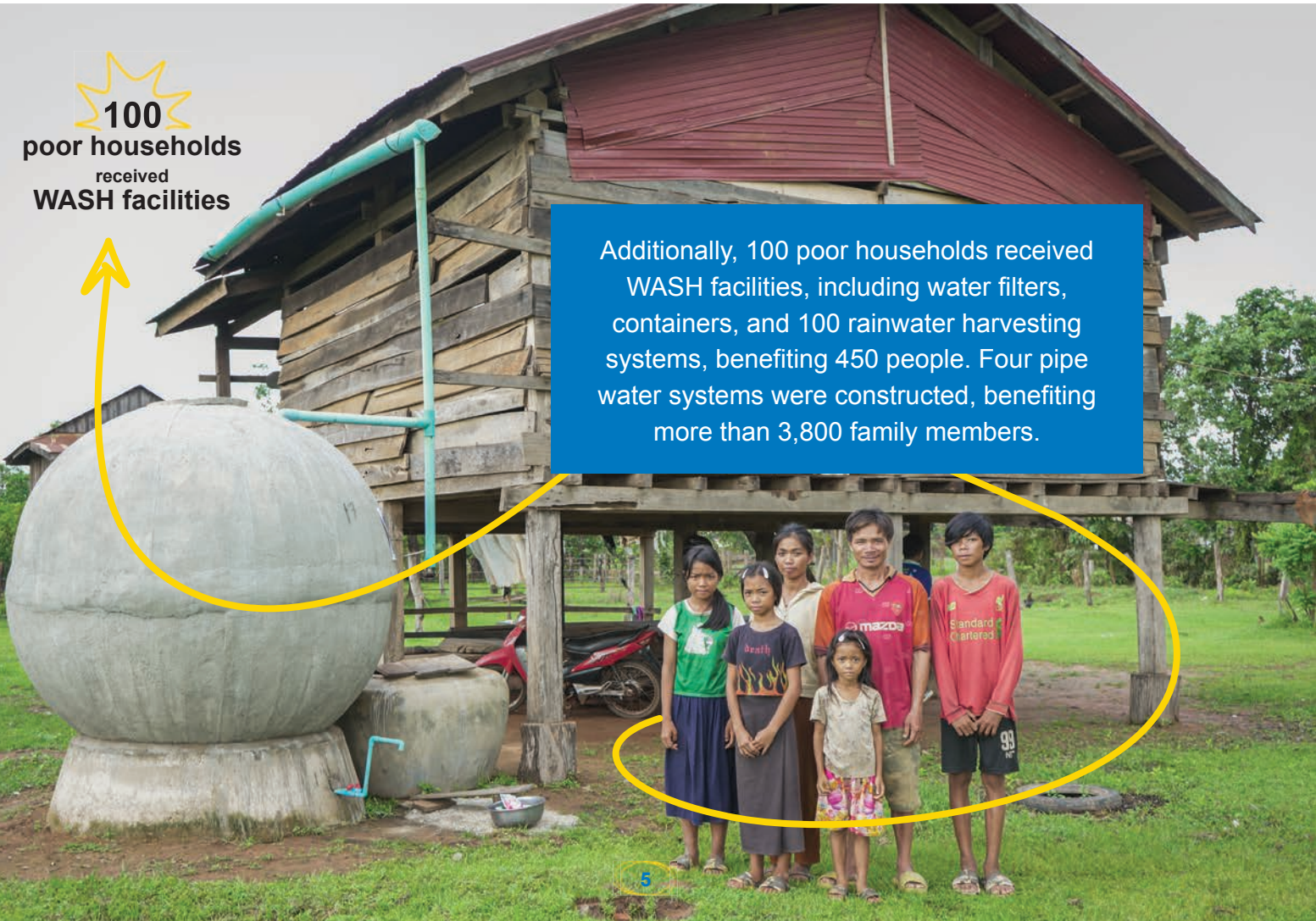
Over 850 poor households received SMART subsidies for latrine construction, benefiting more than 4,000 people, who now practice using latrines and apply sanitation and hygiene at home.

In FY24, two additional provinces were recognized as ODF provinces, bringing the total to seven by the end of the fiscal year.”.

The Open Defecation Free (ODF) guideline was developed with the Department of Rural Health Care of the Ministry of Rural Development. An ODF fast-track workshop was conducted with 25 Provincial Working Group Chairs of the Provincial Department of Rural Development to promote ODF status. As a result, **Preah Sihanoukville Provinces achieved ODF status, benefiting hundreds of thousands of people.**

100
poor households
received
WASH facilities

Additionally, 100 poor households received WASH facilities, including water filters, containers, and 100 rainwater harvesting systems, benefiting 450 people. Four pipe water systems were constructed, benefiting more than 3,800 family members.



From Traditional Beliefs to Safety: Riet's Journey to a Healthier Pregnancy in Ratanakiri Province

Riet, a 30-year-old woman from the Kavet ethnic minority, lives in Voeyun Sai District, Ratanak Kiri Province, about 65 kilometers from the town. She is the mother of a four-year-old boy and is expecting her second child in July 2024. Her family earns a living through rice farming and seasonally collecting non-timber forest products like mushrooms, nuts, rattan, and vines. Riet never attended school, and her husband, Sothith, dropped out school in grade 6.

Speaking with limited Khmer, Riet recalled her first pregnancy and delivery experiences. She shared that she did not visit a health center for antenatal care check-ups because she was unaware of their importance and lacked the money. Additionally, cultural norms within the Kavet community discouraged her from leaving the house and eating certain foods while pregnant.

