Royal Government of Cambodia

Address by HE Chhay Than
Senior Minister, Minister of Planning

at the National Workshop on

The Identification of Poor Households Programme
— A Key Tool for Equitable Development

Cambodiana Hotel, 8 January 2009

My respects to Excellency Keat Chon, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Economy and Finance, representing Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Decho Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia,

My respects to the presiding panel,

My respects to Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, honoured guests.

First of all, please allow me to express my great pleasure in welcoming, with my profound esteem and respect, His Excellency Keat Chon, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy and Finance, and to thank him for making available his valuable time to honour us with his attendance as the presiding chair of this important workshop. I would also like to express my deep thanks to your excellencies, ambassadors, international and national representatives, ladies and gentlemen for taking your busy time to attend this workshop.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen:

Please allow me to provide a brief summary report about the establishment of the national Identification of Poor Households Programme as follows:

In the Kingdom of Cambodia, institutions and organisations have been using a range of different procedures and criteria for identifying poor households. The data collected by these institutions and organisations are useful to them for the provision of targeted services and assistance to the poor, but the results obtained cannot be compared with each other and are generally not shared with other organisations and institutions for their use. Therefore, the Ministry of Planning organised a National Forum in February 2005, to discuss possible solutions for this situation. At the forum, there was broad consensus on the need to create standardised procedures for identification of poor households, to decrease the cost of identifying target groups, and to enable more efficient distribution of limited development resources to the poor.

In April 2005 the Royal Government agreed to establish a Working Group led by the Ministry of Planning, that was tasked with developing draft national procedures and criteria for identifying poor households. This Working Group established a smaller Core Group consisting of members from the ministries of Planning, Interior, Health, Education and Social Affairs as well as a number of

organisations such as GTZ, World Bank, World Food Programme, UNICEF, and University Research Company (URC), among others.

In 2005, the Ministry of Planning requested the German Government to provide financial and technical support to establish the Identification of Poor Households Programme, and to pilot implementation of the draft procedures in a number of provinces, in order to work towards the creation of national procedures officially recognised by the Royal Government. The German Government agreed to this request and in 2006 commissioned GTZ to provide technical and financial support to the Ministry of Planning.

What is identification of poor households? Why do we need it? I would like to inform you that identification of poor households seeks to determine, in rural areas, which households are poor and the poverty level of these individual households. The purpose of identification of individual households is to provide data on poor households, and the level of poverty at commune and village level, to development planners and providers of services and assistance, in order to select target households and areas. Targeting of services and assistance is done in order to help lift households out of poverty and to protect them from various crises which may deepen their poverty.

Implementation of identification of poor households depends on the use of existing structures such as the Provincial Departments of Planning, Provincial Local Administration Units, Provincial and District Facilitation Teams, Commune Councils, and Planning and Budgeting Committees, and in each village a Village Representative Group is established to directly implement the process. Implementation of the procedures relies on a cascade training approach to build the capacity of implementers at each level, to ensure the long-term sustainability of the programme. There is also participation from villagers in checking and providing comments on the draft List of Poor Households, in order to increase the transparency of the implementation process, the consensus of villagers, and the accuracy of the results.

In the process of identification of poor households, there are two poverty categories to which poor households can be assigned: Poor Level 1 (very poor) or Poor Level 2 (poor). These poverty categories are assigned based on a number of scoring questions and a number of non-scoring questions about the special circumstances of households.

The key output of identification of poor households in each village is a Final List of Poor Households. In addition, all households identified as poor are issued with Equity Cards. These cards 1) help to raise the awareness of poor households that they can seek out services and assistance and assert their eligibility to receive them, and 2) help service providers to quickly verify the identity of poor household members in order to provide services to them.

I would like to inform you that in 2007, the Ministry of Planning, in cooperation with the Department of Local Administration of the Ministry of Interior, implemented the Procedures for Identification of Poor Households in Siem Reap province (the two Operational Districts of Sotnikum and Kralanh), and the whole of Kratie province. In 2008 the Ministry of Planning expanded its coverage to two more ODs in Siem Reap province (Angkor Chum and Siem Reap); three ODs in Kompong Cham province (Cheung Prey-Batheay, Chomkar Leu-Steung Trong, and Prey Chhor-Kong Meas); two ODs in Prey Veng province (Peareang and Preah Sdach); and the whole of Oddar Meanchey province. In total, 2109 villages were covered.

