

Chum NEAP SU

**Workshop on Developing University Capability  
in Continuing Education**

**Address by : Eva Mysliwec, Director CDRI**

Excellency, Professor North, Colleagues from AIT, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honored to have been invited to speak to you this morning on the **role of continuing education in the national development of Cambodia**. I understand that one of the objectives of this workshop will be for you the participants to identify a strategic plan for the provision of continuing education programs within your universities and to link these to Cambodia's national development needs. I will therefore try to highlight some of the challenges facing Cambodia today and some of the priority needs for reconstruction and development. It will be up to you to identify appropriate and practical ways in which your institutions can and must respond to the rapid changes occurring as a result of the process of liberalization and economic reform. The Cambodia of today is very different from the Cambodia of the sixties, or seventies, or even the eighties and will require **new and creative** solutions based on an honest assessment of what is feasible and desirable for the long term interest of Cambodia's people.

We are all aware of the dramatic changes which have occurred in Cambodia in the last two decades and which have culminated in democratic national elections, the adoption of a new constitution and the establishment of the Royal Government of Cambodia in November 1993. These events led to diplomatic recognition and normalization of aid relations with the international community. Cambodia was subsequently able to reestablish working relations with the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, leading to the provision of financial resources essential to the stabilization of the economy and continuing reconstruction and development of the country.

In spite of progress made since 1979 Cambodia bears the burden of decades of war and turmoil, and remains severely constrained in its reconstruction and development efforts by insufficient skilled human resources in all sectors as well as by continuing insecurity in many parts of the country. Valiant efforts have been made over the last 15 years to restore the educational system and other infrastructure yet, due to numerous constraints, the quality and type of education available today do not adequately meet the demands and **challenges of a country striving to attain national unity, to overcome poverty, to foster economic stability and growth, to ensure food security, and to strengthen democratic process.**

With a population of 9.3 million (of which there is a high proportion of women and children and almost half under the age of 15) and an annual growth of 2.5-3%, an estimated GDP per capita of \$220, a child mortality rate of 184/1000, an adult literacy rate just under 30%, a high incidence of malaria and tuberculosis and an alarming rate of HIV/AIDS infection, Cambodia ranks as one of the Least Developed countries.

Agriculture continues to be of paramount importance, employing over 80% of the labour force and contributing nearly 50% to the GDP. Industrial products and employment remain at modest levels and derive almost exclusively from small to medium scale enterprises. The service sector has shown a boyant but unstable expansion. Despite an annual growth of 6-8 % in the period '91-92, the economy remains structurally weak and unbalanced with significant income and regional disparities.

Since 1989 the Cambodian government has been committed to a process of transition from centrally planned to a market economy. Liberalization measures especially the restoration of private ownership and increased reliance on market forces have led to the emergence of a small but bustling private sector. These measures, combined with the fiscal and monetary reforms introduced by the Royal Government and supported by the international lending and donor institutions, have already yielded some positive effects, notably - stabilization of the economy as evidenced by the sharp decline in the rate of inflation and an increase in investments.

The transition to democracy and to a market economy will require more far-reaching reforms; an improved internal capacity to oversee and manage the reform process, well targeted social and economic policies, an education system responsive to emerging labor market patterns and work force skill needs, and the creation of a secure environment and legal framework conducive to participation in order to realize sustainable growth with equity and social justice.

In February 1994 the Royal Government articulated its priorities for reconstruction and development in the National Program to Rehabilitate and Develop Cambodia (NPRDC). The NPRDC was submitted to the ICORC meeting in March 1994 and was endorsed by the international donor community.

The Royal government's vision as articulated in the NPRDC, is described as a commitment to the following:

- \* Reform the State, its institutions, and its public service so as to attain political and socio-economic priorities;
- \* rely on private entrepreneurship and the market as engines of growth
- \* double the present level of GDP by 2004 in real terms, and place heightened emphasis on **harnessing Cambodia's agricultural, industrial and tourism potentials:**
- \* extend health, educational and social services to the entire population so as to ensure, within the decade, a substantial improvement in the standard of living.
- \* **improve rural living by promoting rural development as a central feature of the Government's development priorities;**
- \* ensure that the pattern of development is <sup>s</sup>ustainable socially, politically, fiscally, and environmentally.
- \* strengthen domestic self-reliance and thus reduce the current dependence on external financial and technical assistance.

