

Opening Remarks
Mr. Soveacha Ros
On behalf of Ms. Anne Lemaistre, UNESCO Representative in Cambodia

Inauguration of the *Robal* Community Learning Center, Siem Reap

20 February 2015

H.E. Dr. Hang Chuon Naron, Minister of Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport,
H.E. Khim Bunsong, Siem Reap Provincial Governor,
Mr. Noboru Nouguchi, Director General of the NFUAJ-Tokyo, Japan
Robal community members, ladies and gentlemen,

We are celebrating the inauguration of the *Robal* Community Learning Center (CLC). This is the 13th CLC supported by the National Federation of UNESCO Associations in Japan (NFUAJ). On behalf of UNESCO, I wish to convey my sincere congratulations to the NFUAJ family on your continued CLC success in Cambodia. To support Member States' education needs, especially in achieving Education For All and Life-Long Learning goals, UNESCO launched the Capacity Development for Education For All (CapEFA) program in selected priority countries around the world. In many Asia-Pacific countries, Community Learning Center is an area of focus that UNESCO collaborates with local governments, technical partners, private sector and civil society agents.

During this occasion, I wish to contribute to the inauguration event by speaking about roles of literacy in strengthening Cambodia's economy through CLCs. Therefore, I am going to highlight some ideas about relationship between CLCs and implementation of literacy classes. In 2015, literacy is the major focus of the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport within the non-formal education sub-sector.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

As stated in the *Manual for Management of Community Learning Center*, developed by the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport in collaboration and with UNESCO's support, CLCs will act as local venues for community members such as adults, youths and children of all ages to engage in all forms of learning, through literacy and continuing education programmes. The UNESCO's CapEFA Programme in Cambodia has collaborated with the Department of Non-Formal Education of the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport (MoEYS) since 2010. MoEYS and UNESCO have mutually agreed to conceptualize and implement the Cambodia's National Literacy Campaign in 2015, as grounded in the Country Literacy Acceleration Plan (CLAP) 2013-2015. The National Literacy Campaign aims to enable Cambodia to meet Education for All goals (84.4% by the end of 2015) and contribute to the overall implementation of the Education Strategic Plan 2014-2018.

Literacy is a cornerstone for improving the quality of life and supporting the career aspirations of those who cannot read. Literacy is more than basic reading and writing skills. Literacy is an indication of how individuals use their acquired skills to effectively engage themselves in society. In addition, not only does literacy have an impact on illiterates' ability to participate in society and to understand important public issues but it also provides the foundation upon which skills are needed in the labour market. For example, strong literacy skills are closely linked to the probability of having good jobs, maintaining healthier lifestyle, and receiving better public services.

Despite noticeable economic growth within the last decade in Cambodia, illiteracy is still a major issue faced by the country. Only 77.6% (2008 National Population Census) of the total population are literate while the budget allocation for Non-Formal Education sector is still relatively low.

Under the UNESCO's initiative and support, MoEYS produced more than 500 maps of illiteracy rates and the number of illiterate individuals for all districts and provinces with detailed, village-level literacy data for evidence-based analysis and planning. In addition, based on the UNESCO's CapEFA Programme support, MoEYS endorsed the Country Literacy Acceleration Plan for targeting literacy classes and guiding the processes of the National Literacy Campaign in 2015.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

To complement the existing efforts of the MoEYS, I wish to take this opportunity to call for nationwide support to the National Literacy Campaign which aims to provide literacy classes in available venues including Community Learning Centers and primary schools. UNESCO and MoEYS must mobilize national resources, including the support of different line Ministries (including Ministry of Interior and others) and Institutions (including National Institute of Statistics of Ministry of Planning and others), the private sector, the civil society, the general public, and the international community. In Siem Reap, the NFUAJ can contribute to the National Literacy Campaign by advocating for more literacy classes to be conducted by other NGOs. I would like to thank the NGOs that are planning to offer literacy classes in 2015.

To support the National Literacy Campaign, the engagement of staff members of Provincial and District Offices of Education play an essential role. For example, commune and district chiefs can support the Campaign by providing enrollment information to literacy teachers and learners. For the Campaign, the MoEYS and UNESCO have planned to offer 3685 literacy classes. There are 2558 primary school teachers and 1127 literacy teachers needed for providing the literacy classes. These teachers will be instrumental to the overall success of the Campaign. For your information, Samdech Prime Minister Hun Sen is going to preside over the launch event of the National Literacy Campaign on 02 March 2015 at the National Institute of Education.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to conclude my remarks by taking this opportunity to thank NFUAJ for all the good work in continuing to strengthen existing CLCs and establish new CLCs to offer benefits to many community people in Siem Reap. With this tremendous effort, UNESCO Office in Phnom Penh has found NFUAJ as a key collaborator. I would also like to thank the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport for responding to community needs through CLCs. For purposes of strengthening Cambodia's economy through CLCs, evidence-based planning for developing annual plans for CLCs can be enhanced. In this spirit, UNESCO reaffirms its continued commitment to providing technical support to the Ministry. And, I am looking forward to continue working with the Ministry in allowing almost 100,000 learners to become literate by the end of 2015.

Once again, congratulations to the NFUAJ family for the inauguration of the *Robal* CLC!

Thank you!