

Mercy Global Concern attends major seminar at UNIFEM as a guest of the Executive Director – Ms. Noeleen Heyzer.

The guest speaker was Minister Kantha Phavi Ing, Minister of Education Cambodia.

The Theme of the seminar was:

‘Strengthening Human Rights and Women's Rights – A Key to Realizing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

*H.E. Minister Kantha Phavi Ing
Ministry of Women's and Veteran's Affairs, Cambodia
Excellencies,*

Ladies and Gentlemen, distinguished speakers and guests.

I am very pleased indeed to have been invited to take part in this Conference Strengthening Human Rights and Women's Rights A Key to Realizing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The Millennium Development Goals are a key instrument for achieving development aims and objectives. The National MDGS map out the priorities and approaches a country adopts for achieving its' set objectives.

The Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) accepted the Millennium Development Goals in 2000 and submitted its first report in 2001. The Millennium Goals were not yet adapted to Cambodian realities. The next step was to make the international MDGs relevant to Cambodian context. The Cambodian Government worked on the adaptation throughout 2003. The Ministry of Women's Affairs under support of UNIFEM and UNDP took the opportunity to ensure that the targets and indicators took account of gender issues.

The Cambodian Millennium Development Goals (CMDGs) Report was launched by the Prime Minister in March 2004.

The CMDG Report was innovative in several respects:

- It focused specifically on to the Cambodian context and efforts were made to develop targets and indicators relevant to the local situation.
- An in-depth diagnostic of the country situation was provided.
- Major policies and programs contributing to each CMDG were identified and described.
- Major challenges to achieving the CMDGs were identified and a framework set out to meet the challenges and reach the goals.
- Critical linkages between the CMDGs were outlined and gender was accepted as a cross-cutting issue.
- A roadmap for effective monitoring and evaluation was outlined.

The process to the report was basically divided into two phases: The Council of Social Development conducted initial assessments. With these assessments we gained insights into the underlying problems of Cambodia.

The Ministry of Women's Affairs in cooperation with UNDP and UNIFEM for example identified Goal 1 on poverty and Goal 6 on HIV/AIDS as our focus. Under Goal 6t we have undertaken a study on interfamilial relations in Cambodian families and the spread of HIV. Specifically this study examined the impact of traditional patriarchal norms that position women in inferior and subservient positions to men in relation to the transmission of HIV within heterosexual married couples.



Deirdre Mullan rsm, Minister Kantha Phavi Ing and Mrs Noeleen Heyzer looking at the photo of the school built as a result of the inquiry in Mercy eNews

Goal One on poverty is especially notable for its lack of gender focus and gender-sensitive benchmarks. Yet as we know poverty affects women in very specific ways and strategies that target women are much more effective in preventing and reducing poverty than those which are gender blind. Globalization has the potential to increase women's poverty rather than alleviate it. Measures need to be put in place to ensure women benefit and that they are protected from any negative impacts, which may flow from trade liberalization.

Our strategy was to advocate with line ministries to mainstream gender tie to include sex disaggregated targets and indicators.

The initial assessments of all participation agencies were discussed at a National Poverty Forum with broad-based participation. This was followed by in-depth consultations and a workshop attended by ministries, donors and NGOs.

We succeeded in adding a number of indicators to Goal 2: on education, Goal 4 on child mortality, and Goal 5: on HIV/AIDS. In addition we added to Goal 3 on gender equality nineteen new indicators addressing secondary education wage employment female participation in decision-making.

Violence is a threat to many women and girls in Cambodia but it was nowhere mentioned in the MDGs.

According to the Cambodian Demographic and Health Survey from the year 2000, 23% of ever-married women aged 15-49 have experienced violence in their family. The Youth Risk Behavior Survey of the Ministry of Education from February 2005 shows even a higher

prevalence: 27% of the nearly 10.000 young people said they had experienced violence in their family in the last 30 days.

Violence against women is dealt with in the Beijing Platform for Action. The Royal Government has ratified the Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination of Women (CEDAW). The Royal Government's Policy Nary Rattanak 11 has a section on violence against women. Together with statistical data and data on impact of violence we advocated to include targets on violence against women.

And we succeeded: The Cambodians National Millennium Goal now has five Indicators and targets to measure progress on addressing violence against women under Goal 3.

This special Target asks for a significant reduction of violence against women. The five indicators are dealing with laws to combat violence against women, national statistics to monitor cases, the development of a prevention plan, awareness that violence against women is a criminal act and the improvement of services for victims of violence.

The CMDG on laws on violence against women even serves as a benchmark for measuring Cambodia's performance in the Consultative Group Process.

