

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT - NSDP Social Sector Priorities

Joint Donor Statement on Human Development - NSDP Social Sector Priorities

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Government Donor Coordination Committee (GDCC)

4 March 2008, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

1. As donor partners, we welcome the focus on human development and NSDP social sector priorities at this GDCC meeting. We take this opportunity to highlight progress in these areas, priority issues for consideration and to discuss impact of the Organic Law on service delivery at local levels and achievement of NSDP and CMDG social sector targets and our current JMIs.

2. We have seen significant progress in the social sectors in 2007. This has included the Government of Cambodia's final promulgation of the Education Law and succession to the EFA Fast Track Initiative Catalytic Fund; the development of the next Health Sector Strategy 2008 - 2015; establishment of the TWG for Rural Water Supply and Sanitation and finalization of the Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition, and drafting of the 2008 Cambodia Gender Assessment.

3. Within this context however, there are issues that require our attention:

- Whilst primary net enrolment rate in the 2006/7 school year reached 92% it is estimated that up to 20% of primary school age children are not effectively attending school and a large majority of these are from disadvantaged families that reside in remote/rural areas. Moreover, only half of those entering primary school are expected to reach sixth grade. Strong attention should be given to enabling rural/remote and disadvantaged children to enter at right age and remain at school.
- A constraint to further progress on many health sector issues is insufficient levels of financing of front line health services, including low levels of remuneration for health staff. There is need for progress in civil service payment reform in the health and other social sectors.
- Government's salary incentive scheme for midwives was operationalised in 2007. Although the JMI target for 2007 to recruit and deploy 68 midwives in Health Centres that previously were without a midwife was almost met, by the end of 2007 there were still 112 health centres without midwives. Only recently introduced, the incentive scheme does not yet show its intended effects. To fully understand these trends we request information on the impact of results of this scheme to be presented at the next GDCC.
- Adult HIV/AIDS prevalence continues to decline therefore Cambodia has already exceeded its MDG target. Sustaining and improving prevention efforts to maintain reduced HIV incidence must remain a major priority.

4. In moving forward, it is clear that sectoral interventions must be supported by strong robust governance systems, underpinned by government's wider reform initiatives including financial management, public administrative reform and decentralization and deconcentration. The draft Organic Law demonstrates commitment to democratic development, and we feel it is essential to increase engagement on the organic law with all social sector ministries, including the Ministries of Education, Health, Rural Development, Social Affairs and others. Their active membership in the National Committee for Decentralisation and Deconcentration, and consultation on the first package of functions to be decentralized will be essential to ensure social sector priorities and targets are achieved. We also reinforce the importance of continuing to give priority attention to transformative gender work, and that laws and provisions that address gender inequity are enforced with appropriate accountability mechanisms in place.

5. We would like to recommend that sufficient focus is given to strengthening existing sub national participatory planning, fiscal transfer and accountability mechanisms so that the poorest and most

vulnerable will have a voice in determining needs and allocation of resources. We would like to reinforce the importance of the provincial and district councils and devolving adequate power and resources to support these functions and development plans.

6. In conclusion, we are glad to have this opportunity to discuss key social development issues central to improving the livelihoods of Cambodia's women, children and men. There are a number of important priorities within this statement that require our immediate attention. We look forward to monitoring this progress at future GDCC and CDCF meetings and maintaining a focus on the critical linkages between Cambodia's human development priorities, governance and economic goals.