In order to realize this vision the National Plan (NPRDC) identifies the following as priority strategies:

- 1) Creating a base for a market economy by instituting stabilization and reform measures in the financial sector.
- 2) Increasing absorptive capacity through reform of administrative practices, strengthening operational ministries, and developing human resources.
- 3) Implementing sectoral development programs and priority projects, keeping environmental sustainability in mind.

In pursuing these goals and strategies, "government intends to give priority attention to capacity building and to the rehabilitation and mobilization of the country's human, physical and financial resources".

The Royal Government's National Plan to Rehabilitate and Develop Cambodia acknowledges that **Cambodia needs a major upgrading of its managerial, technological, entrepreneurial and organizational skills and capacity.** The NPRDC emphasizes that human resource development is both an objective of national policy and a means of executing national policy.

The main bottleneck (constraint) for implementing the national development plan is a **shortage of adequately trained personnel in all sectors of work, and particularly at provincial, district and village levels.** It is unfortunate that there does not yet exist a "Manpower Plan" identifying the human resources which are currently available and projecting what additional human resources will be needed over the next 10 to 20 years in order to ensure continuing development and growth. Such a plan would certainly facilitate the task of prioritizing training needs and proportionately allocating scarce resources.

We can see from the goals which are to be achieved that there is no shortage of ways in which continuing education can contribute to reconstruction and development. While much emphasis is being placed on the need to mobilize training resources for enhancing capability for management of the market economy at all levels of the administration, and particularly at **provincial and district levels** which up to now have been largely left out of mainstream development, the key to Cambodia's future lies in the development of its **rural sector** where most of the population are employed.

While Cambodia has long been characterized by an absence of physical and human capital investment, it does have a base of natural resources. This base has been exploited to a degree, but with the exception of rubber, there is no area in which technology or investment has ever achieved a viable economic scale in modern terms. A very large proportion of Cambodia's GDP is attributable to agriculture, in spite of the primitive level of its farm production. Over much of the past 35 years, while other parts of S.E. Asia and the Indian sub-continent were advancing steadily using "green revolution" genetics and new management techniques, the Cambodian agriculture was deteriorating. Worldwide average rice yields have increased more than 75% since Cambodia was last an effective producer, and the country is now quite far behind in relative efficiency of production. Some recent improvement is evident, and with modest assistance, output can be expected to expand to meet domestic consumption demand, but moving beyond this to achieve internationally competitive production will be extremely difficult. The key constraint is the lack of investment in human and physical capital - a severe lack of knowledge, training, infrastructure, technology and productive assets. In addition to the above, successful strategies for rural development will need

to include improved extension services and diversification of the agricultural base. There is significant scope for research and training in more efficient and productive farming techniques as well as in appropriate technology. Opportunities for off-farm production and agro-processing/ agro industry have yet to be exploited in any serious way.

Similarly there is exists wide scope for development of other natural resources, namely fisheries and timber. Their future as valuable resources to Cambodia depend largely on sustainable management policies and practices.

Another largely underdeveloped sector of the economy is that of tourism and the service sector where 64% of the urban labour force and about 10% of rural labour force are employed. Skills training and management training are critical and can be implemented in collaboration with the private sector who stand to gain directly from such investments.

The introduction of modern, but **appropriate technology**, to manage new systems of management, whether it be management of the economy, information and communication, natural resources, or administrative structures and procedures, is limited both by the lack of skilled trainers as well as by the rate at which such new technology can be disseminated and absorbed.

Thus far I have suggested roles for continuing education in the context of economic development sectors. But perhaps one should look at even more basic issues such as adult education/literacy and its impact on the economy. Reports on the fastest growing economies in Asia tell us that sound economic policies alone cannot ensure growth and development. A factor common to two of the fastest growing economies in Asia, Taiwan and South Korea is the large investment which they made in basic education for the general population. Investment in functional literacy and basic education is probably the single most effective step that any developing country can take down the path to development. A vast body of research demonstrates that farmers, and this includes the vast proportion of women who are farmers, with even a few years of schooling are better agricultural producers and better income earners. They tend to eat more nutritious meals, have healthier families, are more likely to engage in family planning, and the children that they bear are more likely to survive and do well in school. It may be worthwhile to look carefully at the gains that could be obtained by a systematic effort to increase the opportunities for Cambodia's **adult** rural population to access functional literacy and basic education programs that are relevant to their situation.

