

SPEECH

by

H.E. Deputy Prime Minister Yim Chhay Ly,

Chairman of the Council for Agricultural and Rural Development (CARD)

During the 3rd National Nutrition Day

(6th November 2014 - 6th November 2016)

Under the Theme: “Improved Hygiene and Nutrition Make Children Grow”

Chaktomuk Theatre, 4 November 2016

- Excellency, Lok Chumteav, members of the Royal Government;
 - Excellency, Lok Chumteav, leaders of development partners organizations;
 - Excellency, Lok Chumteav, ladies and gentlemen, students, members of the event.
1. Today, on behalf of the Royal Government and the Council for Agricultural and Rural Development, it is my pleasure to be here in the 3rd National Nutrition Day, 6 November (2014-2016) under the theme “Improved Hygiene and Nutrition Make Children Grow ” that aims to promote public awareness nationwide about the importance of nutrition for children and women, and for intellectual and physical development of children who are the future generation of our family and the nation.
 2. Improvement of nutrition status for every person, especially women and children, with special focus on reducing the rate of stunting and wasting in children through improved knowledge about the importance and benefits of the interconnection between water supply and hygiene sector and nutrition sector, is a new theme for the Third National Nutrition Day for this year. With this, we strive to induce a positive behaviour changes in every citizen, especially children’s care taker and parent specifically the mother, toward using safe drinking water, family toilet and consistent hand washing with soap, all of which will contribute to reduce malnutrition in children and women to gradually eliminate this issue from our community. I would like express my sincere appreciation and gratitude for all relevant stakeholders from different ministries/institutions, development partners, civil society organizations and private sector for your support of the Royal Government in its campaign to promote nutrition today.
 3. Malnourished children are more prone to different infectious diseases. Children with micronutrient deficits tend to be weaker, more vulnerable to disease and fatality. This also holds true for maternal death and newborns with low birthweight. These are challenges faced by malnourished children and the poor families; thus we all must make our best effort to break this vicious circle in our society.
 4. Indeed, access to water supply and hygiene is interconnected with nutrition issue. Yet, exclusive breastfeeding during the first six months of infant’s life and providing

supplementary food to infants and children are also indispensable measures to prevent malnutrition in children. Researchers has found that exclusive breastfeeding during the early period of infant's life for six months in an effective intervention to protect up to 1 million children aged under five years old from death all over the world. In countries with high rate of malnutrition, providing children with supplementary food can reduce the rate of stunting and wasting in children up to 17%. Therefore, the strategy to integrate water supply and hygiene sector into anti-malnutrition strategy is effective when we combine this with breast feeding and supplementary food for children.

Excellency, Lok Chumteav, all members of the event,

5. During the last two decades, the Royal Government under the wise leadership of Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, the Prime Minister, has paid great attention to the implementation of UN Millennium Development Goals and set out policies, joined and sectoral strategies. Meanwhile, huge investments have been made in the economic and social infra-structure including road, electricity, water supply, irrigation, education, health and other social services with an aim to promote sustainable growth, speed up social-economic development and to achieve poverty reduction goal of 1% per year. With such efforts, within the last two decades, Cambodia has attained an average annual economic growth of 7.70%, a result considered by the World Bank to be one of the eight fastest growing countries in the world. GDP per capita has also increased pompously from USD253 in 1998 to USD1225 in 2015. Base on these, poverty rate has been reduced from 53.2% in 2004 to 13.5% in 2014. As a result, in relation to poverty reduction, Cambodia is ranked the 4th most successful country in the world to achieve the poverty-reduction-related Millennium Development Goals prior to the deadline by the end of 2015 and other four goals including reduction of child mortality rate and promotion of maternal health.
6. The RGC's achievements as mentioned above are inseparable from generous supports provided by various development partners to Cambodia in the socio-economic investment especially in terms of institutional and human resource capacity building at all levels. Today we all have come together to celebrate the Third National Nutrition Day under the theme "Improved Hygiene and Nutrition Make Child Grow" with an aim to eliminate child malnutrition, specifically stunting and wasting in children which are indications of serious malnutrition that entails impairment to social development when these children grow up. Promotion of nutrition is not an exclusive role of a ministry/institution; rather this is a cross-cutting theme that requires joined efforts from various sectors including water supply and hygiene, agriculture, education, health and information sectors as well as contribution from sub-national governments to promote nutrition.
7. The rate of stunting and wasting in children is high and the government has considered this a priority for multi-sectoral preventive interventions. Base on the Ministry of Planning's 2014 report of Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey, 32% of Cambodian children suffered from stunting and 9.4% of children were wasting. Another economic assessment estimated the cost of malnutrition to be approximately between USD250 million and USD400 million per year should there be no preventive measures for malnutrition problem in Cambodia.

Therefore, investment to reduce malnutrition is an important agenda. The Royal Government of Cambodia in cooperation with development partners, civil society organizations and private sector is working to promote nutrition in Cambodia especially for children age between 0 and 5 years old because we consider that children are indispensable human resources who will take over the role to develop the country and our homeland in the future.

8. In addition, researches by various experts indicate that water supply and hygiene can imply significant impacts on nutrition as 50% of children who suffered from malnutrition did not have access to clean drinking water, improved toilet and did not practice hand-washing with soap. These factors contribute to increased malnutrition, especially during the first 1000 days of life when children are growing intellectually and physically. Consequently, these children suffer from stunting, wasting, underweight and death in some serious cases. Therefore, interaction between water supply, hygiene and nutrition sectors is very crucial to effectively improve nutrition status as already mentioned wise message of Samdech Decho Prime Minister in his message to congratulate the Third National Nutrition Day today.
9. Before I conclude my remark, I would like to call for all relevant stakeholders to continue to cooperate with each other in our fight against all forms of malnutrition affecting our children and women. I would like to wish His Excellency, Lok Chuteav, representative of national and international organizations, ladies and gentlemen all distinguished guests the four gems of Buddhist blessing: Longevity, Nobility, Health and Strength.

Thank you!