

Session IIC 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
3rd CAMBODIA DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION FORUM
Phnom Penh, June 2, 2010**

Excellency Keat Chhon, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy and Finance,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Significant progress has been achieved since the initial commitment made at the 2nd CDCF in December 2008 to strengthen social protection for the poor and vulnerable. This commitment was made in recognition that large parts of the population are vulnerable to a variety of risks that can push them into poverty, overturn progress on development results and undermine growth and social stability. With the succession of shocks in the last two years, from rising food and fuel prices to the impact of the global economic downturn, and for some, the impact of Typhoon Ketsana, the Royal Government's response has included a focus on improving social protection for the poor and vulnerable. On behalf of Development Partners, I would like to commend the Royal Government for the progress achieved to date. In particular the Council of Agricultural and Rural Development (CARD), H.E. Deputy Prime Minister Yim Chhay Ly and H.E. Ngy Chanphal, who were tasked with coordinating this exercise, have shown strong leadership in steering the process that has resulted in the Royal Government's draft National Social Protection Strategy for the Poor and Vulnerable.

Achievements include the scoping and mapping of existing social protection measures, the holding of a national forum with guidance from the Prime Minister on strengthening the social protection system, and extensive technical consultations to inform the strategy, with a wide-range of stakeholders including line ministries, sub-national actors, the development community and civil society. The outcome is a draft National Social Protection Strategy that provides clear direction to achieve the vision set out in the Rectangular Strategy and the National Strategic Development Plan and to attain the country's development priorities including the Cambodian Millennium Development Goals.

Development Partners support this approach and believe that the draft National Social Protection Strategy is relevant and appropriate to address poverty and vulnerability and stimulate sustainable economic growth in Cambodia by increasing protection against chronic poverty and hunger, shocks, destitution and social exclusion, and investing in human capital. Investments in social protection for the poor and vulnerable put forward in the draft National Social Protection Strategy are strategically wise investments from both a social and economic perspective. The progress achieved to date is recognition of the pressing need to reduce poverty and vulnerability in Cambodia through improved and expanded social protection. It signals the political commitment to establish a national, integrated system of social protection, it shows the constructive collaboration between the Royal Government and development partners and it emphasizes the need and opportunity to move forward towards more comprehensive social protection for the poor and vulnerable.

Development Partners encourage the speedy endorsement of the National Social Protection Strategy by the Royal Government. Subsequently, Development Partners are committed to working in partnership with the Royal Government to support the Government's implementation of the National Social Protection Strategy.

Social protection is a cross-cutting, multi-sector undertaking. At least ten ministries are already implementing or are involved in different social protection interventions¹ as well as a number of Development Partners and civil society organisations. Successful implementation of the National Social Protection Strategy will therefore rely on effective coordination, between Development Partners and between relevant ministries. Coordination will be necessary in order to avoid thematic and geographic overlap or gaps, harmonize implementation procedures and ensure effective use of available funds from the national budget and Development Partners. Coordinating activities would need to include policy oversight, development of a common results-based monitoring and evaluation framework, knowledge and information management, capacity building at sub-national level and appropriate targeting mechanisms. Establishing appropriate institutional arrangements for coordination and ensuring complementarity with existing social sector strategies will be crucial to the successful implementation of the National Social Protection Strategy.

Development Partners welcome guidance from the Royal Government regarding the institutional arrangements for implementation of the National Social Protection Strategy.

The effectiveness of the national social protection system will depend on predictable and sustainable financing for coordination, targeting the poor and vulnerable, benefits and service delivery. Development Partners support the harmonization and alignment of existing social protection programmes and stand ready to support a Government-led programme-based approach to implement the National Social Protection Strategy.

Development Partners welcome the Royal Government's indication of the prioritisation of Government resources to implement the National Social Protection Strategy and how Development Partners can assist in exploring a programme-based approach for social protection.

Prioritizing social protection interventions in the short term will likely be guided by limited fiscal space and limited implementation and absorptive capacity. Important next steps to operationalize the strategy will be:

- i. a capacity building programme for the social protection coordination mechanism when established
- ii. a functional capacity needs assessment for each programme at central, provincial, district and commune/sangkat level
- iii. harmonization and scaling up of existing programmes
- iv. technical design of new or expanded programmes such as cash transfers and public works
- v. evaluation of the poverty impact of existing and new social protection measures

¹ Including the Ministry of Economy and Finance; Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries; Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports; Ministry of Environment; Ministry of Health; Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training; Ministry of Rural Development; Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth; Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology; and Ministry of Women's Affairs. The Ministry of Planning also has an important role in the identification of the poor.

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Development Partners stand ready to provide assistance to each of these steps. We also confirm our continued support to existing social safety net activities focusing on the poorest and most vulnerable, including health equity funds, scholarship programmes, school feeding, public works, strengthened crisis and disaster response mechanisms, and the expansion of the coverage of the ID Poor Programme.

Development Partners welcome the Royal Government's guidance on the priority needs for financial and technical support, in particular to build up institutional capacity to administer and manage social protection in Cambodia.

On behalf of Development Partners I would like once again to congratulate the Royal Government on this significant progress towards developing a social protection system for the poor and vulnerable and look forward to supporting the implementation of the National Social Protection Strategy and greater social protection coverage for the poor and vulnerable in Cambodia.