It is clear that the challenge of meeting Cambodia's continuing

education needs is a daunting one. We have barely touched on the many opportunities that exist for contributing to capacity and capability building through continuing education. Choices concerning appropriate programs, methods, and target audiences will have to be made according to each institution's strengths and resources, (not excluding the need to look at ways of generating more resources both internally and externally.) At the same time one will need to take into consideration what other resources already exist for the provision of continuing education, where one can make the most significant impact, and where partnerships with private providers can be established.

Although provided by a diversity of governmental institutions and non-governmental agencies, opportunities for continuing education in Cambodia are still limited. Ministries, public enterprises, international agencies and NGOs are the major suppliers of training services. Privately run institutions organizing paying classes have also recently emerged responding to the high demand for computer and language courses. Various ministries and public enterprises organize short term courses usually combined with on the job training of 3-6 months duration. According to the Ministry of Education, training courses sponsored by international agencies and NGOs were attended by some 4,500 persons. Numerous NGOs and ILO/UNDP provide significant vocational training programs which encourage self reliance and self-employment and which are often accompanied by credit schemes. NGOs such as Australian Catholic Relief, CIDSE, GRET have made important contributions to the formal and on-the-job training of rural extension workers while UNICEF and other NGOs have developed interesting programs in non-formal education.

Target groups of NGOs typically include farmers, women, disabled persons, orphans, refugees and demobilized soldiers. The Cambodia Development Resource Institute is one of the few institutions upgrading the management and planning skills of civil servants, essentially through the organization of short term specialized seminars and workshops. International technical agencies also provide staff development for various ministries - UNESCO with MOEYS, FAO with the Ministry of Agriculture, and WHO with the Ministry of Health.

In the last year, bilateral and multilateral donors such as UNDP/Asian Development Bank and the IMF have initiated programs for technical assistance and training in the financial sectors and relating to the management of economic transition and structural reform. Whereas CDRI has been engaged in providing macroeconomic training and market economy skills since 1991.

While the above programs contribute to the overall development of institutional capacity the training system coverage still

seems insignificant in relation to the needs of large segments of the administration and Cambodian population. Provincial and district administration have perhaps been the most neglected sector in terms of training opportunities yet they are crucial for the implementation of Cambodia's national development plan and rural development strategy.

Another important role which could be played by the continuing education sector is the provision of courses, accreditation and/or equivalency certificates, for adults who for one reason or another have not been able to complete their education. Collaboration with internationally recognized providers of distance education is one option to be explored, and which can yield many benefits for the host institution. I will later briefly describe such a Program which CDRI is implementing in collaboration with the University of London.

The main constraints to the provision of continuing education to date have been limited financial resources, limited human resources i.e. competent trainers, lack of adequate salaries for teachers, availability of trainees, (particularly civil servants) over any extended period of time, appropriate educational materials and local case studies, lack of research and reliable statistics, and last but certainly not least - language. Insecurity is a problem as well, since it prevents the use of educational facilities and resources in the evenings.

I think that the lack of financial resources is a problem which educational institutions can overcome quite easily provided that they are given some autonomy to engage in creative entrepreneurship and transparent accountability. The private sector is thriving on the popular demand for training and demonstrates that people are willing to pay for something which they value. The question of **quality** of training from the private sector is another matter entirely and I will not discuss here other than to say that it urgently needs to be regulated and controlled.

In its four year experience of providing training to civil servants and teachers CDRI has found one major constraint to be the lack of **critical thinking skills** (which I explain in detail shortly) and poor reading and study skills of many participants. Another constraint is the low level of general knowledge of many participants which may in part be related to the former constraint. CDRI has thus started to explicitly teach critical thinking skills in its training activities.