"I was told not to eat eggs, coconuts, or catfish, but drinking wine was fine. I craved eggs but had to resist for my baby's sake," Riet explained. "I wasn't allowed to take iron supplements because we believed they would make the baby too large and difficult to deliver."



In early 2020, Riet went into labor and decided to deliver at home with a traditional birth attendant (TBA). She had not prepared anything for the newborn except wine. The TBA, lacking proper skills, waited passively for the baby to come out on its own.

"I was in severe pain and had no energy. The TBA told me to wait and to use my strength to push the baby out," Riet recounted. "I was scared and thought my baby and I would be in danger if I continued with the TBA."

Her husband, Sothith, was frightened and unsure of what to do. After a few moments, he decided to take Riet to the health center, 8 kilometers away, by motorbike. Fortunately, they arrived in time, and the midwife helped deliver their baby safely. "I was overjoyed when I heard my baby crying. My energy came back," Sothith said with relief. "I am grateful to the midwife at the health center for helping my wife and son."

Before they returned home, the midwife explained to them the importance of skilled birth attendants, family planning, vaccination, post-natal care, and the risks associated with unskilled TBAs. Following the midwife's advice, Riet breastfed her son for three years and ensured he received all necessary vaccinations.

In Riet's community, Plan International Cambodia and its partner, Bandos Koma, work with Health Center to improve the nutrition practices and access to nutrition related health services among vulnerable girls and boys under-five and pregnant and lactating women. With our support, health center staff provides awareness raising to pregnant women on the importance of delivery baby with skilled midwife at the health center; and pre- and post-natal care. In addition, we support health center to provide treatment service to severe acute malnutrition children and support for rehabilitation of moderate acute malnutrition children.

Now, eight months pregnant with her second child, Riet has attended four antenatal care check-ups at the health center and taken around 90 iron folic acid tablets as advised by the midwife.

"I was told that during pregnancy, I need to eat a variety of foods, avoid drinking and smoking, monitor my weight, and seek medical attention if I experience any symptoms like fever, bleeding, or anemia," Riet shared. "I never miss an appointment with the health center midwife because I want my child to be safe and healthy during delivery."

Riet and her husband have prepared everything and plan to give birth at the health center. She expresses gratitude to her husband for always caring for her and their children and to the midwife for providing essential prenatal, delivery, and post-natal care advice.

Transforming Child Malnutrition through Community Support and Education

Pheour Phat, a 57-year-old resident of Banteay Srei District, Siem Reap Province, lives with his wife, six children, and a 5-year-old granddaughter who was previously suffering from moderate acute malnutrition (MAM). Through the partnership between Plan International Cambodia and Human Resource and Rural Economic Development Organization (HURREDO), Phat became a member of a parenting group that provided training on child nutrition and vegetable seeds for planting. As a result, his granddaughter has overcome her malnutrition.

Granddaughter's Past Situation

Phat recounted that his elder daughter, during her pregnancy, suffered from severe morning sickness and did not eat much, leading to the birth of a low-weight baby. Despite breastfeeding her baby for six months and caring for her for two years, financial constraints forced Phat's daughter to migrate to another province for work.

As a father of six children, including two with albinism and with limited income, Phat struggled to support his family entirely. His limited knowledge of nurturing care, *"When my daughter left, my granddaughter refused to eat. Due to my lack of knowledge about nutrition and nurturing care, I didn't know how to encourage her to eat properly," Phat recalled. "My wife and I fed her only plain porridge with salt daily, and she continued to lose weight."*



Support from Plan International Cambodia and Partner

Plan International Cambodia, in partnership with HURREDO, implemented the "Promoting Healthy Start" project in Banteay Srei District, where Phat's family lives. The project included health promotion on nutrition, mass screening, and the provision of Ready to Use Supplementary Food (RUSF) to treat identified MAM children.

"When my granddaughter was identified as a MAM child, I was upset," Phat said in a low voice. "I was instructed to give her RUSF and to cook nutritious food for her, including green vegetables, meat, and fruits."

Phat joined a parent's group as a volunteer to help his granddaughter. He received training on nutrition, nurturing care, and hygiene. He never missed a parenting meeting; if he was busy, he asked his wife to attend and share the information with him later. He applied the knowledge he gained to care for his granddaughter.

Plan International Cambodia and HURREDO also provided Phat with vegetable seeds and technical training on planting and raising catfish.



Results for His Granddaughter

Phat explained that he planted eight types of green vegetables and raised catfish with technical coaching from the Provincial Department of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishery. He cooked meals using the vegetables and fish he grew and raised for his family and granddaughter. He sold the surplus produce for additional income.

"My granddaughter is no longer a MAM child after three months; she is now healthy and active. I am happy with the result," Phat said joyfully. "I will continue to apply this knowledge to my family and share it with my neighbors so they can nurture their children to prevent them from being stunting and wasting and be healthy."



Protection Plus



The Protection Plus Program supported almost 35,000 children and young people in living free from violence, abuse, exploitation, and neglect in Siem Reap, Stung Treng, and Ratanakiri Provinces.

