Royal Government of Cambodia

Closing Comments 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 the presiding panel,

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

Before closing this workshop, I would like to briefly summarise its purpose and what I consider to be the key points of this workshop.

Today's workshop had the following objectives:

- To raise awareness among all stakeholders about the Identification of Poor Households Programme, and more specifically about the Procedures for Identification of Poor Households.
- To promote the wide use of the data on poor households gathered by the Identification of Poor Households Programme and partner organisations.
- To encourage government and development partners to contribute funds to support the expansion of the Identification of Poor Households Programme to cover all rural areas throughout the country.

I believe that we have made good progress today toward achieving these goals, through the speeches, presentations and discussion. Today we have presented to you a number of key topics. These include:

- How and why the Procedures for Identification of Poor Households were created.
- An overview of the Procedures, the Questionnaire, and the Database of Poor Households.
- Achievements of the Identification of Poor Households Programme to date, and plans for the future.
- Experience of service providers such as Health Equity Funds and the Emergency Food Assistance Project in using the data on poor households for provision of services and assistance to poor households.
- The potential uses for the data in other sectors, as well as for supporting the development and operation of social safety nets.

In addition, there were many questions and comments which helped to bring out other important aspects related to identification of poor households.

I hope that you will take the following two key messages away from this workshop:

1. There are significant benefits to be gained in multiple sectors, projects and programmes from using the national standardised Procedures for Identification of Poor Households, and from distributing the data on poor households to all institutions and organisations who provide services and assistance targeted at the poor.

2. The Ministry of Planning, decentralised structures and local villager representatives themselves have demonstrated the capacity to implement the Procedures for Identification of Poor Households, and we are now ready for further expansion on a systematic basis to achieve national coverage of rural areas.

I am very pleased that so many of you today have shown strong interest in the Identification of Poor Households Programme. I am sure that this support will encourage the IDPoor Programme team to strive to develop and expand the programme even more and to disseminate the data as widely as possible.

However, there is still more work to do. One of the key tasks ahead is to mobilise regular and sufficient funding from the government and development partners to conduct identification on a systematic basis throughout the country, and to update the data every two years. A rough estimate is that it would cost around US$4 million per two-yearly update cycle (in other words, $2 million per year), which would be done on a rolling basis, half of the country each year. While this might seem like a lot of money, as a proportion of the overall resources spent on development every year by the government, development partners and implementing organisations, it is only a very small proportion. And the benefits for service providers and beneficiaries themselves are potentially great, because this data will allow more efficient allocation of limited resources to the poorest communities and households who need the most assistance.

Another key task is to achieve further integration of identification of poor households into the decentralised structures and processes in line with the decentralisation and deconcentration reforms. It is clear that the Ministry of Planning would maintain the role of overall national coordination of the identification of poor households process, and of processing the data and disseminating it widely. It is not yet clear, however, what functions at the sub-national level will be transferred to the provincial and district councils, and how this will affect the work of various government departments at the provincial level. As for the commune councils, consideration should be given to making identification of poor households an assigned obligatory function for them, and funding should be allocated through the decentralisation structures for this purpose. The Ministry of Planning will work closely with the Ministry of Interior to find a way forward in this complex and changing environment.

I would like to emphasise that the data that we have distributed today and that we plan to distribute on a regular basis will only realise its maximum potential if it is widely used by development planners and service providers. I would therefore like to encourage all of you present today, when you return to your offices, to schedule discussions with your colleagues on how to make best use of the data for assisting the poor. We will also welcome any feedback from your institution or organisation on how we can better meet your needs.

It will also be important for the management of your institution or organisation to take note of areas for which data is available or will soon be available from the IDPoor Programme, to avoid duplication of effort in carrying out identification of poor households. If your institution or organisation is planning to conduct identification of poor households, especially on a large scale,

please consult with the IDPoor Programme team at the Ministry of Planning to ensure that there is adequate coordination and harmonisation.

Today we could not invite to this workshop all institutions or organisations for whom identification of poor households is relevant. I therefore hope that you will inform other institutions or organisations about the Identification of Poor Households Programme, so that others can benefit from the data. Please let them know that they can look at the webpage on the Ministry of Planning website to find out basic information, and can contact the IDPoor Programme team directly for more detailed information or to obtain data on poor households.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen:

Finally, I would like to once again thank you all for attending this workshop today, and I look forward to having further opportunities to meet with you and share information and experience on identification of poor households and targeting of assistance to the poor. What we all have in common is that we want to contribute to poverty alleviation in Cambodia as effectively as possible, and to ensure that as many people as possible can share equitably in the development of the country. We hope that you will consider the Ministry of Planning Identification of Poor Households Programme to be a valuable partner in this endeavour.

Before closing, I would like to wish your excellencies, ladies and gentlemen the four Buddhist blessings of longevity, beauty, health and strength.

I hereby declare this workshop closed.

Thank you.