By critical thinking skills we mean the ability of students to identify, analyse, compare, evaluate and predict. Critical thinking plays a crucial role in both complex policy planning and everyday decision-making. Critical thinking is manifested regularly in nearly all reading and writing activities, in

Your Excellency, the Minister of Education, Youth and Sport; Professor Alastair M North, AIT President; Dr Nicano Astriaco, AIT-CEC Director; representatives of the Swedish International Development Agency; ladies and gentlemen.

First of all, I'd like to deeply thank all of you for making the effort to be present at this opening ceremony of this conference on Developing University Capability in Continuing Education. I offer you my warmest welcome.

This is the first international workshop to be held at the University of Phnom Penh. It has resulted from the co-operation between the Ministry of Education, the four Universities (Phnom Penh University, Faculty of Business, Institute of Technology of Cambodia and Royal University of Agriculture) and AIT-SIDA.

If this conference goes well maybe others will follow next year at other institutions in our Kingdom of Cambodia.

This conference is very important. Through the discussions we will learn the strategies for implementing continuing education for the development of our Universities and of this country.

Once again, I would like to express my gratitude to the organisers. I hope that the workshop will bear fruit.

I wish you all good health and every success.



organization and prioritization of work, in problem solving and making choices. It may sound very simplistic and may be taken for granted but it is key to the success of any education and training effort.

Now I would like to talk a little bit about the activities and experiences of CDRI. The Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI) was established in Phnom Penh, in July 1990 with a status of independent, non-profit, non-governmental organization. It became operational in January 1991.

The CDRI, through its combined programs aims to provide access to skill acquisition by Cambodians - whether in the civil service, private development agencies, or private sector - to enable them to play a more dominant role in the reconstruction and development of their country. By offering training opportunities in English language and computing, and by exposure to topical issues through seminars and workshops, CDRI aims to enhance the capacity of individuals and institutions to effectively plan and manage social and economic development programs relevant to the needs of all Cambodians.

Training in issues relating to the transition from a centrally planned to a market economy, and development planning and management have been a major priority of CDRI since its inception. Since 1991 CDRI has offered 29 seminars for over 679 middle level and senior staff of the Cambodian administration and Economics Institute in topics addressing Economic Transition issues, Macroeconomics, Fiscal Policy, Rural Development Planning and Credit, Project Appraisal and Evaluation, as well as in aid planning and management techniques.

The CDRI English Language Training Center, through intensive special purpose courses, has enhanced the English language competency of over 422 individuals from the government and private sector since 1991. The Computer Center has trained over 335 individuals in basic and more advanced computer applications since 1992.

In the 1995-1997 plan CDRI aims to continue to fulfill its long term objectives through a combination of strategies and programs including:

- Socio-economic research and monitoring
- Human Resource Development to strengthen institutional capacity of Cambodian administration and local NGOs
- Documentation and Information Dissemination
- ✓ Gender Training and Research
- Regional Conferences, Workshops and Lecture series
- ✓ Distance Education/ training of next generation of

- economists
- Networking with regional research institutions and NGO interest groups.

### Target groups

Cambodia's **administrators and decision makers** remain the primary target and audience for CDRI's activities. Highest priority is given to development planners and managers as well as to faculty of Cambodia's tertiary educational institutions.

The **Cambodian Development Council (CDC)**, the government body responsible for aid coordination.

**Recent graduates** of Cambodia's universities working in the Cambodian administration in sectors related to economic development will be the principal beneficiaries of the 3-year distance education program leading to the Msc. in Financial Economics.

**Local organizations** are the main beneficiaries of a series of workshops focusing on leadership, communication and organizational skills as well as on action-oriented research and community development techniques.

CDRI collaborates with a number of regional and international institutions, and individual resource persons, in the implementation of its programs.

Apart from short term training, on-the-job training and other means of upgrading competence, CDRI sees a strong need to train a contingent of young Cambodians up to the level of western Bachelor's or Master's degree in Economics. To this end, CDRI has engaged the collaboration of SOAS, University of London for a distance education program leading to an Msc in Economics. The program involves three years (part-time) study in Cambodia. Year One is seen as a qualifying year upgrading students' levels of English, mathematics and statistics skills, and basic micro/macro-economics. Students completing the Qualifying course successfully obtain a certificate/diploma in Economics from the University of London and become eligible for the 2 year Master's program.

