On 28 December 1996 His Majesty Norodom Sihanouk, King of Cambodia called and chaired a three hour working session on the issue of Child Rights which was attended by ministers of Education, Social Affairs and Industry and some parliamentarians. UNICEF was represented by Leo De Vos and Bernard Gilbert. His Majesty stressed the need for additional legislation to reflect the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Cambodia's laws and decrees and expressed his active support for programmes working towards the elimination of hazardous and exploitative child labour. The meeting on Child Rights was specially convened by His Majesty in response to concerns raised by UNICEF on the subject. His Majesty repeatedly offered to be available, at any occasion, to advocate for complete compliance of the Convention and to appeal to His people for respect of children's rights. The King added that this is one of the first working sessions of its kind and He would like to convene similar sessions in future to discuss critical issues concerning the Kingdom's children.

His Majesty's support and initiative led Cambodia to accede to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1992. The provisions of the Convention have subsequently been incorporated into the Cambodian Constitution. The King had raised children's issues and stressed that children are the future of Cambodia.

Earlier, on 7 December, as part of World AIDS Day activities, UNAIDS representatives joined a group of 28 delegates led by the Ministry of Health and Pasteur Institute at an audience with His Majesty to discuss the issue of HIV/AIDS in Cambodia. Majesty acknowledged the gravity of the situation and was keen to explore ways to create awareness among the public about the risks of HIV/AIDS.

A week later, His Majesty invited the same group along with 160 students to the Royal Palace for an open debate on HIV/AIDS. The events showed that the young people of Cambodia are very keen to participate in prevention activities.

We carry in this issue a donor profile on Sida (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency). UNICEF would like to pay a special tribute to the Government of Sweden, one of the major donors to Cambodia. We intend to continue this series in our future issues and illustrate the international support given by other major donors to Cambodia. (See pages 6, 7, 8)
iodate were recently handed over to the Industry, Mines and Energy for iodization of salt. Following installation in the salt province of Kampot and training of Salt Board rst Cambodian iodized salt came off the line as part of the Government efforts to ever IDD problem throughout the country.

iodization machines have the capacity to rent of the salt produced in Kampot and if l during the test period over the next three if additional funds can be identified, four nes will be installed in mid-1997.

national survey has been carried out on the IDD problem in Cambodia, limited surveys have shown IDD to be a serious public health e recent UNICEF surveyed a goitre rate 1 20 percent in some provinces as well as a nom Penh, indicating that the problem is both widespa and certainly not restricted to the 1 provinces as formerly believed.

ience is so easy to prevent that it is a et a single child be born mentally lfor that reason

medical staff were recently trained in goitre by the officials of the Thai Ministry of he first full national IDD survey is now being Results are expected to be available in early

support from UNICEF, Canadian CIDA and national, efforts to eliminate IDD through t iodization (USI) are now well underway. In e iodization activities in Kampot, a active package with logo is being developed ce from social marketing experts and id public awareness strategies are also being

salt is expected to be available in Cambodian lay 1997. It is hoped that goitre, cretinism mental effects of sub-clinical iodine ill be a thing of the past in Cambodia in the nt future.

knowledge and self-medication practices has just started in Phnom Penh. The aim of the project, supported by UNICEF and PATH (Thailand), is to improve the knowledge of both mothers and private pharmacy "prescribers" on the better management of childhood diseases.

Qualified pharmacists and their non-qualified assistants will be trained in the management of children with diarrhoea and respiratory infections and this will be supplemented by a public awareness campaign targeted at mothers. Expansion to improve self-medication practices at village level as well as other training and awareness activities including HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases and birth spacing are now being discussed for implementation later in the year.

As in most countries, both developing and developed, the most frequent first choice source of health care for the population is the private pharmacy or informal drug seller. Cambodia is no different and mothers often seek treatment for themselves and their children from private drug sellers, even for very serious problems. The training programme will initially cover recognition of serious childhood problems, decision-making on referral to a medical doctor and the "prescribing" of simple drugs for treatment.

