Royal Government of Cambodia

Support of Capacity Building and Human Resource Development

Presented by H.E. Dr. Kol Pheng
On behalf of
The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports
Ministry of Health and National AIDS Authority
and
The Ministry of Women's Affairs

Consultative Group Meeting
December 6-7, 2004
Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Capacity Building and Human Resource Development: Strategic Priorities

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Presentation by HE. Dr. Kol Pheng, Senior Minister

H.E. Samdech Prime Minister Hun Sen,
H.E. Keat Chhon, Chairman of the Conference,
H.E. Ian Porter, Co-Chairman of the Conference,
Excellencies the Representatives of country donors and education partners,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, Ministry of Women's Affairs, Ministry of Health and the National AIDS Authority, I am honored to make a presentation at this important Consultative Group meeting. My presentation will focus on an overview of Government's strategic priorities for capacity building and human resource development, one of the four angles of the Rectangular Strategy of the Royal Government.

The core strategy encompasses:

(1) Strengthening quality of education;
(2) Fostering gender equity;
(3) Improving health service; and
(4) Implementing population policy.

The ultimate target of this core strategy is the government's broader poverty reduction goal. It will contribute to a balanced and equitable economic growth and social development.

In many ways, this pillar is the one which concerns Cambodia's people most directly and immediately. Consequently, this component of the Rectangular Strategy provides a wide-ranging opportunity to foster wide-ranging national participation and partnership in development.

My presentation will focus on a number of themes. Human resource development strategy must be responsive to the broader macro-economic environment,

especially the demographic pressures on job creation and social services demand. Equally, effective workforce development can enable improved economic competitiveness and productivity, as well as urban and rural economic diversification.

As I indicated earlier, the broad coverage of these four areas of capacity building and human resource development offer an opportunity for participatory development and stakeholder consultation. Nevertheless, education and health services are also the most sensitive to changes in the national fiscal environment. Effective partnerships with donors, NGOs, the private sector and civil society are therefore critical in managing this balance of opportunity and risk.

Enhancing Quality Education: Strategic Priorities

The Government's long-term policy objective is to provide nine years of high quality education to all children. The medium-term strategy will ensure all students to complete six years of primary education, along with improvement in student and teacher performance.

A second strategy, set out in the new Education Strategic Plan 2004-2008, will be targeted expansion of secondary and higher education opportunities in currently under-served areas.

The Government proposes a number of systemic and targeted interventions to achieve these strategic objectives. Priority programs will focus on:

(a) Improving student retention rates within primary and secondary schools, targeting additional enrollment from 0.6 million to 1.30 million students by Year 2007, and constructing 800 additional secondary schools;

(b) Expansion of non-formal education opportunities, especially re-entry and equivalency programs for out-of-school youth;

(c) Poverty and merit based scholarships for the poor, girls and ethnic minorities; and

(d) Enabling greater community and private sector involvement in early childhood care and development and higher education. In this area, the Ministry will strengthen capacity building of staff and faculty members.

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports is conscious of ADB's conditionality of Loan Agreement and our needs to take corrective actions. Thus, we are now in the process of putting in place a Prakas prohibiting the students'

payments of non-formal fees in primary and in lower secondary schools. The Ministry is also strengthening measures to improve cash management on PAP funds. The Ministry will provide continuous training to strengthen the education and financial planning and management.

Fostering Gender Equity

The strategic focus of Government's gender equity policy will be to build up women's capacity and confidence to fully participate in decision making at all levels, including Government ministries, other elected bodies and the private sector. Development and implementation of national youth policy that assures equal benefits for young women will be a priority in the next five years.

A cross cutting intervention will be to strictly enforce women and girls' legal rights and protection. Key legislative measures will include revision and adoption of the domestic violence law, introduce new anti-trafficking legislation and ensure the enforcement.

The Government recognizes that regulation of these laws will not be sufficient.

Expanding access to education, training and employment opportunities will be an equally important measure to reduce vulnerability. Equally, measures that promote the economic empowerment of women will be critical. Government priorities will include:

(a) Women's empowerment centers; which provide women with the access to training and micro-credit to become small business entrepreneurs;

(b) Expanding access to formal and informal education to girls and women (dormitories for girls, expanding access to library and skills training opportunities); and

(c) Expansion of child care services that free up women into the formal and informal workforce. This will create a 'virtuous circle' for women in development.