**Comprehensive
National Action
Plan**

to eliminate

**CEFMU and
early teenage
pregnancy
for 2024-2028**

Our influencing work has achieved significant milestones. We supported the Ministry of Women Affairs (MoWA) in conducting an in-depth study on Child Early and Forced Marriage and Union (CEFMU) across nine provinces in Cambodia, which was launched at the end of June 2024. This study is a significant achievement, leading to the development of a comprehensive National Action Plan to eliminate CEFMU and early teenage pregnancy for 2024-2028. Plan International Cambodia has supported the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veteran and Youth Rehabilitation in reviewing the Zero draft of the “White Paper for Social Affairs” with relevant ministries and institutions. The White Paper was developed to map out the needs of vulnerable people, children, and households, set strategic priorities and approaches to respond to those needs, and analyze the social services workforce portfolio versus clients. This paper serves as a core guideline document on social affairs, informing the future development of national social affairs policy. In collaboration with UN agency and INGOs, we have jointly supported the CNCC in developing the National Action Plan to End Violence Against Children 2024-2028 (NAP-VAC 2024-2028). The NAP-VAC is anticipated to be officially approved by the Council of Ministers in 2025.

1,600 people

**received
professional
counseling
services**

Through the digitalized free helpline, more than 1,600 people, including LGBT individuals, received professional counseling services. Over 13,500 people received issue-based and educational information services on topics such as family relationships, physical health and healthcare, psychological and mental health, poverty, sexuality and sexual awareness, violence, parenting, and child care.

**Forty-five
health center staff
from**

19 health centers

**received training
on SRHR**

Forty-five health center staff from 19 health centers received training on Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). The training provided knowledge and methods to use IEC tools related to the SRHR module, enabling further training for the Village Health Support Group (VHSG), village chiefs, commune council members (CC), and outreach to parent groups. As a result, these 45 health center staff actively promoted and provided coaching to VHSG and the Commune Committee for Women and Children (CCWC) after participating in the training, gradually becoming more familiar with the SRHR module.

31 CSO & 28 NGOs

**applied & practiced
the Child Protection
in Emergency**

Sixty Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) members, including Child and Youth Led Network (CYLN) members, actively participated in and supported the development of alternative reports/position papers related to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) report for submission to the UNHRC. An assessment among 60 CSO members revealed that 32 CSO respondents (90%) have a Child Protection Policy, 31 CSO respondents applied gender within their organizations/institutions, and 28 NGOs applied and practiced the Child Protection in Emergency (CPiE). These results will help CRC-Cambodia take further action to build its capacity in the coming years.



Nineteen target health centers in Ratanakiri and Stung Treng Provinces have applied Youth Friendly Health Services for SRHR service provision with technical and management support from the Provincial Health Department (PHD) and Operational District (OD) in Ratanakiri Province. Monitoring results revealed that 40% of the monitored health centers delivered good quality SRHR services to the target community, 59% were rated as moderately performing, and only 1% were rated as providing poor quality services.

Fifteen out of 25 target communes in Stung Treng and Ratanakiri Provinces have increased their commune budget in the Commune Investment Programme (CIP) to around US\$2,500 to US\$3,000 annually to deliver quality and equitable support for vulnerable children and youth, particularly girls and young women.



Sixty-nine percent of 48 community based child protection mechanism (CBCPM) groups in 25 communes are functioning well, 19% are moderately functioning, and 12% are poorly functioning in terms of roles and responsibilities in responding to child protection. These groups could share issues occurring in their communities, be proactive in CCWC meetings, and understand relevant laws, gender roles, and safety guidelines.

More than 1,300 people including women, children and youth received training and mental health counseling.



More than 500 child and youth club members have led collective actions such as action research, bell sound, child-led issues raised, peer-to-peer education on child protection and SRHR, health center visits, and quarterly meetings.



Empowering Change: Sreyneth Leads the Way in Promoting Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights in Ratanakiri Province

Holding a sanitary pad in her hand, 14-year-old Sreyneth demonstrated to her classmates how to use it during their menstrual period. When asked why she was doing this, she smiled and said, "I want all students to know about sexual reproductive health and rights."

Sreyneth, a girl from the Prov ethnic minority living in Taveng District, Ratanakiri Province and a sponsor child, is a peer educator on sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR) at her school. She explained that in her community, especially among ethnic minorities like herself, there was little knowledge about SRHR. They followed practices passed down from older generations.

"Before, when we had our period, we always stayed at home and didn't go out because our norms said that if we stayed at another house, we would bring bad luck," explained Sreyneth. "Also, we didn't go to school because we were ashamed of our male classmates and had difficulties changing our pads."

As the second daughter of a farming family, Sreyneth noted that many young people in her community drop out of school due to financial challenges, some marry at 14 or 15 without understanding the consequences. Awareness about SRHR is not widespread in these remote areas.



With funding support from The Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Plan International Cambodia and its partners, Watanapheap are implementing a three-year project, "Time to Act," in Ratanakiri Province, where Sreyneth lives. The project aims to reduce Child, Early and Forced Marriage and Unions (CEFMU) and child pregnancy in disadvantaged and remote areas of North-Eastern Cambodia. One of the project activities is raising awareness of SRHR among lower secondary school students, and Sreyneth was selected as peer education and she plays the role to conduct peer-to-peer education.

"I was selected to conduct peer-to-peer education because I can speak both Khmer and Prov [the ethnic minority language]," Sreyneth recalled. "At first, I had mixed feelings—I was nervous and happy. I told the staff I wanted to do it but didn't know how. They assured me that they would provide training."

Sreyneth received training and coaching from schoolteachers and project staff on SRHR and counseling skills. After the training, she shared her knowledge with classmates during school breaks, speaking for about 10 minutes each session.

