



Youth Committee for
Unity and Development
(YCUD)



Youth Support Letter to World Bank, British Ambassador, and AusAID – Better Nutrition, Better Future

This letter is in reference to the statement issued on Friday, 24 August 2012, by Annette Dixon, Mark Gooding, and Penny Richards entitled “Better nutrition, better future”. We are a youth coalition: the Youth Committee for Unity and Development (YCUD), consisting of 9 leading youth organizations and associations--Khmer Youth Association (KYA), Youth Resource Development Programme (YRDP), Youth For Peace (YFP), Youth Council of Cambodia (YCC), People Development and Peace Centre (PDP), Khmer Youth Social Development (KYSD), Khmer Institute for National Development (KIND), Cambodian Indigenous Youth Association (CIYA), and People Health Development Association (PHD). We would like to express our sincere interest and strong support for the World Bank, the UK, and Australia in supporting of the Royal Government of Cambodia to respond to nutrition and social protection schemes to improve maternal and child health in Cambodia.

For almost two decades, youth organizations have been working very actively in promoting youth engagement and empowerment, and we always monitor and observe closely the activities of the World Bank and other bilateral partners such as AusAID and the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development in Cambodia. We observe that these development partners have contributed to Cambodia by mobilizing global knowledge and resources to ensure that the full spectrum of development work, ranging from health and water to sanitation and gender. This work has positive impact on nutrition.

We recognize that this is a new strategic direction and an important support for improving the nutrition status of Cambodian children and for promoting maternal and child health as well as social protection. This support is very significant for better health and for economic growth of Cambodians, particularly, women and children. This will contribute to poverty reduction goals.

But our youth organizations would suggest that the development partners keep continuing to improve human rights and democracy – such as housing rights, forced evictions, and land disputes as well as monitoring the process of national elections, which will be held soon in July 2013, to ensure a free and fair election. Free and fair election is the core principle of a democratic foundation in Cambodia.

Youth and children together make up 70%¹ of Cambodia’s population: most of them are living in rural areas and some of them are living in poverty. These young people are faced with numerous challenges ranging from unemployment, HIV/AIDS, sexual reproductive health, poverty and a myriad of other challenges such as obtaining education and life skills, and especially malnutrition. Therefore the need of young people’s participation in sustainable development in Cambodia is very crucial. **Young people are the future of Cambodia’s development** and young people are critical stakeholders in the development process. However, research by national and international development agencies have found that young people’s participation in inclusive social development is still limited, and the youth organizations or youth groups were suggested as important potential actors. Hence, we urge the development partners to have strong strategic partnership with youth groups or youth organization to enable a better environment for youth to inclusively participate in solving the problem of malnutrition and to promote maternal and child health in Cambodia. Youth is needed to be inclusive participants in all processes of development, not just participants as beneficiaries. Youth must be a part of solutions and decision making processes.

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¹ National Population Census 2008