

Remarks of Ms. Anne Lemaistre, UNESCO Representative in Cambodia

Launching the National Literacy Campaign 2015 National Institute of Education, Phnom Penh 02 March 2015

*Samdech Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Royal Government of Cambodia
Excellency Deputy Prime Ministers, Senior Ministers, Ministers and Secretaries of State
Excellency Dr Hang Chuon Naron, Minister of Education, Youth and Sports,
Excellencies Ambassadors,
Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen*

I am very pleased and honored to be a part of the launch of Cambodia's National Literacy Campaign 2015 and to share a few words with you. First of all, I would like to express my sincere thanks to Samdech Hun Sen, the Prime Minister of the Royal Government of Cambodia for officially launching the National Literacy Campaign. I would like to express my sincere thanks to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports for organizing this important event. Also, allow me to extend my warm welcome to you all, especially those who have traveled a long distance from provinces and districts to attend this event.

Samdech, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

UNESCO and the Royal Government of Cambodia believe that literacy contributes to sustainable development. Literacy allows people to access more educational, scientific, cultural and economic opportunities, leading to individual, community, societal and national development. Literacy enables people to better understand and interpret information, gain new knowledge and create opportunities for improved quality of life. As an example, literate parents provide better education and learning environment for their children at home. Educated young people get better jobs, especially young women. Since 1990s, UNESCO has been supporting the Royal Government of Cambodia to improve literacy situation for all its citizens. UNESCO is happy to support efforts of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport to ensure Cambodia's commitments to Education for All Goals, particularly the literacy goals are met by 2015. "Literacy not only changes lives, it saves them", the UNESCO Director-General Ms. Irina Bokova sums up the meaning of literacy.

With the strong leadership of Samdech Prime Minister, this Campaign will mobilize the entire country, including: different ministries and institutions, civil society, private sector, people of Cambodia, and international community. To achieve this mobilization, support and guidance of Samdech Prime Minister in this event and implementation of the campaign will be essential.

Samdech, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Cambodia has committed itself in achieving the Dakar Declaration Framework on Education For All (EFA) since 2000. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, as the lead Ministry for these purposes, has made a significant progress achieving all six EFA goals in general. The Ministry of Planning reports that adult literacy rate of the population aged 15 and above has increased by 10 percent from 67.3 in 1998 to 77.6 percent in 2008. In 2013, the literacy rate continued to increase up to 79.7 percent.

To achieve the EFA goal on adult literacy by the end of 2015, the UNESCO Institute of Statistics states that Cambodia needs to reach at least 84.4 percent. Therefore, I would like to appreciate the MoEYS leadership and all colleagues, especially the Department of Non-Formal of Education for developing the three-year Country Literacy Acceleration Plan, which enables the MoEYS to implement the National Literacy Campaign 2015.

After the launch of this Campaign, I believe that the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport needs more support from staff members of all levels, especially at the commune and village levels because they will be registering 92,125 literacy learners into 3,685 classes located close to their home and community. UNESCO hopes that the literacy learners view their enrollment and completion in the literacy classes as an investment into their long-term family plan.

The Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport has been strategizing the campaign with relevant staff members and UNESCO. To contribute to this process, I would like to mention that effective monitoring of the literacy classes requires a strong support from local authorities who need to closely work with the MoEYS staff members. It is important for the MoEYS to explicitly identify roles and responsibilities, scope, and schedule of the monitoring process.

At the end of the campaign, I believe the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport will work closely with the National Institute of Statistics of the Ministry of Planning to include the literacy learners into the next General Population Census of Cambodia on Literacy and Educational Attainment.

Samdech, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to thank the Royal Government of Cambodia for investing in education sector overall, particularly in the national literacy campaign. During this campaign, I believe the 1127 literacy teachers and 2558 primary school teachers are ready to serve the 92,125 literacy learners throughout Cambodia. UNESCO is proud of these teachers for being a part of this campaign to enable Cambodia to become a more literate country in view of the forthcoming ASEAN Economic Community and Cambodia's aspirations to achieve upper-middle-income status by 2030 and developed economic status by 2050. In these spirits, UNESCO wishes to reiterate its continued support to the Royal Government of Cambodia by continuing to collaborate with the MoEYS, other line ministries, and all relevant partners to promote educational goals of Cambodia. I wish to thank all CapEFA donors—Denmark, Finland, Italy, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland—that allow the CapEFA programme in Cambodia to serve the Royal Government of Cambodia from May 2010 to December 2015. And, I thank Smart Axiata Company for kindly supporting the promotion of the National Literacy Campaign.

I am looking forward to hearing from Samdech Prime Minister during this occasion. And, I wish all the success to the Cambodia's National Literacy Campaign 2015.

Thank you!