Improving Health and HIV/AIDS Services

The focus of Government's health sector strategy will be to ensure equitable access to basic health services. Significant progress have been made since 1998 in both provision of basic health services, diseases controls interventions and promotion of women and child health.

The total number of health centers with adequate capacity to provide minimum package of activities was increased from 386 in 1998 to 823 in 2003.

The number of referral Hospital with major surgical operation was increased from 3 in 1998 to 15 in 2003. The success of diseases control interventions was seen with the increase in cure/detection rate of tuberculosis, decrease in prevalence of adult tested HIV positive, and decrease in incidence and case fatality rate of malaria, dengue hemorrhagic fever, measles and cholera, and the eradication of poliomyelitis since 2000. The percentage of pregnant women with at least two antenatal care visits increased from 19% in 1998 to 33% in 2003.

The thrust will be to achieve an effective and sustainable balance between preventative and curative health care. The priority for Government spending will be to ensure poor families face less cost barriers in accessing referral hospitals and health centers. The Royal Government encourages private participation in health care sector, especially in the area in which the public sector lacks of expertise and technology.

A second strand of health strategy will be expansion of preventative programs, especially for communicable diseases and promotion of maternal and child health care. Expanded health education and information campaigns are a priority, alongside targeted construction of referral hospitals and health centers in under-served areas. These measures will be under-pinned by enforcement of health safety legislation and regulation, including for modem drugs and traditional medicines.

In the campaign against HIV/AIDS, Samdech Prime Minister Hun Sen stood in the forefront among leaders in the ASEAN. The Royal Government efforts in this area are successful. The prevalence of HIV infection on 15 to 49 years old people has dropped from 3.30% in 1997 to 2.60 in 2003.

Sustaining the effectiveness of HIV/AIDS programs is a critical cross cutting priority. Measures to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS will include:

(a) Expanding 100% condom use campaign;

(b) Increased preventive programs for high-risk groups, (women and youth);

(c) Broadening HIV/AIDS awareness coverage, including in and out-of-school peer education; and

(d) Actions at community level. Strengthening capacity and commitment at all levels, including the National AIDS Authority and community groups, are essential.

Implementing Population Policy

Government's population strategy is to enable 'children by choice'. The strategic focus will be to equip couples and families to make well-informed decision about the size of their family. Well managed fertility rates are a key component of both household poverty reduction strategy and improved access to social services. Expanding birth spacing services and improved child maternal health care are key dimensions of an integrated approach to population strategy implementation.

Effective population policy is also a key in managing demographic pressures on health and education service demand. Equally, it is recognized that carefully planned population policy and strategy can be a catalyst sustainable and pro-poor economic growth. Nationwide information, education and communication (IEC) programs will be a central focus of policy implementation. These IEC programs will be carefully targeted and designed according to specific social and economic circumstances.

Governance and Partnership: Strategic Linkages

As the Rectangular Strategy illustrates, Government recognizes that capacity and human resource development cannot take place in isolation. The strategy recognizes good governance and public administration reform can optimize the impact of investment in these social services. Therefore, in all four areas of this pillar, the Government will adopt what can be broadly described as a sector-wide approach. This approach will be adjusted according to the unique characteristics of the four sectors.

Coordinating education and health strategies is vital to ensure that workers become both better skilled and healthier. Assuring gender equity is also critical to optimize the workforce and accrue the well-known family planning, nutrition and educational benefits associated with better educated female.

The Government will continue to expand its legislative and regulatory reform program, especially in education, health and gender. It is anticipated that education and health will continue to be priority ministries for the implementation of the pay reform and public financial management reforms. As broad coverage sectors, another strategic focus will be expansion of capacity building for decentralization of service management and delivery.

The Government and its partners recognize that these sectors are leading the way in evolving models of partnership development. Strengthening our joint capacity for policy-led performance monitoring and strategic review remains a priority. A second priority will be to develop harmonized but flexible approaches to improve the effectiveness of external assistance and ensure a strong results-orientation to aid.

Conclusion

The development of an individual to his/her full potential as a human being shall balance between a sound mind and a healthy body. Health service provides a child with a healthy body; education gives him/her a sound mind; people and the surrounding environment give him/her family values; and spiritual leader gives him/her high moral conduct and ethics. This is a holy approach for a full potential individual, who will become a good citizen. Good citizens provide a better, more developed nation. And developed nations, together, in the context of globalization, ensure a more peaceful and prosperous world for ALL.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR KIND ATTENTION.