



*Empowered lives.  
Resilient nations.*

# Newsletter

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UNDP partners with people at all levels of society to help build nations that can withstand crisis, and drive and sustain the kind of growth that improves the quality of life for everyone. On the ground in 177 countries and territories, we offer global perspective and local insight to help empower lives and build resilient nations.

## Voter education campaign kicks off

**Phnom Penh** – A voter education campaign is underway in Cambodia to help people with disability and indigenous people to be eligible to vote in the new general election slated for July next year.

The campaign targets these groups of Cambodian citizens in 17 provinces: Kandal, Kampong Speu, Takeo, Kampot, Svay Rieng, Kampong Cham, Kratie, Stoeung Treng, Mondulakiri, Ratanakiri, Preah Vihear, Kampong Thom, Siem Reap, Banteay Meanchey, Pailin, Battambang and Pursat.

The election is scheduled to take place 28 July 2013 to choose new lower house of parliament, National Assembly, for another five-year term. Preparing for the poll, the commune/sangkat offices across the country are conducting verification of voter lists and registering new voters until 12 October.

As part of its work to promote democratic governance in Cambodia, United Nations Development Programme has teamed up with two non-governmental organizations in a series of awareness-

*continued on page 2*

## Cambodia unveils action plan for women's empowerment



Photo: UNDP/Chansok Lay

*Cambodian women make decorative flowers using palm leaves at a women's development group in Takeo province.*

**Phnom Penh** – The Ministry of Women's Affairs has unveiled an action plan designed to assist the country to speed up progress on its Millennium Development Goal 3 on gender equality. The plan entails three key priorities in:

- providing women who are unemployed and underemployed with training for jobs consistent with market demands;
- promoting women-led small and medium enterprises with the aim to assist women to enhance their capacity to transform their businesses from informal into a formal sector; and
- working to improve livelihoods of poor women in rural communities.

The Ministry developed the plan using the MDG Acceleration Framework (MAF), a country-specific approach designed to help countries to find their own ways to

address gaps in MDG achievement. It was introduced by the UN Development Group and endorsed at the UN Global MDG Summit in September in 2010.

The action plan was validated during a meeting of government officials and representatives from UN agencies, development partners, non-governmental organizations and private sector on Sep. 19.

UN Resident Coordinator Douglas Broderick hailed the achievement in his remark to the meeting. He said the three priorities listed in it "are crucial" in advancing Cambodia's efforts to improve the status and lives of women and girls in the country.

"Empowering women isn't just an essential part of realizing women's rights. It also makes good economic sense," he said.

## Contents

Young indigenous people gear up for election.....	3
Small business key to lifting women out of poverty .....	4
UN Secretary-General's message on International Day of Democracy .....	5
Partnering with youth to build a brighter future for all .....	5
Photo essays discuss sustainable development .....	6

# Voter education campaign kicks off

continued from page 1



Photo: UNDP/Chansok Lay

A person with disability views a voter education poster used at a forum in Kratie province in northeastern Cambodia. At the bottom right corner of the poster, a message in Khmer reads "We have the same rights!"

raising activities aimed at empowering indigenous people and people with disability to exercise their rights to vote.

Those activities kicked off on 27 August – with focus on voter registration period – and will run until July next year. They include training on importance of voter registration to focal persons who themselves are people with disability. They then will roll out more training sessions for other people with disability in some 60 communes across Cambodia.

In provinces home to Cambodian indigenous people, public forums are also held to increase their awareness and participation in voter registration process.

Despite progress in improving opportunities for them, people with disability continue to face challenges in using their potentials to contribute to socio-economic and political development of the country. Lack of access to education, health, social services,

employment and political participation is among the challenges that are also shared by the indigenous people.

"Every vote counts. General election happens only once every five years. It is a sacred opportunity to make one's voice heard," said Socheath Heng, manager of UNDP's Strengthening Democracy Programme that oversees the current campaign.

"Considering the challenges they still face in their lives, it is important to assist indigenous people and people with disability to be prepared to cast their ballots so that they will not miss this chance to wait for another five years," he added.

Leading the civic education campaign are Khmer Youth Association (KYA) and the

CDPO, a group advocating for the rights and wellbeing of Cambodians with disability.

Some 9,200 indigenous people and 1,800 people with disability are expected to benefit from this campaign.

For more photos on the campaign, check out photo gallery on [UNDP Cambodia's Facebook page](#).



Photo: UNDP/Chansok Lay

A woman with disability arrives on a motorcycle to take part in a voter education forum in Kratie province.