A baseline survey of mothers and pharmacy sellers was recently completed and shows that a lot of work needs to be done. While more than 97 percent of pharmacies had ORS in stock, less than three percent actually sold ORS, and anti-diarrhoeal medicines and antibiotics were frequently "prescribed". First training on the major childhood killers - diarrhoea and respiratory infections - is expected to start in March and a full public awareness programme in May. A follow-up survey will be made in late 1997 to measure the impact of the project.

This sub project is part of the "Essential Drugs for Community Needs "project in the Government-UNICEF Plan of Operations, 1996-2000

Most efforts to improve health practices in Cambodia have until now focused on the public sector. This project will be an attempt at improving the quality of care for the majority who, either by choice or frequently due to lack of resources to consider alternatives, use private pharmacies even for serious problems.

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Today, we are bringing you ammunition - ammunition of a different kind which you are not used to. Ammunition that does not kill, maim or wound but ammunition that protects the children against diseases [...] Today, I have the hope that more of this kind of ammunition will be flown into Phnom Malai in the future", said Leo De Vos addressing the Cambodian gathering in this hitherto inaccessible Khmer Rouge controlled region of Phnom Malai on 8 February.

Cambodia raged a war against the Khmer Rouge strongholds in Phnom Malai on 8 February. However, for the first time in its history, this was a different kind of war. A war against the polio virus. Three thousand children were administered oral polio vaccine in this out-of-reach region during a ceremony organized on the initiative of the Second Prime Minister and the Ministry of Health as part of the 1997 National Immunization Days (NIDs). The ceremony preceded events scheduled for 11 February, the first day of Cambodia’s 1997 National Immunization Days. UNICEF and WHO representatives, ambassadors of many donor countries, Government officials and journalists accompanied the Second Prime Minister on a military helicopter (due to lack of road access, landmines and security reasons, travelling by road is not possible). Children were given polio drops while hundreds of war hardened Khmer Rouge soldiers curiously watched. The Second Prime Minister reinforced the statement made by the UNICEF Representative and committed himself to fly-in more “ammunition” to the region. "These are the guns of prevention for our children", he said. The Second Prime Minister handed out T-shirts, books, medical supplies and large bags of foodstuffs to the villagers.

Phnom Malai, bordering Thailand, has been the stronghold of the Khmer Rouge rebels and was inaccessible to the outside world for many years. The children of Phnom Malai have been denied access to sustained health care since 1975.

The national campaign was opened in Phnom Penh on 11 February by His Majesty Norodom Sihanouk and Her Majesty the Queen at a function organized at the Royal Palace. Like the two previous years’ successful NIDs, this year Cambodia has again shown that it is able to mobilize millions of family members, tens of thousands of government staff and volunteers throughout the country. UNICEF support to this year’s NIDs campaign is directed towards those areas that were difficult to reach or did not achieve good results last year.

While speaking on the occasion at the Royal Palace H.E. Dr Chhea Thang, Minister of Health said: “The Ministry of Health has the objective to eradicate poliomyelitis from the country by 1998. So the Ministry has conduct National Immunization Days every year up to and including 1998. For conduct the 1997 National Immunization Days on February and 11 March, the Ministry of Health has spent many months of planning and discussions to identify areas in the country where immunization services have not reached before, or areas where vaccination coverage is low. To reach children in the areas we have created additional vaccinati posts. We have created mobile teams this ye for the purpose of giving OPV to children living on boats.”
Mine Awareness Training Team (MATT). Using common curriculum adopted in July 1994, these three organizations have mobile training teams which visit villages and schools in mine-affected areas. Most mine awareness programmes have given special priority to the northwestern provinces of Battambang and Banteay Meanchey, where new mines are still being laid by both soldiers and civilians even as older mines are being removed by deminers.

Since 1994, UNICEF has supported a special mobile mine awareness team of the Mines Advisory Group to provide mine awareness education for school children in Battambang province. More than 40,000 children aged 5 in 129 schools in 18 communes attended this programme between October 1994 and November 1995. In 1996, the programme was expanded to neighbouring Banteay Meanchey province, and it is expected that the programme will reach roughly 30,000 additional children a year in each of these two heavily-mined provinces.

