

## **Project: Food Security, Health Outcomes and Nutrition Education Among Cambodian Women in Massachusetts**

**Project Leader: Lorraine Cordeiro**

### **Project Overview**

Food insecurity is a broad concept that describes limited or uncertain access to food, including culturally important foods. Food insecurity is linked to multiple poor health outcomes. Resettled refugee populations in the U.S. have persistently high rates of food insecurity, which has implications for long-term health of community members. This study aims to better understand why food insecurity is a persistent issue in an established Cambodian refugee population in MA, to determine factors that moderate good health outcomes in this largely food insecure population, and determine if culturally-tailored nutrition intervention can improve food security and/or dietary practices related to food security.

### **Activity Summary – 2015**

- Nutrition Education Interventions (3)
- Capacity building for Cambodians and students interested in working with multicultural populations at UMass Amherst and in the community (1)
- Food Frequency Questionnaire for use with Cambodian populations (1)

### ***Total Educational contacts***

	Youth Contacts	Adult Contacts
In Person	22	102
Indirect Contacts (Print, Web, etc...)		

### **Narrative Summary and Impact**

This project has reached 124 hard-to-reach immigrant and refugee women. More than 80% had never participated in research in the past and were willing to continue participation in future studies with us. We found high levels of food insecurity and depression in this population. The community partners have been able to use our data to support their grant writing efforts which in turn will generate funds for service projects. Several participants requested on-going nutrition education and indicated a high interest in cooking programs. We presented findings at national conferences and generated two manuscripts which have been submitted for publication.

We completed a three-session, nutrition education intervention which was implemented for a target group of 24 participants. This intervention included the Tufts University New Entry Sustainable Farming staff who provided education about locally grown plants, farmer's markets, and opportunities to purchase reduced-cost fresh produce. Participants also learned how to modify culturally-specific dishes to improve health and well-being.

The long-term impact of this study, combined with previous and future work of the PIs, is to promote positive health outcomes in a refugee and immigrant population with persistent food insecurity; to provide a framework for continued collaborative research between UMass, Extension, and refugee/immigrant communities; and to provide information that may be applicable in other multi-generational refugee and immigrant communities.

### **Collaborating Organizations**

- Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association, Lowell, MA
- Lowell Basic Adult Education, Lowell, MA
- WIC, Lowell, MA