When asked about her challenges, Sreyneth quickly replied that, in the beginning, she was disappointed as her classmates didn't join the sessions. "But I didn't want to give up because I wanted them to know about SRHR. Another challenge was that I was a shy girl and didn't dare to talk about sex and reproduction because I was taught that it wasn't proper for a girl to talk about that," Sreyneth continued. "My teachers always encouraged and motivated me by saying that I can do it. As a result, I gained confidence and dared to talk to my classmates about these topics." For the new school academic year, Sreyneth has conducted five sessions on menstrual hygiene management, youth body changes, and the consequences of early marriage. She gets the support from her parents and always receives good advices from them. Consequently, most students no longer miss school during their periods, and male students do not tease female students about it.

"I feel happy now because I can help my friends continue their studies," Sreyneth said with a smile. "I also want to improve my knowledge and skills so I can do my job better and my friends will understand SRHR clearly."

Despite her busy schedule with project activities, Sreyneth never forgets to help her parents with house chores and farming. She helps with Sunday farming and house chores in the mornings and evenings before and after school. Once a girls' football tournament runner-up, Sreyneth plays football in the evenings after school. "I want my body to be strong to be a soldier and protect our country when I grow up."

Community Hero: Noun Thak's Efforts in Child Protection

Noun Thak, 42, lives with her small family, including her husband and two children, in Sesan District, Stung Treng Province. Her husband works in the rice fields and plants cashews and cassava; her son is an engineer, and her daughter is a teacher.



When asked how she felt about seeing children being beaten, she replied without hesitation that she felt shocked and disappointed. "I tried to help them, but I was afraid that something bad would happen to me and my family," Noun Thak explained. Despite she reported incidents to the police, but violence against children persisted in her community.

In 2019, Plan International Cambodia and its implementing partner, Phnom Srey Organization for Development, launched the "New Generation" project funded by Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) to empower civil society in Cambodia to promote children's rights, including protection, sexual reproductive health, and participation. One activity was establishing a parent group to provide knowledge on positive parenting. Noun Thak volunteered to join and received a series of training sessions.

"When I got new knowledge on preventing violence against children, I shared it with my neighbors and other parents," recalled Noun Thak. "I was happy because at least I could contribute to reducing violence in my community."

With her active participation, in 2023, Noun Thak was selected to be a Community-Based Child Protection Mechanism member. This group comprises a preschool teacher, village chief, parent representatives, Buddhist priests, children's club members, villagers, and the village health support group. Their role is to collect information on child abuse, raise awareness of positive parenting, report incidents, and intervene when necessary. "I couldn't believe it when I was selected. I was delighted to help children in my community," said Noun Thak.

However, Noun Thak faced several challenges. She noted that parents who used violence against their children often did not attend the awareness sessions. Most of those parents used physical and verbal violence against their children. At times, she felt like giving up, but the support from her colleagues, family, friends, and especially children kept her going.

Noun Thak worked tirelessly to reach those parents. She organized awareness sessions one to two times per month after lunch and personally drove parents to the meeting venue. "I do the same for all villages in my commune, and if they still can't join, I visit them at their homes," she explained.

Another challenge was that some parents did not change their behavior and continued to use violence. To address this, Noun Thak sought support from the commune committee for women and children (CCWC) and the village chief to educate these parents and make agreements to stop using violence against their children, they are very supportive.

Despite the challenges, Noun Thak's efforts paid off. The majority of parents changed their behavior toward their children. "About 60% of parents have stopped using violence and now report when they see someone else using violence against children," she said proudly. "I am so proud of them and hope the children in my community have a bright future."

Ai Chai, Phnom Srey Organization for Development staff said that Noun Thak is very committed person and works hard to support children in her community. She continued: "When she received children cases, she does not stay at home and intervene with other members."

Noun Thak said everyone in her community calls her "Teacher" because they believe she has the knowledge and capacity to support everyone. Additionally, they come to her for consultation, reporting, and intervention when they face problems or challenges.

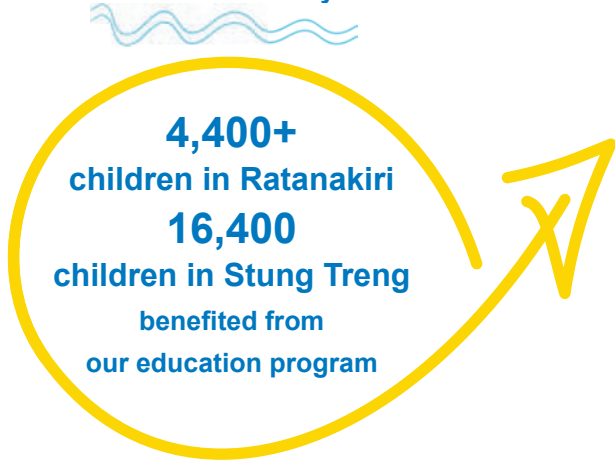
Noun Thak hopes to select her replacement soon. She wants to transfer all her knowledge and skills to them so they can continue to support and protect children from violence.

Lifelong Learning



The Lifelong Learning Program has supported more than 130,000 children and youths, particularly girls, adolescent girls, and young women, in gaining access to quality education and skill development. This initiative aims to foster lifelong learning and decent employment opportunities in Siem Reap, Stung Treng, and Ratanakiri Provinces.