The Mines Advisory Group in Battambang also has a data-gathering team which since December 1994 has been compiling the first fully reliable monthly totals for new mine and UXO injuries. This project is also supported by UNICEF, with a view to using the information thus obtained as the basis for social mobilization activities and other MAG teams now gather monthly injury statistics in five of Cambodia's most heavily mined provinces.

In addition, an effort to gather pre-1995 mine injury statistics for the entire country, supported by UNICEF staffed by the Cambodian Red Cross and coordinated Handicap International (HI), has been initiated in collaboration with CMAC, whose mandate is to be the long term umbrella organization for all demining, mine mapping, mine marking, mine awareness and data gathering activities throughout Cambodia.

UNICEF's growing support to CMAC is indicative of an increasingly diversified approach to the problem of reducing landmine and UXO injuries. It is now recognized that involving villagers in a variety of activities which result in greater familiarity with the specific risks of their own particular situation is far more effective than any general presentation in which they remain essentially an audience rather than active participants. Thus CMAC, with UNICEF support, is increasingly exploring minefield marking activities which involve members of the community, the recruitment of village mine awareness representatives to act as permanent focal points for mine awareness in their home villages, and the use of peer group communication strategies for children and other target groups.
which included art, drama and song. In the document's introduction, the children stated: "We are the children of this world, we are the present and the future, we are the mothers and fathers of life to come. We want to laugh, sing, dance, jump, be loved, hugged, be happy ... LIVE. [...] In this document we the children have expressed our feelings at the world we are living in. Together we exchanged ideas, experiences and thoughts."

San Souputra is currently a student in Phnom Penh. He has participated as a youth representative for the UN Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children led by Graça Machel and is an advisor to the Children's Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Peng Sokunthea, an excellent student, is currently the chairperson of the Children's Committee on the Rights of the Child.

The trip was jointly sponsored by Redd Barna and UNICEF.

The National Olympic Committee of Cambodia donated US$5,000 to UNICEF in January. The Committee has desitned that this amount be used for the rehabilitation of landmine victims. The money was raised by the Central Committee of the Angkor Wat International Half Marathon 1996. Central Committee successfully organized this marathon in Siem Reap on 22 December 1996. The Foundation for Support of United Nations, Tokyo sponsored this event in collaboration with the National Olympic Committee Cambodia.

Cambodia approves 1997 Budget

The US$593-million national budget for 1997 has been approved by the Cambodian Government. The Budget, up from $581 million last year, has increased provisions for health, education and agricultural sectors. The budget calls for an income tax increase and for high taxes on luxury items such as tobacco and alcohol. Military spending still account for the largest expenditure with $156 million allotted - a little lower than last year's $160 million. The Finance ministry expects tax revenues to go up by 11 percent because of economic growth and increased collection measures.
Sida’s support to Basic Education

The UNICEF-assisted Basic Education programme in Cambodia has, for several years, been almost wholly financed by Sida. For the period 1996-1998, Sida has agreed to support it with SEK 83 million (around US$12 million) through UNICEF. This amount will finance the four Basic Education projects and contribute to two projects within the Community Action for Social Development (C ASD) programme. As agreed between Sida and UNICEF, starting 1997, all the project documents will be prepared in accordance with the Logical Framework Approach (LFA).

During the last two years, two major pilot projects have been successfully implemented with Sida support: the Cluster School project in four demonstration sites (in four provinces) and the in-service teacher training project successfully tested in one province. As a result of these achievements, the Cluster School model was adopted by the Ministry of Education in 1996 for national implementation. A nationwide programme, funded by USAID, is now underway to expand both the Cluster School model and in-service teacher training.

The Ministry of Education has received major support through Sida/UNICEF in the field of curriculum development and textbook production for Khmer and Mathematics. In 1995, the PASEC project (Programme d'Appui au Secteur de l'Education Primaire au Cambodge) supported by the European Union has started to complement these activities.

