

**Development Partner Remarks  
Social Protection for the Poor and Vulnerable**

**Delivered by Mr. Jean-Pierre de Margerie, World Food Programme Country  
Representative on behalf of Development Partners at the 18<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Government-  
Development Partner Coordination Committee  
Phnom Penh, April 20, 2011**

*Excellency Keat Chhon, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy and Finance,  
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It is my privilege to speak at this forum once again on behalf of development partners on the topic of social protection. I would first of all like to take this opportunity to **welcome and applaud the Royal Government's endorsement of the National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS)** on the 18<sup>th</sup> March 2011 and to pay credit to the strong support and commitment to social protection shown by Prime Minister Samdech Hun Sen, His Excellency Deputy Prime Minister Yim Chhay Ly and His Excellency Secretary of State Ngy Chanphal. Much preparation and consultation went into the development of the strategy with effective leadership by the government and good coordination between government and development partners. Its official endorsement and subsequent implementation will serve, we believe, as a cornerstone in accelerating progress towards National Strategic Development Plan targets and the Cambodia Millennium Development Goals.

As outlined by the Royal Government, the NSPS will serve three main purposes - the 3 'Ps' namely i) to protect the poorest and most vulnerable against shocks; ii) to prevent the poorest and most vulnerable from using negative coping strategies such as taking children out of school and reducing intake of food; and iii) to promote economic growth and better living standards through improvements in human capital. In this regard, development partners are pleased to align themselves with the priorities endorsed by the Royal Government of Cambodia in the NSPS where social protection is deemed as an essential policy pillar to an inclusive social and economic development strategy for the country.

2010 showed a remarkable return to economic growth after the slowdown of 2009, and there has been further progress in the reduction of poverty for which congratulations must be given to the Royal Government. Preliminary findings of the Cambodia Demographic Health Survey 2010 also indicate improvements in many health indicators. However, the survey also reports stagnation in some areas, including that of nutrition, with levels of malnutrition remaining stubbornly high and, in some areas, even reaching critically high levels. Much work still needs to be done between now and 2015 if all CMDGs are to be reached, notably the poverty target of 19.5 percent which would mean removing over 1.5 million of the most vulnerable people from poverty, and notably other targets in the areas of nutrition and health. As reflected in the NSPS, well-targeted safety nets can achieve these goals by providing a basic social protection floor, addressing basic human needs, and ensuring that transient poverty does not become chronic poverty. There remains today, we believe, a consensus on the need to develop and support a long-term affordable and effective system of social protection in Cambodia to ensure that the impacts of any future macro-economic shocks (such as volatile food and fuel prices), natural disasters (likely to increase due to climate change), and individual/household-levels shocks (such

as loss of a family member or severe illness) do not impede or reverse economic gains and improvements in the welfare of society achieved thus far.

As outlined at the 3<sup>rd</sup> CDCF in June 2010, development partners are committed to working in partnership with the Royal Government to **support implementation of the recently approved NSPS**. To this effect, development partners will work with the Social Protection Coordination Unit (SPCU) of CARD and relevant line ministries and agencies such as MEF, MOLVT, MOSAVY, MOH, MOEYS, MOI, MOP, MRD, MAFF, MOWRAM, MOWA, CDC, NCDD and SNEC who are either directly or indirectly involved in social protection. Development partners encourage the timely assignment of **technical and high-level social protection focal points** in each line ministry and agency, in order to facilitate effective and integrated implementation and which should ensure that social protection will be fully mainstreamed within sectoral policies and ministry annual operational plans. Development partners welcome the consultations already underway between the National Committee for sub-national Democratic Development (NCDD) and the Interim Working Group on Social Protection. Development partners support linkages and further exploration of synergies including closer institutional arrangements with the sub-national democratic development process.

Development partners also support an **evidence-based approach to policy dialogue and formulation**, including through the piloting of new cash transfers and public works schemes and through the ongoing review and evaluation of existing programmes. For example, efforts are underway to design a cash transfer pilot to address malnutrition and a national public works programme, an evaluation of the impact of food versus cash scholarships, and an evaluation to assess the process and results of the Ministry of Planning's Identification of Poor Households (IDPoor) Programme. It is anticipated that lessons learned from these evaluations will facilitate an evidence-based approach for the scaling up and harmonisation of social protection programmes. Development partner support is further outlined in such initiatives as the AusAid/ World Bank Trust Fund, the UN Development Assistance Framework 2011-2015 and other ongoing bilateral support. Development partners stand ready to promote mechanisms that will support the development of an integrated social protection system, such as the wide use of the IDPoor procedures as a common targeting tool. To this effect, national coverage and sustainable financing to enable regular data updates by the Identification of Poor Households Programme will be important in achieving this common purpose.

As stated at the 3<sup>rd</sup> CDCF and 17<sup>th</sup> GDCC, development partners regard **financial sustainability** as a crucial part of the successful implementation of a national social protection system. As a matter of priority, development partners would support a high-level government/donor funding mechanism and steering committee using a programme-based approach, which could facilitate the provision of sufficient resources for the initial implementation phase; in the longer term, such financial and steering platforms could guide the process of progressively transitioning from donor to government financing based on robust evidence of impact and sound costing of programmes. Activities could include an Integrated Fiduciary Assessment and Public Expenditure Review (IFAPER) type process. To this effect, development partners welcome the **indicative costing of pilot programmes and scale-up options for existing ones** as outlined in Table 7 of the NSPS. Development partners stand ready to further support the Government in the ongoing costing of social protection through provision of technical assistance and through information-sharing.

**In terms of summary action points:**

- Development partners would welcome before the next GDCC further elaboration of the Implementation Plan for the NSPS, specifically including the arrangements for how and when line ministries will be directly involved, how this involvement could be reflected in sectoral plans, ministry annual operational plans, and through institutional arrangements at the national and sub-national levels (including the identification of both technical and high-level social protection focal points).
- Development partners would welcome an outline of joint mechanisms before the next GDCC that support the development and harmonisation of new and existing social protection interventions, including such measures as a common targeting tool that can help harmonise implementation of social protection programmes.
- And, as a matter of priority, development partners, seek clarification on the Government's specific plans for establishing a sustainable and regular financing framework, in particular with regard to a steering committee to oversee budgeting and financing issues and mechanisms. An initial activity of such a committee could be to review the ongoing costing of the NSPS.