80% - 95%
Transition Rate
at the lower secondary level



In the 2023-2024 school year, the transition rate at the lower secondary level increased from 80% to 95% in Stung Treng and Ratanakiri provinces. Additionally, the percentage of children and youth who successfully transitioned to upper secondary school and could read rose from 72% to 90%. Over 4,400 children in Ratanakiri and 16,400 in Stung Treng benefited from accelerated learning, remedial classes, scholarships, literacy coaches, libraries, national reading day events, peer-to-peer programs, material provisions, and life skills programs in schools.

Nearly 600 children directly benefited from the construction of three new school buildings with 12 classrooms, two standard latrines, and one well in Stung Treng. Seventeen water filters (LifeStraw) were distributed to target schools in Mondulakiri, Kratie, and Stung Treng provinces. Sixteen schools completed standard latrine construction, either rehabilitated or newly constructed. Fifteen schools received grants to improve school environments, and three 21st-century libraries and one digital library were set up in Stung Treng and Ratanakiri provinces.



More than 17,700 individuals benefited from disaster risk reduction and emergency preparedness response (EPRP) action plans in 96 primary schools, ensuring safety. Almost 3,000 children benefited from rehabilitated or newly constructed WASH facilities in primary schools. Over 46,500 students in 78 primary schools benefited from enhanced hygiene promotion, over 7,700 people attended Menstrual Hygiene Day events in schools, supported by health center staff and local authorities.

More than **7,700 students** participated in **career orientation and education fair events** in 14 secondary schools.

The **dropout rates** among primary school children decreased from 8% to 6%, and from 14% to 5% at lower secondary schools in Ratanak Kiri Province. The percentage of schools using learner centered, gender responsive, and inclusive teaching methodologies increased from 85% to 91% in the 2023-2024 school year.

Plan International Cambodia piloted a **digital distance learning platform in 10 lower secondary schools** in Ratanakiri Province to address the shortage of secondary school teachers in core subjects in poor and remote areas. This initiative will be scaled up to more schools in 2025.



We have been working with Directorate General of TVET (DGTVET) of the Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training (MLVT) to **develop the green and digital life skill learning materials** (to be completed in November 2024). The learning materials, upon completion, will be used by the four TVET institutions in Plan Cambodia's target provinces (Siem Reap, Stung Treng, and Ratanakiri) to deliver the said (green and digital) life skill training to their trainees as part of the skill training packages to improve their employability especially in the contexts of green and digital economy and society.

A Khmer language textbook for year 1 in accelerated learning programs and two types of books on **Child Development linked to Primary Education** were adopted and launched, with the deputy prime minister and minister of education, youth, and sport presiding over the event.

The Implementation Manual for School Learning Garden and Kitchen in Cambodia and the Activity Manual for Grades 4, 5, and 6 at Primary School were launched with the participation of over 100 people, including the acting Deputy Ambassador, Director of Primary Education, curriculum development department representatives, directors and deputy provincial education youth and sport officials from 25 municipalities and provinces, school teachers, students, and youth representatives.

Safe School Guideline was adapted and launched by Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS) with the participation from over 100 relevant stakeholders including MoEYS, Disaster Management Secretariat, National Committee for Disaster Management, Provincial Department of Education, Youth and Sports (PoEYS) from 25 provinces/capital, district governors and Office of Education, Youth and Sports (DoEYS), NGO networks and members of JAG DRR in Education. We have distributed the Safe School Guideline to all key stakeholders and strengthened the cooperation between the MoEYS, PoEYS, DoEYS and all relevant institutions.

Empowering Local Farmers for Better Education: A Story of Don, the Food Supplier



While inspecting the curly cabbage at his organic vegetable farming group, Him Don, a 37-year-old resident of Srey Snom District in Siem Reap Province, ensures with a farmer that the vegetables are safe for school children.

Don explained that he established the Rechana Satrey Dormbey Acphiwat Agricultural Cooperative, which comprises 193 members. The group's objective is to support families' livelihoods so they can afford to send their children to school.

"Most of the children in my village didn't go to school because their parents couldn't afford it. I felt sorry for them," Don recalled. "I invited their parents to join the cooperative to earn money to support their children's education including school material and uniform."

Once farmers join the cooperative, Don and his team train them in safe, organic vegetable farming and animal raising. He got the support from a NGO working on agriculture techniques and practices. When the harvest is ready, Don helps find markets for their product.

With funding support from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) through the United Nations World Food Program (WFP), Plan International Cambodia has been implementing the National Home-Grown School Feeding Program in 202 primary schools in Siem Reap. This program aims to contribute to the development of Cambodia's human capital and local economy by providing hot breakfast meals to primary school students and ensuring schools are equipped with the necessary feeding infrastructure and equipment. The program recruits suppliers to provide vegetables and meat to primary schools.

Since 2021, Don has been a food and vegetable supplier for primary schools in Tram Sorsor Commune, Srey Snom District, Siem Reap Province. He supplies four primary schools: Romdeng, Thlok, Pongro, and Kok Prich Primary Schools.

"When the primary school announced a bid for suppliers, I applied and won," Don explained. "I applied because I have a reliable team that can supply on time for the school feeding program."

As a Community Volunteer for Plan International Cambodia's sponsorship program, Don is committed to ensuring school students eat safe and healthy food. He regularly visits his farmers to ensure they do not use chemical pesticides. "If they do, we exclude them from our group," Don explained. "We also hold regular meetings with school principals and support committees to address issues affecting students."

Don supplies food to schools from Sunday to Friday. However, he faces challenges during the drought season due to climate change, which results in lower harvest yields. He has mobilized farmers from other communes who use biopesticides to address this. "We solve the problem, but our earnings are lower," Don said. "But I am happy to help farmers earn a living and ensure school students are safe and healthy."