Total global contributions received by UNICEF from all sources and contributions from Sweden and USA (In millions of USD) 1990-1995

Sida (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency) is one of the long-term donors to Cambodia contributing SEK 600 million [1 US$=7.2 SEK, end Jan 97] for relief and rehabilitation since the Cambodian emergency was declared in 1979. Significantly, Sweden was one of the very few western donors to provide assistance to Cambodia in the 1980s. The Sida support to Cambodia has been implemented through a number of bilateral organizations including UNICEF.

The Cambodian emergency in 1979-81 was over, most national support was directed to providing relief to the populations in refugee settlements along the Thai-Cambodian border. In contrast, Sweden decided to provide most of its assistance to the interior of Cambodia. Between 1983 and 1988, Sida allocated a total of SEK 102 million to its Cambodia operations, of which only SEK 15 million is directed to the relief work in the border camps.

UNICEF-assisted programmes in the country benefited to the extent of SEK 36 million over the period 1983-1988. Apart from the UN agencies (UNICEF, WFP, FAO and ICIHR), Sida also channelled its assistance through two Swedish NGOs, Diakonia and the Swedish Red Cross.

A Swedish delegation that visited the country in 1988 found that UNICEF was carrying out a successful programme despite the many administrative constraints it was then facing, and recommended increased support for UNICEF's operations. As a result of this mission, further resources were made available to UNICEF.

In the early 1990s, as UNICEF developed more comprehensive sector programmes in health, education and water supply, the UNICEF link served to give Swedish aid an early focus on reconstruction and development. Assistance through FAO had the dual purpose of providing budget support and of augmenting farm yields. Funds channelled through WFP were explicitly destined for food-for-work schemes to repair and maintain rural infrastructure, a time when free food distributions were still very frequent.

After the peace accords in 1991, Swedish assistance ceased concentrating on education; rural infrastructure development (in the provinces most affected by returnees), mine clearance as well as balance of payment support.

With the increased level of aid, Sweden has maintained its position as one of Cambodia's main bilateral donors, with disbursements in the order of USD 12-15 million each year.
The overall Swedish Development Co-operation budget for 1997 is approximately 11.946 billion SEK which is around 0.7 percent of GNI, and Sida handles about two-thirds, the remaining being contributions to UN, IBRD/IDA, AsDB, AfDB and other multilaterals. [1 USD = 7.2 SEK as of end January 1997]

The major part of the Sida share of the budget is used for projects in the Programme Countries, i.e. 21 countries mainly in Africa but also in Latin America and Asia that have long-term development cooperation agreements with Sweden. Cambodia is among these countries as from 1995.

The Cambodia-Swedish development co-operation programme 1997 and 1998 is based on agreements concluded at high-level consultations in January 1997; it focuses on rural development, basic education, mine clearance, human rights/democracy, public administration and, pending agreement in principle and positive evaluations and appraisals, import support. The allocated amount for the two years is 160 million SEK, approx. USD 23 million, excluding human rights/democracy and import support that are covered by other allocations. The Country Strategy of Sweden for Cambodia, giving more details about the programme, is available from the Swedish Development Co-operation Office in Phnom Penh.

Rural development is mainly the UNDP-assisted Cambodia Area Rehabilitation and Regeneration Project in Siem Reap, Battambang, Pursat, Banteay Meanchey and Ratanakiri provinces. In the near future, it may also include, in the same area and supporting the CARERS project, infrastructure maintenance capacity building through ILO and support to rural credit facilities.

Basic education is supported through UNICEF and focuses on teacher training, textbooks production, informal education and community action for social development.

Mine clearance is supported through CMAC via the UNDP-managed Trust Fund, apart from a bilateral Mine Detection Dogs project.

Human Rights and Democracy is supported via the UN Centre for Human Rights in Cambodia and through Swedish NGOs (Forum Syd and Diakonia et al.) working with Cambodian implementing organizations. There may be Swedish support to the elections planned for 1997-998, through the expected UN Trust Fund. Observers will be provided if requested.