This special Cambodian Millennium Goal has already proved as a strong advocacy tool. The Ministry of Women's Affairs has submitted a Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence to the legislative process only in November 2004. Already in March 2005 it has been approved by the Cambodian Government and is ready to be discussed in Parliament. Being a target for the Cambodian Millennium Goals the Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence was on the Government's agenda and a priority.

The Royal Government realizes that Cambodia is lacking social services for women- especially victims of violence. Only the Ministry of Social Affairs has a social work training program to improve the capacity of Ministry staff to serve vulnerable people. Other than that, there was no standardized, high-quality training resource within the country for people working in the field. Services in the whole Mekong sub-region often focus on legal solutions and shelters. To improve this situation the Government included a CMDG target on qualified counseling. To progress the Ministry of Women's Affairs with support of the German Government established a Training Center for Counselor and Social Work. Since July 2004 30 trainees learn social work skills to improve services for victims of gender based violence. CMDGs as well as MDGs really heavily on the availability and examination of statistical data. Statistical data on critical gender equality issues is currently lacking in most parts of the world. In Cambodia, for example, qualitative and quantitative data concerning social attitudes towards gender-based violence did not exist.



Conference Proceedings

With support of the German Government, UNIFEM and East West Management Institute the Ministry of Women's Affairs just conducted a baseline survey for the CMDG indicator on violence against women.

With data for the indicators policy makers can identify both best practices and performance gaps. A preliminary analysis of the data shows that while respondents understood that violence is illegal, they also found it acceptable, in particular when it is committed by a husband against his wife. From the data it became clear that violence is considered a private family affair -It is seen as more acceptable for a husband to behave violently to his wife, than for a wife to be violent to her husband. The data supports earlier data from 1996 finding that high levels of physical violence are prevalent in Cambodian society. The unfortunate news is that in spite of intervention of Government and Civil Society the situation for women has not improved.

However, the data collected for this special CMDG also provides a lot of opportunities. Due to the detailed insights into attitudes of Cambodian people we can adjust our programming. We can look at target group oriented interventions. Moreover, the data collected to measure the progress on the CMDGs provides arguments that we can use in discussion with our partners in line ministries, civil society or with donors. The survey made clear that violence has significant economic, physical and mental impacts on those who experience it. Violence contributed to 16% of interviewees losing around a month's income each year. This is a significant loss in particular for the poorest families. With making this CMDG target operational we have also gained evidence how to reduce poverty. Reducing Domestic Violence will contribute to poverty reduction and indirectly help achieving MDG 1.

However, all this work is not shouldered by the Ministry of Women's Affairs alone. We are helped in this work by a number of technical working groups, including one on gender, which have been established under the Consultative Group Process and which MoW chairs. These working groups have developed sectoral workplans, which have already been approved. Our next move will be to identify gender focal points in other working groups who can take gender mainstreaming forward and monitor the sectoral plans.

Despite impressive outcomes for the efforts to engender the CMDGs, it was a particular disappointment not to have had an impact on CMDG 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, and CMDG 7: Ensure environmental sustainability.

One of the unintended outcomes of the work done to engender the CMDGs was a body of

research on a range of gender issues. On the quantitative side, this was largely secondary research (which demonstrated the existing lack of gender analysis), though some qualitative work was also carried out. Happily, this work could be applied to the Cambodia Gender Assessment, which has now been published in Khmer and English as A Fair Share for Women (2004). It was sponsored by the World Bank, the Asia Development Bank, UNDP, UNIFEM and the British Department for International Development (DFID), in collaboration with the Ministry of Women's and Veterans' Affairs. In turn, the research formed the basis of nine Policy Briefs which have been launched by Prime Minister Hun Sen last March on the occasion of International Women's Day. The Policy Briefs will form the Action Plan for the Ministry of Women's Affairs for Gender Mainstreaming Strategy 2004-2008.

At present, the government, in partnership with donors and civil society organizations, is developing a National Strategic Development Plan for the next five years 2006-2010. It will roll into one document the Socio Economic Development Plan and the National Poverty Reduction Strategy and will incorporate the CMDGS. The Ministry of Women's Affairs is working with line ministries to encourage them to engender their work more thoroughly than in the past and we will be monitoring the process to ensure that the gender targets and indicators are also included.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank the German Government for its' support in advancing the status and dignity of the women of Cambodia, and especially in their support to achieve the specific Cambodian Millennium Goal "Significant reduction of violence". German Technical Assistance supported the draft and advocacy process for the Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence – one of our Cambodian Millenniums Goals. The Draft has been adopted by the Council of Ministers and will soon enter the National Assembly. For the support in this pressing matter I again would like to sincerely thank the German Government. I look forward to sharing with you the results of this and other initiatives under the Gender and MDGs project in Cambodia as we progress this work in future. Let me close by saying how much I appreciate the opportunity to share with you Cambodia's challenges, lessons and achievements in implementing the MDGs and working towards gender equity.