Don's two children are also students at one of the schools where he supplies, and they often share what they learn with him and his wife. Don cooks for his family using safe and healthy ingredients.

Don buys meat and fish from the market, but he is organizing a group to start raising them locally for community's household economic support. He plans to continue bidding to supply food and vegetables to schools to keep the children healthy.



Growing Knowledge: Keo's Innovative Approach to Teaching Through School Learning Gardens



With a high pitch and regional accent from Siem Reap Province, Phort Keo explained mathematics and the Khmer language to a group of students in the garden. During her explanation, all students listened attentively and asked many questions. "I am happy that you all are enjoying learning," Keo told the children.

Keo has been a primary teacher in Banteay Srey District, Siem Reap Province, for almost five years. She recalled her past experiences when she used to teach her students strictly based on the teacher's books. She mentioned that she did not produce many teaching materials or involve students in activities.

"Even though I tried hard to explain the lessons, many students could not grasp the concepts. By the end of the school year, some students dropped out, and others had to repeat the grade," Keo said with a note of sadness. "I was unhappy because I felt I was failing them as their teacher."

Plan International Cambodia is implementing a "School Learning Garden" project funded by Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP) through Plan International Australia. The project aims to ensure that girls and boys, especially the most marginalized and vulnerable, are healthy, educated, and empowered to fulfil their potential in Siem Reap Province. It supports students in grades 4, 5, and 6 to improve their knowledge, skills, and attitudes around healthy eating and gardening and enjoy learning in four key subjects including Khmer, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies in real life contexts. This enjoyment of learning is reflected in improved learning outcomes, measured by student attendance and performance in these subjects. Plan International Cambodia trains teachers on teaching methodologies and how to create learning and teaching materials for the school learning garden. Keo and her colleagues organized garden following mathematic shapes and also displayed glossary in the school kitchen.

"The school learning garden is a teaching method that integrates real-life lessons for students," explained Keo with a smile. "It helps teachers to interact and actively engage with students in various activities, ensuring inclusiveness, unity, and the correlation of the garden to related subjects and life skills."

Keo added that the school learning garden also provides teachers with a practical approach to garner support from the communities and students' parents, proactively working to improve the teaching and learning environment and standards.

After the training, Keo and other teachers produced many learning and teaching materials and established a school learning garden. "Since implementing the school learning garden, I have noticed that students enjoy studying more, and the drop-out rate has reduced," Keo explained. "Teachers and students have a better relationship, and students work well in groups without worrying about gender differences."

As the middle child in her family, Keo has noticed that students show remarkable enthusiasm for learning. They willingly attend school on weekends and holidays to care for the plants and discuss their pending homework with friends. Keo highlights the crucial role of teachers in promoting equal participation among all students and creating an inclusive, safe environment. Additionally, Keo actively engages parents and the community in the school's learning garden, ensuring that children receive support for their learning at home, with benefits that extend beyond the school premises.

"I am happy that I can help my students avoid repeating grades and excel in class," said Keo. "I love my job and want to continue improving my knowledge to provide more support to them."



Girl Leadership



The Girl Leadership Program has **supported around 2,300 adolescent girls, young women, adolescent boys, and young men** through training on empowerment and leadership, active citizenship, and civic participation for individuals and groups in Siem Reap, Stung Treng, and Ratanakiri provinces.

The Girl Leadership Programme has significantly influenced national policy by partnering with the Ministry of Women Affairs (MoWA) to adopt its modality.

Plan International Cambodia has integrated this approach into the new National Strategy Neary Rattanak VI (2024-2028). A new National Program, “Leading the Way for Girls Leadership (LWGL) Program (2024-2028),” has been initiated. This program aims to empower and promote girls’ leadership capabilities with gender-transformative and ethical leadership in social and community engagement for sustainable development. The program’s modality is replicated in the Champion of Cambodia (CoC) modules as a national training curriculum, applying the child and youth club/network models and leading the International Day of Girls as a national event in Cambodia.



More than 300 adolescent girls and young women have gained the knowledge to take collective action to promote gender equality. They use the Champion of Cambodia modules to analyze community issues in consultation with commune councils. Additionally, 31 youth ambassadors who received leadership and public speaking training have gained the confidence to lead their peers and present their work to others. In collaboration with a media specialist and a citizen journalist, 26 adolescent girls and young women were trained on gender equality. After the training, at least 75% reported a positive impact on their social media behaviors, including verifying sources, identifying fake news, and creating positive content. Young citizen journalists and media professionals produced four articles.

Two sessions on “Responsible Use of Social Media” and “Child Online Harassment and its Prevention” were provided for 38 child and youth club members from Siem Reap and Ratanakiri provinces. These sessions connected media professionals with potential youth and provided mentorship support. According to the evaluation, 95% of participants reported increased knowledge, with their media literacy and ability to handle online abuse rising from 46.8% to 69.6%.

Sixteen girls from target areas, including remote regions, took over high-ranking positions in both the private sector and government. These positions included the German Ambassador, General Manager of a hotel in Siem Reap, Vice President of DWCCC in Stung Treng, District Governor in Ratanak Kiri, Chief Human Resources at Prudential Cambodia, District Manager at Starbucks Cambodia, and Minister of Environment. During their takeover, the girls raised issues such as early and forced marriage and negative social norms. They learned new skills and gained experiences that benefited their daily lives and future aspirations. After the takeover, some received job offers and scholarships and were invited as guest speakers for media interviews and workshops.