The import support has been co-financed with IDA. It has been a positive list of import of goods and the same mode is expected to be applied in a possible coming phase.

Other activities: poverty assessment and monitoring with UNDP, IBRD and Holland.

Message

Sweden and UNICEF have worked well together over a number of years. The Government of Sweden is happy to cooperate with UNICEF globally since the priorities of UNICEF agree with those set by our Government for its international development cooperation.

Thanks to this partnership, it was possible for Sweden to render humanitarian assistance to Cambodia at an early stage. I am, therefore, glad to note the continued partnership in Cambodia, not least in the field of basic education in rural areas.

Eva Heckscher
Ambassador of Sweden to the Kingdom of Cambodia

The Swedish contributions are mainly channelled through UN and IBRD agencies barring a few exceptions such as CMAC and the Cambodian Development Resource Institute (CDRI). This strategy is also likely to be maintained in the future although the country strategy will be up for revision in 1999, after the elections. Consequently, there are few Swedish bilateral aid workers in Cambodia, but there are several JPOs or Associate Experts in UNICEF, UNHCR, UNDP, CURI and, yet to be cleared, in UNCHR. Other Swedes work for AsDI and UNDP projects, Forum Syd, Norwegian People's Aid, Swedish Church Aid or independently and the total number of Swedes is approx. 20, excluding family members.

Special contributions earmarked for UNICEF supported programmes in Cambodia (In millions of USD)

Jan-Mar 1997
provinces of Battambang and Banteay Meanchey at had discussions with UNICEF staff, officials of the Ministry of Social Affairs and NGO colleagues.

Sida/UNICEF Annual Review Meeting

The first Annual Review Meeting of Sida/UNICEF projects was held, 11-23 November, in Phnom Penh. Sida was represented by Mr Sven-Ake Svensson, the Sida Resident Representative in Phnom Penh as well as Ms Ann-Charlotte Olstedt, Mr Lars Boberg and Ms Ingrid Svensson from Sweden. The Ministry of Education was represented by H.E. Mr Toj Lah and senior officials. Having agreed that education is a key area for the future development of Cambodia, the meeting adopted joint measures for effective coordination.

Sida

Sida (Government of Sweden) has agreed to provide SEK 83 million (around US$12 million) for the four Basic Education projects and the two projects within the Community Action for Social Development programme over the period 1996-1998.

Norwegian support to Cambodia

NORAD (Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation) has allocated NOK 5,000,000 (around US$780,000) for three years for the Community Action for Social Development programme in Cambodia. The goal of the programme is to improve the situation of children and women through community action.

Government of Japan

Government of Japan has provided US$500,000 for the project Education for Community Needs under the Community Action for Social Development programme. The contribution is specifically earmarked for basic education of girls.
UNICEF support to World AIDS Day

As part of its support to World AIDS Day, 1 December, UNICEF provided technical and financial assistance to the National NGO Committee on HIV/AIDS for development and production of IEC materials. Support was also provided to the Svay Rieng Provincial AIDS Committee for multi-sectoral government and NGO World AIDS Day activities in Svay Rieng province. Svay Rieng is one of the three provinces where UNICEF's area-focused Community Action for Social Development Programme was initiated in 1996.

Vigorous social mobilization efforts were made during the World AIDS Day. As part of the national World AIDS Day campaign, a one minute TV spot was produced and telecast on all TV stations in Phnom Penh. A series of TV spots are planned for 1997 targeting specific audience as part of awareness building.

Speaking on the subject, Mr Paul Matthews, UN Resident Coordinator said: "The UN family of organizations and the NGO community are extremely concerned about the HIV/AIDS situation in Cambodia [...] To respond to the epidemic, we need to take individual responsibility and individual actions [...] One indispensable condition for effective HIV/AIDS prevention is a social atmosphere that provide acceptance for both women and men to live their lives equally." He added that "UNAIDS, a joint United Nations Programme on AIDS co-sponsored by the six UN agencies (UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, UNESCO, WHO and World Bank) is determined to work with our partners, government, no government organizations, bilateral donors and business sector against this long-term epidemic."

