

**Opening Address of H.E Dr. Yim Chhay Ly, Deputy Prime Minister,  
Chairman of Council for Agricultural and Rural Development**

Workshop on “Integrating Social Policies and  
the Delivery of Social Protection Floors”,  
Siem Reap, 29-31 May 2013

*Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It is my great honor of being here to preside over the Opening Ceremony of the Workshop on “Integrating Social Policies and the Delivery of Social Protection Floors” organized by the International Labour Organization and Council for Agricultural and Rural Development. It is not a coincidence that this workshop is organized in Siem Reap Province of Kingdom of Cambodia.

- From this province, you can see the splendid and magnificent culture of Cambodia, Kingdom of Winder where the nation and civilization were built under the participation of people to its peak in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century.
- From this province, you can see the legacy of war where the nation and civilization were destroyed to its root and land of cultural heritage became the genocide field in the 3 decades.
- But, most importantly, from this province, you can see how Cambodia can stand up on our own feet for nation salvation, reconstruction, reconciliation, rehabilitation, and development. Bringing the country back from Year Zero to where we are today is the miracle.

In each step of nation development, Social Protection is the essential tool for Cambodia. The culture of sharing, mutual help and family kinship is always part of our tradition. The Cambodian people have a long history of defending the life, integrity, unity, independence, territory and pride of their nation. Since 1979, faced with numerous constraints, they have made great efforts to turn challenges into opportunities in developing and transforming the Kingdom of Cambodia into a country of hope and dignity in Southeast Asia. The Royal Government of Cambodia has focused on the long-term future through a reform agenda that can adapt to all eventualities, with a vision of gradual improvement towards the achievement of its planned objectives of socioeconomic development where Social Protection is the core part of this vision.

Social protection is high on regional and international policy agendas. This owes to the convergence of the food, fuel and financial crises in 2008, which increased the insecurities of millions of people by heightening economic and social risks, especially for those living in or close to poverty. Natural disasters and extreme weather events added to the pressures upon these people by destroying lives, property, community resources and local economies. The combined impacts of these setbacks prompted a shift in thinking about social protection. Instead of approaching it through reactive event specific interventions, Cambodia and other Asia-Pacific countries are now moving towards comprehensive solutions capable of strengthening coping capacities and resilience as crucial underpinnings of their vision of inclusive development.

Despite these efforts extending social protection coverage is one of the key challenges of Cambodian society. Social protection is focused on certain groups of the population (such as the private sector employees through the National Social Security Fund) and / or certain risks (such as access to health care through the Health Equity Funds that cover today approximately 50 per cent of the rural poor). To date most Cambodian people are not provided with adequate social protection coverage.

*Your Excellency, Ladies, and Gentlemen*

The ASEAN integration in 2015 will have major consequences on Cambodia's economy and society. The ASEAN integration may be a major threat for the poor and the vulnerable people of Cambodia if a comprehensive social protection plan is not developed aiming at protecting the most vulnerable and enhancing the full potential of the youth and other active age group. To face the manifold challenges in the area of social protection, the Royal Government of Cambodia, under the leadership of the Council for Agriculture and Rural development (CARD), has developed a National Social Protection Strategy for the poor and the vulnerable (NSPS) in 2011.

The NSPS provides with a vision to develop a coherent social protection system in a phased approach, starting with the establishment of a social protection floor for all those in need of protection and ensuring that more and more people can enjoy progressively higher levels of benefits. This is in line with ILO's vision and strategy and the newly adopted Recommendation concerning national floors of social protection, 2012 (No. 202).

The NSPS is the result of more than two years of national dialogue where CARD involved all line ministries, workers and employers, the civil society, and development partners. May I take this opportunity to extend my highly appreciation to the collaboration of the International Labour Organization in particular for working with Council for Agricultural and Rural Development and I wish to have further collaboration in the stage of NSPS implementation.

Coordination is also one of the corner stones of the implementation of the NSPS. It is stated in NSPS to *"Establish an appropriate structure and mechanisms to coordinate the development and implementation of the NSPS, ensuring policy oversight, partnership and dialogue, M&E and information and knowledge management"*. Establishing an effective institutional framework for coordination will be a priority task to be carried out over the first year of NSPS implementation. In addition to the ministries at the central level, the implementation of the NSPS will require coordination with the sub-national level, where subnational administration has been given increased responsibility in making the government more transparent and more responsive to the needs of the people, in the framework of the National Program for Sub-National Democratic Development (NP-SNDD) 2010-2019.

To implement the NSPS, the idea of integrating the delivery of social services was developed, and is now being pilot tested in Siem Reap Province. The Social Service Delivery Mechanism (SSDM) is a one-stop shop for social protection and employment services. More specifically the SSDM will contribute to overcoming the challenges faced by social protection programs in Cambodia, namely their limited outreach to target beneficiaries, the insufficient data management, monitoring and evaluation, the lack of coordination between programmes, the lack of empowerment of the subnational administration. The SSDM will also contribute to the graduation out of poverty by providing combined services to final beneficiaries.

The present workshop on “Integrating Social Policies and Delivery of Social Protection Floors” is timely and particularly relevant for Cambodia, in our efforts to develop cross-ministerial coordination as well as coordination between national and subnational levels, and between social protection programs. There is growing evidence that coordination and integration of social policies together with adapted case management systems are more efficient and effective in expanding social protection coverage and facilitating graduation out of poverty.

This workshop is also a unique opportunity to learn from the experience of other countries in Asia and elsewhere in the world, such as Thailand, Malaysia, India, Pakistan, South-Africa, Chile, Brazil and many others that have developed and implemented similar national social protection strategies and successfully expanded the national floors of social protection. We are looking forward to learning from their successes as well as the challenges that they may have faced.

It is my honor to officially announce the opening of the Workshop on “Integrating Social Policies and the Delivery of Social Protection Floors”. *Thank You*