Three inter-generational dialogues with 260 participants, including LGBT community members, youth, local authorities, and parents, were conducted. During these dialogues, child and youth clubs raised concerns about child online abuse, girl education, leadership, and gender-based violence through role-play performances. As a result, parents reached a consensus, and the community and authorities began working closely with children and youth clubs to address these concerns. Between 55.71% and 73.68% of parents and authorities understood the discussions and topics, while 58.34% and 76.84% reported building better relationships with their families.



Breaking Barriers: Phally's Journey to Empowerment and Skill

While checking an electronic device, 18-year-old Phally, who lives with her parents in Sesan District, Stung Treng Province, told us she has been studying electronics at the Stung Treng Provincial Training Center for four months. She is happy with her decision. Phally, an Islam girl, is the youngest child in a family of farmers who plant cassava and green peas. She is also the only child in her family to complete high school, as her four older siblings are already married. Phally dreams of pursuing a bachelor's degree once she passes the national exam. However, financial constraints led her to volunteer at a local NGO to prevent child early forced marriages, aiming to save money for her studies. "When I see students at the university, I feel sad and want to join them, but now I work to save money," said Phally.

At 17, Phally was forced by her parents to marry but refused, expressing her desire for higher education and financial independence before marriage. "I was shocked when my parents insisted on marriage, especially as I work to prevent early forced marriages," she explained with a sad voice. "I continued explaining that while someone may care for us now, the future is uncertain." Her parents eventually agreed to let Phally decide when to marry.

Phally aspires to acquire knowledge in electronics to enhance her remote community, which faces electricity shortages. Although some community members have invested in solar panels, Phally's family cannot afford them. Consequently, she relies on candles to study during the evenings.

Plan International Cambodia and its partner, Watanakpheap, are implementing a three-year project, "Time to Act," funded by the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) in Stung Treng Province. The project aims to reduce Child, Early, and Forced Marriage and Unions (CEFMU) and child pregnancy in disadvantaged and remote areas of North-Eastern Cambodia. It supports vulnerable girls at risk of or experiencing early forced marriage by providing economic independence opportunities through vocational training, internships, job placements, and business start-ups. In early 2024, Phally received information about vocational training, particularly electronics, from a friend who studies at the center. She asked her mother for permission to register. "At first, my mom didn't agree, worried about the safety risks related to electrical shocks. She asked why I didn't study a more traditional 'girl' skill," Phally recalled with a laugh. "I told her I love this skill and that jobs should not be segregated by gender. I heard that the teacher asks boys to carry heavy things."



Phally gathered information from senior students, especially female students studying electronics, who encouraged her to pursue her interest. Finally, she enrolled in the electronics course and is happy with her decision. She studies theory in the morning and practices in the afternoon, enjoying every moment.

In group work, the vocational training teachers mix boys and girls to support each other, with boys carrying heavy items to avoid discrimination. There are only four girls among 22 students in her class. After four months of study, Phally became a staff member at the Training Center, working as an administrator and assistant electronics teacher.

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Phally also volunteers to teach out-of-school children whose parents have migrated for work. She teaches two shifts, accommodating 60 children after her studies and work hours, using her own money to buy her students' notebooks, books, and refreshments. "Some parents who can afford it support me with motor gasoline; if not, it's okay," she said.

Phally is proud of her achievements and hard work, and her mother shares in her happiness. After completing her training, Phally plans to run a small shop selling electronic devices. "I also want to teach girls in my community electronics skills so they can fix small problems at home and not rely solely on men for support," she said.

Defying Early Marriage to Empower Her Community



Living with farmer parents, Kann, a 24-year-old Lao minority girl in Stung Treng Province, used to dream of completing her bachelor's degree and securing a job before marrying at 27. Has she achieved her dream?

Kann was selected as a children's club member in 2019 because of her active participation in the club and the Commune Committee for Women and Children (CCWC) meetings.

"I like social work and sharing knowledge with children and youth, so I decided to join the child club," recalled Kann. "I actively participated by providing ideas and sharing opinions during the monthly CCWC meetings. So, the members voted me as their leader, and I was delighted."

Kann mentioned that she never missed a meeting and did not care about financial support; she was happy to join as it provided her with knowledge and skills for her future. Kann reported that Plan International Cambodia established and supported the children's club. They provided several training on various topics, including Cambodia's history, child early forced marriage, gender-based violence, and child rights, to club members, including Kann.

A third-year management student, Kann recalled a sad moment in her life when she raised awareness about the consequences of early marriage, not expecting it to happen to her. In grade 12, she was shocked when her mother talked to her about marriage. "I was speechless and disappointed that the suggestion came from my mother," Kann said sadly. "I argued with her and explained that I wanted to pursue higher education and get a decent job in the future. I don't think about marriage now."

Her mother did not respond immediately. Daily, Kann tried to explain the consequences of early marriage to her mother and family members. Eventually, they stopped discussing the topic with her.

In 2023, Kann applied for a field staff position with Plan International Cambodia's partner, Khmer Youth Association (KYA), based in Stung Treng Province under the "Time to Act" project funded by The Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The project aims to reduce Child Early and Forced Marriage and Unions (CEFMU) and child pregnancy in disadvantaged and remote areas of North-Eastern Cambodia.

Kann advised to youth that they should develop themselves, care about their health and income generation before marriage.



