

## **An August Meeting Report of The Council for Agricultural and Rural Development**

A monthly meeting of the Council for Agricultural and Rural Development (CARD) was held on August 27, 2010 at the Office of the Council of Ministers. It was presided over by **H.E. Yim Chhay Ly**, Deputy Prime Minister and Chairman of CARD. The meeting was participated by the senior and junior officials of CARD; and the representatives of the Ministry of Rural Development; Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries; Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology; Ministry of Health; Ministry of Environment; Ministry of Public Works and Transport; and Ministry of Planning.

The meeting was intended to monitor the progress of the formulation of the National Social Protection Strategy and the on-going work directions of the six relevant ministries, particularly the implementation of the Health Equity Foundation Systems and the rice cultivation in this rainy season. It also focused on the implementation of the government's regulation No. 01 on the actions and protection of areas around Tonle Sap and the publication of the government's policy on milled rice export promotion.

As an opening remark, H.E. Deputy Prime Minister started to welcomed and delivered his speech to all the meeting participants and pointed out the government's development policy, especially the agricultural and rural development. He requested all the relevant ministries to report to the meeting participants about the last progress update in implementing its projects/programs. Within this regard, the Director Department of Planning of the Ministry of Health presented the Health Equity Fund program. His presentation emphasized the definition, background and objectives of the Equity Fund program; effectiveness of the health protection for the poor; identification of the poor; challenges; and the work plans for expanding the coverage of the this program in the future. It also touched on the program objective that is part of the implementation of the government's social protection strategy for the poor. The program so far covers 22 provinces. As for Stung Treng and Kep provinces, the program already ended due to the unavailable budget to continue.

H.E. Ngy Chanphal, Secretary of State of the Interior Ministry and Vice Chairman of CARD, also took the opportunity to present the formulation process of the National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS), explaining why CARD is still formulating this strategy while some ministries-institutions have already been implementing it. He also showed the activities and some published documents as well as the on-going work activities to be implemented subsequently. This included the review of the draft of this strategy documents before it is submitted to the Council of Ministers to call for an inter-ministerial meeting for an official approval as well as the preparation of the pilot implementation after this strategy documents are approved by the government.

Afterwards, H.E. Teng Lao, Secretary of State of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, reported its progress update. He said that the ministry is currently formulating strategies in rice production promotion; attracting the investors to export rice to the international markets; selecting and distributing high-yield and high-quality seeds; and testing the selected rice seeds in some areas. He added that seed selection is necessary to ensure the quantity and quality of the rice production, but the ministry is in shortage of budget to carry out further research. Therefore, the ministry is late. However, the ministry is working hard to look for partners to support this project, and hopes that Cambodia would be able to export four million tons of rice to the international markets by 2015. Regarding the implementation of the programs, H.E. **Yim Chhay Ly** requested the ministry to work hard in order to implement the government's policy on milled rice export in a timely manner.

H.E. Phang Sareth, Secretary of State of the Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology, reported its progress update, especially the implementation of the government's regulation No. 01 over the issues around Tonle Sap lake. He also mentioned the sub-decree one the land border demarcation for zone 02 and 03 to resolve the impacts on local people; the preparedness of the rain shortage; and the implementation of the irrigation system construction plans.

Finally, H.E. **Yim Chhay Ly** informed the meeting participants that the six relevant ministries play an important role in contributing to national development and rural economic development. He requested each ministry to catch up and know well of the national economy and to work hard for the stability of the people's livelihoods. He also asked the Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology to strictly implement the government's regulation 01, while the Fisheries Administration has to replant the flooded forests on the cleared areas in order to maintain the fresh water biodiversity, balance the ecological systems and lives around Tonle Sap. He also pointed out that the rice production promotion and rice export policy to the international markets has been raised by the Royal Government as reflected in the national strategy to boost the agricultural productivity, agricultural diversification and agro-industry. Therefore, the relevant ministries have to promote crop cultivation, expansion of the cultivated land, seed selection, irrigation schemes, publication of the agricultural technology and so forth. He also urged that the agricultural policy and water policy have to hand in hand to achieve success and efficiency. In that opportunity, H.E. Deputy Prime Minister also informed the meeting participants that the Royal Government of Cambodia has worked hard to develop the country by transforming the border areas into the development areas. Thus, the development should go together with the conservation and it requires strong commitment and good coordination among all relevant stakeholders.