In 2009, the Ministry of Planning will expand identification of poor households to two more Operational Districts in Kompong Cham province (Memut and Ponhea Krek); one OD in Pursat (Sampouv Meas); one OD in Banteay Meanchey (Mongkol Borei); and the entire provinces of Kompong Thom, Kompot, and Svay Rieng. In total, around 2876 villages will be covered in 2009.

The Ministry of Planning has calculated the median poverty rate of villages in each region that was covered by identification of poor households in 2007 and 2008. In 2007, in the areas of Siem Reap that were covered, the median village poverty rate was 29.8%. In the whole of Kratie province, the median poverty rate was 36.9%. In 2008, the median village poverty rate in the areas that were

covered in Siem Reap was 25.5%, in Kompong Cham—30.4%, and in Prey Veng—33.7%. Please note that in those provinces, identification of poor households was carried out only in selected areas. In Oddar Meanchey, the whole province was covered, and the median village poverty rate was 30.9%.

In addition to the areas covered by the MOP, Health Equity Fund Operators and their partners have been using the Procedures for Identification of Poor Households in a number of other areas. URC and RHAC have been implementing the procedures for identification of poor households in Banteay Meanchey, Battambang, Pursat, Kompong Chhnang, Kompong Cham and Sihanoukville. URC plans to cover Preah Vihear, Ratanakiri, Mondulkiri, and Koh Kong (Srae Ambil and Smach Meanchey ODs) in 2009.

As resources are limited, the Ministry of Planning only has the means to conduct identification of poor households in a number of regions. To enable coverage of additional other regions, the Ministry of Planning has allowed partner organisations to carry out identification of poor households using the Procedures for Identification of Poor Households, with guidance and monitoring by the Ministry of Planning. To facilitate cooperation, the Ministry of Planning has prepared *Guidelines for Partner Institutions and Organisations*, which provide guidance to partners about use of the common procedures and criteria for identification of poor households.

I would like to inform you that the Ministry of Planning is currently drafting a Sub-Decree in order to outline to stakeholders the principles and conditions related to identification of poor households, such as:

- Identification of poor households using the national procedures.
- Use of data on poor households collected using the national procedures, for use in providing services and assistance to poor households.
- The management and coordination structure, and the responsibilities of those involved in implementing the procedures for identification of poor households.

This sub-decree will help to further demonstrate that the Royal Government officially endorses and supports the Identification of Poor Households Programme and promotes the wide use of the Procedures for Identification of Poor Households and data on poor households in order to provide targeted services and assistance to poor households.

The Ministry of Planning intends to carry out research during 2009 regarding the accuracy of the results, the transparency of implementation, the level of public participation, and the cost-effectiveness of identification relative to the benefits. This research will be carried out in order to identify the strong aspects of the programme as well as points that need to be improved. This will help to further increase stakeholders' confidence in the procedures and the data.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen:

The Ministry of Planning aims to conduct identification of poor households in rural areas nationwide, and to carry out updates every two years. The Ministry of Planning will soon be preparing a Master Plan that will seek to carry out identification of poor households in half the country in 2010, and the other half in 2011. In order to achieve this plan, the Ministry of Planning needs sufficient and regular funding from the Royal Government and development partners. The creation of a **Trust Fund** is also very necessary, to enable the Royal Government and various development partners to contribute funds to support the Identification of Poor Households Programme. This trust fund will enhance the sustainability of the Identification of Poor Households Programme, to enable the provision of useful data to institutions and organisations for them to use as a basis for planning development assistance and for identifying target groups for provision of services and assistance. The World Bank and Ministry of Planning are working together to establish a Trust Fund in 2009 to support the Ministry of Planning Strategic Plan, which includes Identification of Poor Households as a Target activity.

In closing, on behalf of the Ministry of Planning I would like to express my profound thanks and appreciation to His Excellency the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy and Finance for attending and presiding over this national workshop on the Identification of Poor Households Programme. I would also like to thank Your Excellencies the ambassadors attending today, and representatives of international and national organisations, non-governmental organisations, and development partners for your participation today. I would also like to express my special thanks and appreciation to managers at all levels of the Ministry of Interior for their cooperation with the Ministry of Planning in promoting the successful implementation of identification of poor households.

I would like to express my special thanks to the Federal Republic of Germany for its financial and technical support to the Identification of Poor Households Programme, and to the Australian Government for its planned contribution of funds to the programme in the near future.

I would like to wish all of you health and prosperity, and continued success in all of your endeavours.

Thank you.