

**Country Report**  
**Hon. Mrs. NIN Saphon,**  
**Head of Cambodian National Assembly Delegates**  
**and Chairperson of the National Assembly Commission on Public Works,**  
**Transports, Telecommunication, Post, Industry, Mines, Energy, Commerce, Land**  
**Management, Urban Planning and Construction to the WAIPA Seminar on**  
**Accelerating the Achievement of Millennium Development Goal 5 through the Role**  
**of Women Parliamentarians: "Maternal Health Improvement"**  
*(Santepheap Palace, Phnom Penh Capital, March 9-12, 2011)*



**Honorable Ms. Chairperson!**  
**Honorable Delegates,**  
**Dear National and International distinguished guests!**  
**Good morning!**

Today I have the great pleasure and honor to attend this Seminar of Women Paliamentarians of ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly on Accelerating the Achievements of the Millennium Development Goal 5 (MDG5) through the Role of Women Parliamentarians here in Phnom Penh.

On behalf of the Women Parliamentarians of the Kingdom of Cambodia and on my own behalf, I would like to express my profound gratitude to the National Assembly of the Kingdom of Cambodia as well as to the General Secretariat of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly for organizing this important seminar. I also wish to thank the Asian Parliamentary Forum for Population and Development (AFPPD), United Nations for Women and United Nations Development Program (UNDP) for their generous support to this event. Again I would like to take this excellent opportunity to express my warm welcome to all delegates from the ASEAN Parliaments for their valuable time spending with us at this Seminar here today.

On behalf of the Cambodian Women Parliamentary Delegation and on my own behalf, I would like to take this auspicious occasion to express our high appreciation to Her Excellency Dr. BUN RANY HUN SEN who has been entitled as National Champion of the UN Secretary General's Joint Plan of Actions for Maternal's and Children's Health on the 21st February 2011.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**  
**Distinguished Guests,**

Currently the world faces various crises – natural disasters, hunger, and diseases which affect millions of women and children – almost in the developing countries. Hence the General Assembly of the United Nations addressed the acceleration of the progress of achieving all Millennium Development Goals at its High Level Plenary Meeting in New York in September 2010. The Millennium Development Goals have been incorporated into the policies of the Royal Government of Cambodia.

Women are the mothers of the world. We represent 49.1% <sup>(1)</sup> of the world's population. Of all Cambodians 52% are women. In Cambodia "Maternal Health" is a critical concern. It affects other Millennium Development Goals and – vice versa – receives adverse impacts from other goals. The demographic survey<sup>(2)</sup> of Cambodia in 2005 as well as the 2008 census<sup>(3)</sup> showed the maternal mortality rate at 472 respectively 461 per 100,000 live births as an unacceptable high ratio. Thus the Royal Government of Cambodia under the wise leadership of the Prime Minister Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo HUN SEN enforced its commitment towards the achievement of the MDG 5 in its policies such as:

- Rectangular Strategy Phase II,
- National Strategic Development Plan 2009-2015<sup>(4)</sup>,
- National Health Strategic Plan 2008-2015<sup>(5)</sup> and
- Fast Track Initiatives Road Map for Reduction of Maternal and Newborn Mortality 2010-2015<sup>(6)</sup>.

This commitment has also been reflected in the annual increase of the national health budget up to 15.77% at present.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen, Distinguished Guests,**

The Millennium Development Goal Number Five is – the reduction of up to three quarter ( $\frac{3}{4}$ ) of maternal mortality rate in-between 1990 and 2015, which means the reduction of the maternal mortality rate down to 250 per 100,000 livebirths.

To achieve this ambiguous goal Cambodia still has to overcome its challenges such as for example:

- access to training and understanding of antenatal and postnatal health care
- illiteracy
- poverty amongst especially rural and indigenous women
- in-appropriate care-seeking and insufficient nutrition during pregnancy, before and after childbirths
- poor infrastructure, especially in the rural and mountainous areas
- dissemination of information on health care for rural and indigenous groups
- lack of health centers, medical equipment and limited availability of emergency obstetric.

