

Kingdom of Cambodia Nation Religion King

Report on working meeting between His Excellency Ieng Mouly, Senior Minister and Chair of National AIDS Authority, and Dr. Robert Newman, director of USCDC to Cambodia

At 0900 on the morning of September 17, 2015 at the National AIDS Authority Headquarters, His Excellency Ieng Mouly, Senior Minister and Chair of the National AIDS Authority, permitted Dr. Robert Newman, who has just been appointed Director of the USCDC (US Centers for Disease Control) to Cambodia, to pay a courtesy call on and hold a working meeting, focusing importantly on the update about the fight against HIV/AIDS in Cambodia.

To begin, the **Senior Minister** welcomed his guest and informed him of the general situation concerning the spread of HIV/AIDS in Cambodia and the update on the progress, achievements, and effectiveness of the response to HIV/AIDS in Cambodia. Moreover, through Dr. **Robert Newman**, the Chair extended thanks, on behalf of the Royal Government of Cambodia and the Cambodian people, to the US government for having offered financial and technical support to Cambodia in the past. The Chair also informed his guest of key significant points, stressing that:

- The Royal Government of the Kingdom of Cambodia has been stepping up self-reliance by making financial contribution of \$3.7 million towards the purchase of antiretroviral (ARV) drugs for a period of three years (\$1 million in 2015, \$1.2 million in 2016, and \$1.5 million in 2017).

- In the context where foreign assistance has been in the decline, the National AIDS Authority has exerted efforts to seek the Royal Government's support for the request, presented to the Ministry of Economy and Finance, for \$4 million in the 2016 National Budget to enable the subnational level to undertake non-health works in place of activities carried out by some nongovernmental organizations that run out of funds. The following actions have been planned:

- To promote voluntary HIV blood testing especially by factory workers.
- To recruit volunteer and contract staff to help monitor and spur exposed people to seek HIV blood test service and AIDS carriers to have regular treatment.
- The National AIDS Authority is currently focusing its key task on youths of the generations to come who have been involved in sexual intercourse (13% among the youth aged from 14 years old) while their AIDS awareness about AIDS has alarmingly plunged.

- To continue cooperation with the Ministry of Health to prevent the spread of AIDS by unlicensed doctors in order to avert any dreadful events, such as the case in Battambang Province's Roka commune, from taking place.

In his reply, Dr. Robert Newman thanked the Chair for offering him the opportunity to pay the courtesy call, and he briefed him of the USCDS's partnership project with the three government institutions: the NIPH (National Institute of Public Health), the NCHADS (National Centre for HIV/AIDS, Dermatology and STD Control), and the Ministry of Health. The doctor also presented his impression on some points as follows:

- Dr. Newman expressed congratulations to and high appreciation for Cambodia, which has scored genuine success in reducing the spread of HIV/AIDS.

- Though it remains a low-middle income country, Cambodia is still in need of necessary funds to continue the sustainability of the program of combating HIV/AIDS. Otherwise, the spread of HIV will return, come what may.

- Development partners should consider reducing funding gradually in agreement with the possibilities of offering contribution by the Royal Government, in line with the need for high political will.

- The Country Director of USCDC joined Cambodia in demonstrating the resolve to fight AIDS towards the 90-90-90 goal.

- The Director supported a study in Cambodia, analyzing that the current investment will produce high positive results in the fight against AIDS in the future at a trivial level.

- Dr. Newman was also concerned about the low pay for civil servants that constituted a challenge facing AIDS workers at health centers.

- He agreed with some difficulties in the project of the Global Fund, which has an implementation policy separate from Cambodia's. However, sometimes the Global Fund project has also suffered pressure from aid donors, which require that implementation be highly transparent, failing to take into consideration the specific situation of each country.

- The USCDC to Cambodia will always continue cooperation with the National AIDS Authority and other national programs whenever it need be.

Before the meeting concluded, the Senior Minister also mentioned that:

- The Royal Government of Cambodia, well aware of the salary issue, has spent up to 49.5% of current expenditure of the national budget to pay for wages of civil servants, which represents the highest spending in 2015. The Royal Government will strive to have the monthly minimum salary fixed at \$250 in 2018.

- Development partners, in particular the Global Fund, should consider continuing the provision of additional subsidies according to their possibilities so as to contribute to bridging this gap.

- As regards transparency, as the Chair of the CCC (Coordinating Committee for Cambodia), he has exerted efforts to coordinate the implementation of the spending policy of the Global Fund project in complying with the national budget policy. Moreover, Cambodia has also had the Anti-Corruption Unit available for important monitoring process.

- The USCDC to Cambodia is asked to continue cooperation with the national program in the use of one common goal, one system, and one voice.

The meeting came to an end at 1000 in an atmosphere of cordiality, with the determination to continue the cooperation with high understanding.

Seen and agreed:
His Excellency Senior Minister,
Chair of the NAA



IENG MOULY

Phnom Penh, September 17, 2015
Minutes taker

Chhim Khindareth