Kann described her work with the CCWC to raise awareness among young people and adolescents about child rights, child and early forced marriage, and sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR). "During awareness-raising sessions, I always tell them that we need to develop ourselves and our health before deciding on marriage," explained Kann emphatically. "As a result, 3 out of 10 young women regret marrying at a young age. I am so proud that I can contribute to reducing early marriage in my community."

Kann also facilitates vocational training for school dropouts at the Stung Treng Provincial Vocational Training Center. When asked when she plans to marry, Kann replied that her dream is to complete her bachelor degree and get a job to earn money. She wants to marry at 27 years old, as she believes she will be more mature and have a stable financial status by then.

"I want to be a female commune chief in the future so I can provide more support to end child-early forced marriage and gender-based violence," Kann said about her future aspirations.



Youth Engagement



Plan International Cambodia empowers girls, especially adolescent girls and young women facing discrimination, to take charge of their lives, communities, and work. We actively engage with existing youth networks, regardless of their registration status. **All our events are youth-led, from planning to execution and follow-up.**

Sixteen girls have participated in the #GirlsTakeover program, which offers them opportunities to assume decision-making roles and inspires them to dream big. Participants have taken on roles such as Ministers, Ambassadors, UN representatives, Country Directors of INGOs, and Provincial officials.

We provided 25 Youth Engagement Funds to youth groups in Siem Reap, Stung Treng, and Ratanakiri Provinces, with direct support from our NGO partners. The focus areas included eliminating CEFMU, preventing school dropouts, raising awareness on SRHR, child rights, and WASH, preventing violence against children, promoting vocational training, and organizing gender-based violence campaigns.

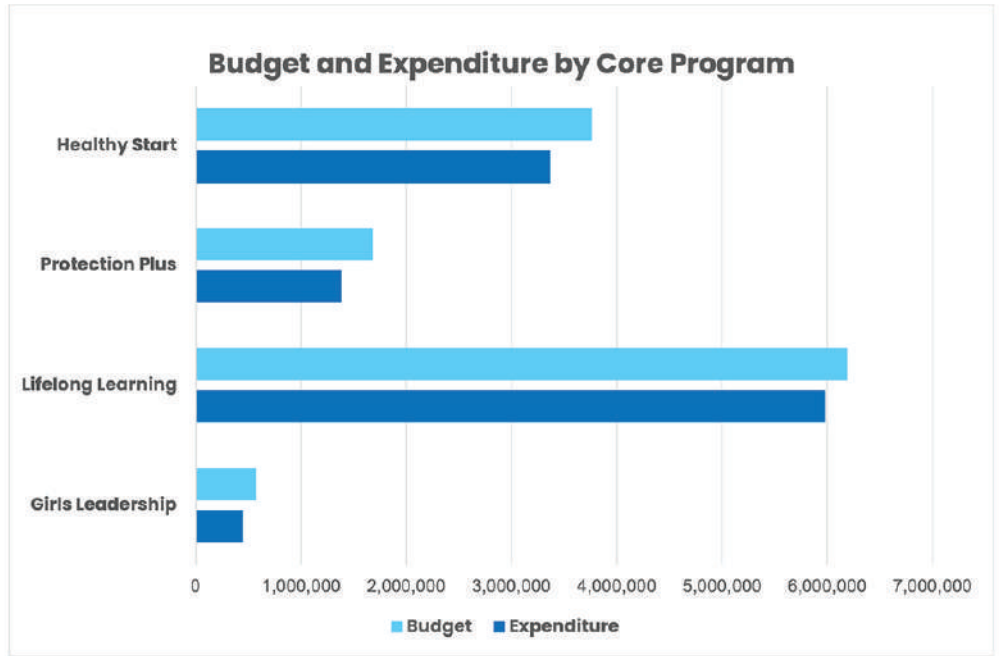
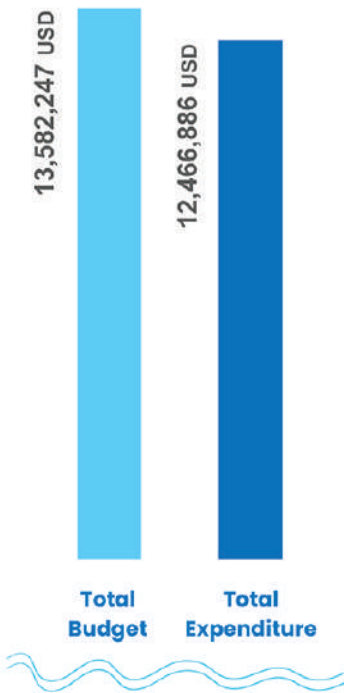
Over 860 children, adolescents, and youth (CAY), including more than 500 young women, participated in high-level dialogues and forums with government bodies.

They shared best practices, lessons learned, and recommendations on their issues in public and private spaces, contributing to policy changes, raising awareness about children's rights, gender equality, and the value of education, and creating opportunities for young females to participate in public forums and events.

The Cambodia Youth Advisory Panel (CYAP) was established with 25 youth representatives aged 18-24, serving two-year terms. This panel ensures that youth voices are heard and contribute to implementing Plan International Cambodia's child and youth engagement strategy. They advise on how Plan International Cambodia engages young people in its internal decision-making processes and governance, and promote youth voices in influencing both sub-national and national levels. Five members represent each program unit, and the other ten represent at the national level.



Total Budget vs Expenditure



Fiscal Year 2024



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- Ms. Kazumi Sakakibara
- Mr. Michael Waring



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