To overcome this situation and lessons learnt Cambodia issued various guidelines and developed comprehensive programs for the training of skilled midwives and continues to implement sufficiently equipped health centers in each commune. By the end of 2012<sup>(6)</sup> at every health center a fully trained midwife should be available. In order to support this process the Cambodian Ministry of Health established a so-called "**Equity Fund**". By this midwives in the rural area receive for example about 60,000 Riels (about USD 15) per life-birth. Midwives in the urban area receive 40,000 Riels (about USD 10). Furthermore – if a traditional midwife convinces a pregnant woman to deliver at a health

center, equipped with a professional midwife, she will also enjoy 60,000 Riels (about USD 15).

Moreover - contributing to the acceleration of Maternal Health Improvement, the Cambodian Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports has integrated Health Education, Hygiene, Health Care<sup>(7)</sup> and Gender-Equality into the curriculum for female-students and schoolgirls.

Because re-productive health is a crucial part of maternal mortality reduction policy, the Ministry of Women Affairs in close collaboration with the Ministry of Health issued the **National Action Plan 2009-2013**<sup>(8)</sup>. Throughout its program on education for both "**Men and Women**" and the program on village volunteers it aims on the Reduction of the Maternal Mortality rate, the Prevention of Domestic Violence, Women's Empowerment as well as Re-productive Health Education. One target of this program is for example to recruit two women volunteers of each village as a "**Village Gender Promoter**". They receive specific training before continuing to coach other villagers of her respective village.

Moreover, Cambodia has received generous technical and financial support from its international development partners, friendly countries and UN agencies. So far the Cambodian Parliament had received technical and financial support from the Legislative Assistance Project under the United Nations Development Program (LEAP/UNDP) as well as the assistance from the Asian Parliamentary Forum for Population and Development (AFPPD). Again – Cambodia is sincerely calling for and welcomes local as well as international investors in the Health Sector, especially maternal and newborn health care, reproductive health, and education.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen, Distinguished Guests,**

To achieve the acceleration of the MDG 5 by 2015 we, the parliamentarians, are ready with willingness and commitment to monitor and to evaluate the implementation process of current and upcoming governmental policies, legislation, and legal instruments in our particular constituencies. Thus, we, women parliamentarians, will improve our understanding and awareness about maternal and newborn health care. With this approach, we convey throughout all administrative levels up to the commune/Sangkat councils.

For the sake of the achievements of the MDG 5 by 2015, the strong commitment and cooperation of the executive and the legislative bodies of Cambodia will continue.

Last but not least, we, the parliamentarians propose the following:

1. Call for all relevant stakeholders to extend their full support to Her Excellency Dr. BUN Rany Hun Sen, First Lady of the Kingdom of Cambodia, President of Cambodian Red-Cross and National Champion of the Asia Pacific Leadership Forum for HIV/AIDS, a National Champion of the UN Secretary General's

Joint Plan of Actions for Women's and Children's Health, Honorary President of the National Committee on Social Ethics, Women Dignities and Khmer Families, and the Honorary President of Women Association for Peace and Development.

2. Call for International Communities, national and international governmental and non-governmental organizations, friendly countries and UN agencies to continue their technical and financial support for Cambodia.
3. Request the Royal Government of Cambodia to continue the implementation of its investment policy with the incentive to encourage and attract more local and foreign investors in the Public Health Sector. This will offer new jobs to our youths and promote the livelihoods of our people, women in particular.
4. Encouraging all AIPA member countries to enhance the spirit of friendship, understanding and cooperation for the promotion of our mutual dialogue, the exchange of best practices and lessons learnt.

Finally, on behalf of the delegates from the Cambodian Parliament and on my own behalf, I would like, once again, to express my deepest thanks for the presence of all honorable delegates, national and international distinguished guests of this WAIPA Seminar. My thanks go also to the organizing committees of the secretariat of AIPA. My further sincere thanks go to AFPPD, UNW and UNDP for their financial support. My thanks and gratitude go also to the National Assembly of the Kingdom of Cambodia for hosting this WAIPA Seminar.

Let me conclude with the four blessings of Buddha: longevity, good health, strength and happiness.

THANK YOU!

Reference:

- (1) [www.infoplease.com](http://www.infoplease.com)- US Census Bureau, International Database
- (2) & (3) Ministry of Planning of Cambodia: 2005 Demographic survey and 2008 Census
- (4) Rectangular Strategy phase II of RGC
- (5) & (6) Ministry of Health of Cambodia: "National Strategic Health Development Plan and Fast Track Initiatives Road Map for reduction of maternal and newborn mortality 2010-2015"
- (7) Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of Cambodia
- (8) Ministry of Women Affairs: "National Action Plan"