UNICEF to chair UNAIDS Theme Group

Mr Leonard De Vos, UNICEF Representative has taken over as the new chairman of the UNAIDS Theme Group in Cambodia. Mr De Vos took over this position from Dr Georg Petersen, WHO Representative who had provided strong leadership in the development of UNAIDS in Cambodia from the beginning. Dr Petersen will continue to be an active member of the Theme Group.

UNAIDS is the joint UN system response to the alarming epidemic of HIV/AIDS. In addition to the UN Theme Group, there is a Technical Working Group on HIV/AIDS already functioning.

HIV update

Aggregate data collected in the 1996 sentinel surveillance conducted in 18 provinces by the National AIDS Programme:

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A Day in the Life of Wan Chenda

Seven-year-old Wan Chenda wakes up early every morning to sweep the yard, bathe and feed her younger brother, and help care for the animals. Then she walks an hour to school, wishing that her classes were at the same time as her sister's so she could catch a ride on her bicycle. In the afternoons, Chenda and her friends tend the cows to keep them away from the rice paddies. It is only for a short while after harvest that the girls have some time to play hopscotch or jump rope.

is an improved life. In the past, Chenda spent many hours every day collecting firewood and fetching water from a distant well. Many children in Cambodia carry up to 20 litres of water for several kilometres every day. "Now when I am not at school, I spend the day looking after my baby brother, tending the cows and playing with the cat," Chenda says. And with life improving for her whole family, she will most likely be among the 50 percent of Cambodian children who complete primary school. Having some time free from chores gives Chenda the chance to get an education and a chance to be a child.

ily five years ago, Chenda's family lived in a mud and straw house. Her father worked as a construction worker in Phnom Penh, and her mother cared for the children, ran the household, grew rice and vegetables, and raised animals. The ok children helped.

1992, Chenda's parents received tools, vegetable seeds and one piglet through the UNICEF-supported family food production programme in Krol Ko village, where they live. The first year, they grew enough food to feed themselves and the pig. Later, they sold three more piglets. Two years ago, Chenda's mother, Long Phally, received a 150,000 riel (US$60) loan from the UNICEF-supported Svay Rieng Provincial Women's Association, with a five-month grace period and three percent interest. In only one month she made 100,000 riels from growing leeks, and in the second month, Chenda's family dug a well and a pond for fish. They saved their extra income from selling produce and animals. "Before receiving assistance it was very difficult," says Long Phally.

Chenda has many responsibilities and little time to play, but she is still lucky. More young children die in Cambodia than in other developing countries. Malnutrition is widespread, making disease all the more deadly. There are not enough schools, trained teachers or textbooks, and access to safe water and sanitation is limited.

Chenda enjoys good nutrition and safe water, lives in a new house, and is getting an education. Chenda is lucky that her family is together. Many children live only with their mothers who struggle very hard to care for them. Great numbers of Cambodian men have died as a result of decades of violence, making women sole supporters in one out of every four families. With the devastation of communities, many extended families are also broken up, leaving women without family support and traditional safety nets.

A Cambodian Child

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Less educated than men and earning little income, women have a difficult time meeting the burden of supporting their families. UNICEF-supported credit projects, such as the one that loaned money to Chenda's mother, make a significant difference in women's lives, enabling them to become economically productive and self-sufficient. Women's equal access to credit, education, and other services enhances the quality of their lives and helps them become better mothers, better role models for their daughters, and more active community members.

Chenda's parents participate in literacy and health education classes and in many community efforts supported by UNICEF. Her father, Peak Thy, is a member of the Village Development Committee, which works on farming and sanitation projects.
Every fourth household in Cambodia is female-headed

Nearly every fourth household in Cambodia is headed by a female. The family burden had fallen on such female heads of households due to the effects of war and civil disturbances, according to the recent Demographic Survey results. The Survey was conducted by the National Institute of Statistics, Ministry of Planning.

