STATEMENT OF THE RURAL WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION SECTOR IN THE KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA

Background

Cambodia is overwhelmingly rural with more than 80% of population living in rural areas, and therefore the rural water supply and sanitation sector development is one of the key agenda for National strategic development and rural livelihood improvements. Rural water supply and sanitation activities have been ongoing in Cambodia since late 1970s; however, until mid-1990s, the activities mainly focused on the emergency relief orientated process. The rural water supply and sanitation sector has been shifting its focus, since about 1995, from the emergency relief to long-term development process, integrating into the National strategic development framework.

Development Goals of the RWSS Sector

In the context of the "Rectangular Strategy" of the Royal Government of Cambodia, one of the focus is set on*: (1) providing all citizens with clean and safe water; (2) protecting all citizens from water-related diseases; (3) providing adequate water supply to ensure food security, economic activities and appropriate living standards; and (4) ensuring water resources and an environment free from toxic elements.* The Government has adopted the National Policy on Water Supply and Sanitation, in which the development goal of the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Sector is stated that "Every person in rural communities has sustained access to safe water supply and sanitation services and lives in a hygienic environment by 2025". The Cambodian Millennium Development Goals (CMDG) include objectives to increase safe water supply services for 50% of rural population and adequate sanitation services for 30% of rural population by 2015.

Present Status of the RWSS Sector

At present, recent surveys in Cambodia confirm that, only about 31% of rural populations have access to safe water supply services and 16% of rural populations have access to basic sanitation facilities. It is estimated that, to attain the CMDG targets by 2015, the RWSS sector should increase safe water supply improvements for 3.15 million populations and basic sanitation improvements for 2.86 million populations within 10 years framework.

RWSS Sector Strategic Challenges

The RWSS Sector programs have been mainstreaming with the National strategic development agenda, and therefore the sector development faces the policy and strategic challenges and technical issues such as, (i) policy advocacy, (ii) integrated service delivery with emphasis on sanitation and hygiene promotion, (iii) enhancing community empowerment in line with the decentralization and deconcentration process, (iv) harmonization and alignment of sector supports with the National ownership and effective leadership, (v) institutional development and capacity building with mutual accountability and good governance manners, (vi) efficient resources mobilization and effective financial management, (vii) appropriate technology development encouraging the demand responsive approaches through informed choices from multi-options of services, and (viii) partnership development between private sector and public sector emphasizing on the private sector's active participation in the RWSS sector development programs.

RWSS Sector Road Map and Future Agenda

The Royal Government of Cambodia is committed to achievement of the CMDGs and National Strategic Development Plans, through which the RWSS sector development agenda are outlined through following strategies:

- Rural sanitation improvement through informed choice of low cost latrines, sanitation market promotion with active participation of local private sector , and hygiene practices;
- Upgrading and rehabilitating of existing unsafe and insufficient rural water supply facilities;
- Integrated RWSS Master Plans for areas with low water supply and sanitation coverage; and
- Safe water supply, sanitation and hygiene promotion activities within the Integrated Rural Livelihood Improvement Program Frameworks.

RWSS Sector Partnership

The RWSS sector agencies are actively and uniquely collaborating with the development partners and set up the Partnership Mechanisms sharing the commitments towards strengthened and harmonized efforts aiming at the ensuring of sustained better services for rural water supply and sanitation improvements for rural populations of Cambodia.