

Signing of a Memorandum of Understanding to promote affordable quality health care in Cambodia on 15 June 2009

As the international economic crisis tightens and casts its shadow on Cambodia's developing economy, joining forces and resources in order to provide for equitable, affordable and reliable health care becomes more important than ever. By signing the Memorandum of Understanding on collaboration concerning Social Health Protection (MoU), representatives of the World Health Organisation (WHO), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the French Development Cooperation (AFD) and the German Development Cooperation, including GTZ and KfW, have taken an important step towards a closer in-country coordination of activities aimed at supporting the Royal Government of Cambodia in strengthening social health protection. The signing ceremony took place on 15 June 2009 at the ceremonial room of the Phnom Penh office at AFD and was greeted by the applause of the nearly 30 international representatives and government officials.



Signing the MoU for improved Social Health Protection. From left to right: Mr Heinrich-Jürgen Schilling (GTZ), Dr Michael O'Leary (WHO), Mr Tun Sophorn on behalf of Mr Bill Salter (ILO) and Mr Eric Beugnot (Afd).

Today, many Cambodians, especially the poor, do not have the money to pay for health care when they or their family members fall ill. The high treatment costs keep many of them from seeking help. Others need to borrow money or sell household assets such as land to pay for treatment, which causes many families to incur debt and to fall into poverty. As a result, social health protection has been placed high on the agenda of the Royal Cambodian Government. In early July, a National Forum on Social Safety Nets in Cambodia will be held in order to discuss about ways of mitigating the effects of the global economic and financial crisis and to support the development of sustainable social protection systems in Cambodia.

In the memorandum, the signatories commit themselves to coordinate their policy advice and technical assistance to the respective Cambodian institutions that are active in the area of social health protection. They also pledge to align their advice

with national policies and strategies in accordance with the Accra Agenda on Aid Effectiveness. Moreover, they agree to work together to strengthen the capacity of local institutions and counterparts so that these can effectively plan and implement social health protection programmes. The MoU is based on the “Providing for Health” initiative (see box) and translates the goals of the global initiative into practical in-country arrangements.

The signing of the MoU is an important event aimed at promoting the international commitment and partnership for establishing a social health protection system in Cambodia. This MoU comes timely. With the current economic crisis starting to affect the Cambodian society, there is increasing need to strengthen social health protection to complement national efforts in reducing poverty and achieving important development goals such as the MDGs.

Providing for Health (P4H)

P4H is an initiative established during the course of several G8 summits. Its objective is to support the strengthening of health systems in developing countries by improving social health protection for the whole population, particularly for the poor. Key areas of the partnership include the facilitation of international collaboration, support to capacity development and the combination of technical and local expertise. P4H is country focused, which means that it is shaped by individual country demand and builds on existing in-country mechanisms.

For more information please refer to:
http://www.internationalhealthpartnership.net/pdf/Providing_For_Health_05_May_2008.pdf

Source: GTZ