This program presents an ideal option to address Cambodia's medium term training needs in market economics, without depriving Cambodian institutions of valuable staff for extended periods of time.

In ending my presentation I would like to quote a paragraph from the NPRDC referring to the role of education because I think it is so critically important to whatever kind of training or continuing education you will decide to undertake. "Educational development begins with general education for all, both formal and informal, and continues with the basic training and professional education of skilled personnel to staff a modern market economy. In Cambodia's case, there is also a particularly important dimension to the design of educational policy, and it is one to which, as noted earlier the Royal Government attaches high priority. **It is the need to modify behaviour mentally, and attitudes so as to foster political reconciliation; to reinforce the rule of law; to promote self-reliance and to strengthen the movement towards a market economy. In other words, in the context of Cambodia's present realities, education has to mean something more than improving skills and knowledge; it has to contribute forcefully to nation building as well as to the reconstruction of the economy.**

I thank you Excellency, ladies and Gentlemen, for your patience and attention. I hope that this will have been useful for your reflections and the work which you have ahead of you.

I wish to thank AIT and the educational institutions involved in this workshop for giving me this opportunity to contribute to the workshop.

The speech of the Minister of Education, Youth and Sport, given at the opening of the Workshop on Developing University Capability in Continuing Education, on the 21st November 1994 at the Phnom Penh University.

The President of the Asian Institute of Technology and your colleagues; representatives of the Swedish International Development Agency; ladies and gentlemen.

First of all, on behalf of the Royal Government and myself, it is with great pleasure that I warmly welcome the AIT delegation, led by Professor North. We are very grateful for the assistance your delegation has provided in setting up this Workshop. We also deeply thank the Swedish Government for providing the funds for the Human Resource Development program, implemented through AIT, for educational institutions in Cambodia.

Through the civil war over the last 2 decades, the Kingdom of Cambodia has been severely devastated in all domains. Under the national reconciliation of King Norodom Sihanouk, the Royal Government of Cambodia has had 3 essential aims:

1. to strengthen peace and security over all of the country
2. to restore and develop an economy based on the natural resources present in the country
3. to develop the human resources of the country through the education of the whole nation. This is the most difficult problem for my war-torn country to overcome on its own. The assistance of international organisations such as AIT-SIDA-HRD, can show us the means by which Cambodia can be restored and developed.

At present, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport is faced with very important tasks: the reform of educational systems at all levels, the upgrading of the teaching and learning capabilities of teachers and students, the consolidation and development of educational management capability..etc.

Among these is the reform of higher and post-graduate education. This can be considered as one of the key factors in the development of the country. Higher education will produce new intellectuals who will be the future leaders of the country.

We can not allow the low quality of higher education to continue. We must see the improvement of higher education as a priority. We must use all the resources that are available to raise the standard of higher education to make it commensurate to the level of other institutions in the region.

If this change goes well, it will be much easier to supply human resources for educational reform at all levels of society.

At present, the gap between the curriculum and the knowledge and skills of students of Cambodian institutions in comparison to that of regional and international universities, is wide. Because of this, we have a lot of difficulty in sending students who have graduated, to continue their education abroad. There are many scholarships available but there are not enough students who can access these scholarships.

We need to consolidate and improve ourselves. We need to be realistic and analyse the present situation objectively so that assisting agencies can support us appropriately.

I am very happy about this workshop which will provide comprehensive pre-planning on developing University capability in Continuing Education. This will help us analyse and prepare essential proposals for higher education as well as for the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport.

In the future there will be a lot of people who want to do further study and there will not be enough scholarships for all of them so the bulk of the continuing education has to be absorbed by the home institutions and the local Universities.

What ever our first step, it must bring us onto the path of building our capability to reach the regional and international level.

In the future we expect we will have our own experts, scientists and technologists of the capacity that will enable us to exchange information with other countries in the region and in the world.

Ladies and gentlemen!

I do hope that in this two week workshop you will all try your best to learn and benefit from all the presenters. Once again on behalf of the Royal Government and myself, I wish you every success for this workshop.