The survey results indicate that the estimated population of Cambodia is 10.7 million (male: 5.12 million and female: 5.58 million). The female population consists of a little more than 52 percent. Children (0-14 years) form 44 percent of the population in the country as a whole. With 86 percent of the population living in rural areas, Cambodia’s urban population represents only 14 percent. About 10 percent of the children (7-14 years) are in the labour force and more than half of them are girls. In urban areas, there was less participation of children in the labour force (about 5 percent). Average household size is estimated at 5.3.

Among the population aged 7 and above, about 31 percent are attending school (or any educational institution). The proportion of females attending school was less than that of males by about ten points in urban and rural strata. About 52 percent of internal migrants are females.

More than three-fourths of the population depend on dug wells (45.8%), spring, river etc (30.3%) for supply of drinking water. In urban areas, nearly half the number of households are getting drinking water from pipes. More than 82 percent of the households in the country use kerosene lamps for lighting. About 10 percent of the households have electric power supply. Only about 15 percent of the households at country level have toilet facility in their dwellings. In urban areas, nearly 50 percent have this facility.

From the point of view of the sample size of about 20,000 households, this Demographic Survey could be considered as a major statistical exercise in the country in recent times. There has been no population census in Cambodia since 1962. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has been providing technical assistance and funds to the Government for preparing the next census which is scheduled to take place in 1998.

UN Theme Group on Food Security

Under the chairmanship of Mr Ad Spijkers, FAO Representative, the UN Theme Group on Food Security in Cambodia organized a meeting on 21 January. The Theme Group consists of members from the Ministry of Planning, Asian Development Bank, World Bank and UN agencies. The major objective of the Theme Group is to establish a structured process of dialogue within the UN Development System for optimizing ongoing collaboration in support of government’s poverty alleviation and food security objectives. Mr Spijkers, in his opening statement reiterated FAO’s commitment to ensure food security referred to the recently concluded World Food Summit and brought to the notice of the meeting the follow-up actions initiated by FAO in collaboration with the national governments, particularly the Special Programme on Food Security (SPFS). He also presented the country position paper on food security, prepared for the World Food Summit in collaboration between FAO, Cambodian Development Resource Institute (CDRI) and the Government, illustrating the food security concerns and issues. These issues are intrinsically related to the issues of poverty. Production shortfalls, instability and inadequate infrastructure expose a large section of the population to food insecurity. Cambodia can easily obtain rice surplus for export if appropriate irrigation and related infrastructure are put in place. The meeting concludes with the understanding that increased collaboration both in understanding the causes and factors affecting poverty and food security as well as in implementing programmes and projects are essential. While at macro level Cambodia is food secure with surplus for export, analytically it is necessary to move beyond macro approach to look at poverty and food security especially in the rural areas.

Anniversary of the National Council for Children

Cambodia celebrated the first anniversary of the establishment of the Cambodian National Council for Children (CNCC) on 20 November. The occasion coincides with the seventh anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by the UN. Due to unforeseen development, the Second Prime Minister Samdech Hun Sen could not attend the function as scheduled and instead his speech was read out by H.E. Mr Suy Sem, State Secretary for the Ministry of Social Affair Labour and Veteran Affairs.

Bernard Gilbert, UNICEF Programme Coordinator in Cambodia, at the address stressed that "investment in children is the best investment the Royal Government can make for the future of Cambodia".

The purpose of the CNCC is to ensure cooperation and coordination among different institutions in the implementation and evaluation of policies and programmes concerning the survival, development, protection and participation of children. It is a national institution to consult and coordination of all activities concerned children's issues.

The audience included hundreds of school children. Two special guests were: Mr Sven-Ake Svensson, Sida Resident Representative in Cambodia and Cathie Guthrie, Director of International Programmes, UNICEF Committee for Canada.

Sida has provided the initial financial support for the establishment of the CNCC.
Participants of the working session on Child Rights with His Majesty Norodom Sihanouk, King of Cambodia at the Royal Palace in Phnom Penh.