# Young indigenous people gear up for election

**Mondul Kiri** – When the local election was held in Cambodia in June this year, Bunthoeun Tola went to a designated polling station hoping to vote in choosing leaders for his commune. But he was there only to be turned away by polling officers. His name on the voter list did not match the one on his identification card.

“It was spelled incorrectly and because of that I was barred from voting. I was disappointed,” said Tola, a member of P’ngong indigenous group in Dak Dam commune, Mondul Kiri province in northeastern Cambodia.

Now he has made sure this will not happen again ahead of the general election on 28 July 2013. In it, he and other Cambodians will elect parties to the National Assembly through which a new government will be formed to run the country for another five-year term.

At 20 years of age, he seems a bit older for the 11<sup>th</sup> grade he has just started in the new academic year. But he is never too old to vote. In fact, it will be the first time in his life to do so after missing out on the commune election because his name was written as Bunthoeun Seiha instead of Bunthoeun Tola, which is the correct version on his ID. He should have verified it and had the correction made beforehand, but he did not and, therefore, lost his chance.

On a recently rainy morning, Tola joined 120 other villagers in a meeting with commune and provincial election committee officials to discuss election-related issues. The gathering was part of a voter education campaign to raise awareness among indigenous people about their right to vote and to increase their participation in the general election.

Shielded from the rain by a make-shift tarp roof set on the ground of a primary school, the villagers took turn posing questions to the speakers. A man complained to them about his two sons-in-law who never bothered to register. He asked if authorities can intervene in making them get registered “to vote for our future.” In his reply, Hach



Photo: UNDP/Alejandro Boza

*Indigenous people verify their names on a voter list at Dak Dam commune office in Mondul Kiri province.*

Proney, the provincial election committee’s legal assistant, thankfully noted the man’s understanding about importance of election but said it is beyond authority’s mandate to impose upon citizens how to use their democratic rights.

During the conversation, misspelling of names was the dominant question.

Dak Dam commune chief, Som Vanny, acknowledged the problem but assured the villagers that it is being corrected. He also urged them to remind themselves of the need to verify their names during the registration process before it is too late.

“This is an important part in exercising your right to choose your representatives. It is more so for young people who will turn 18 by the election day,” he told the villagers at the meeting.

It was supported by UNDP’s Strengthening Democracy Programme in a series of voter education activities now underway in 17 provinces. They target disadvantaged Cambodians, namely the indigenous people and people with disability. Mondul Kiri province, a home to mostly indigenous people, is one of them.

Some 5,694 newly eligible voters are to be added to the 32,237 names already on the list, according to Mondul Kiri provincial election committee.

Nationwide, there were 9,203,493 registered voters for the last local election and the number is expected to be higher due to registration of new eligible voters.

As the meeting wrapped up, several villagers thronged at the commune office. Some crowded at a wooden wall and used their fingers to scan for their names on the voter list. At a nearby door, young people lined up with ID cards in their hands as they waited for the commune clerk to call them in.

“This time everything is in order for me,” Tola said as the commune clerk handed back his ID after fixing his name on the list.

The young man left. Poch Trinh, who turned 18 in April, stepped forward and handed her ID to the clerk. After about two minutes, she became the third registered voter in her family beside her father and mother.

When asked how she felt about becoming a registered voter for the first time, Poch Trinh said: “Nervously happy since I never voted before. Now I am a person who can vote to contribute to progress of the country.”

# Small business key to lifting women out of poverty

**Takeo** – Handicraft maker Chhel Sovann, a mother of four, wants to increase her business so that she can earn more to support her family. Having an affordable loan would be an ideal way to do that but the 38-year-old woman could only wish.

"I do not dare take the risk with borrowing money because I am afraid I won't be able to pay back the loan," said Chhel Sovann, a resident of Srae Ta Sok village, Takeo province.

Her story is one of economic deprivation that is now at the center of the Cambodian government's gender policy. The government is trying to tackle the problem by calling for greater efforts to promote women-led small and medium enterprises as a means to lift women out of extreme poverty.

"By encouraging the development of small or medium enterprises, the livelihoods of people and among them women living in the rural areas will improve," Minister of Women's Affairs, H.E. Dr. Ing Kantha Phavi, said.

"Women's economic empowerment is a priority because we believe it's achievable and critical for bringing about more achievements in other Cambodia Millennium Development Goals," she added.

The minister said in her remarks at a recent meeting where government officials and representatives of development partners discussed steps to apply the MDG Acceleration Framework. Simply known as MAF, it is a policy approach designed to assist countries to identify and remove hurdles to eradicating extreme poverty and achieving sustainable development.

To date 39 countries have adopted MAF. Cambodia has chosen to use it to address economic empowerment of Cambodian women in a bid to make greater progress in the CMDG 3 on gender equality.

The two-day meeting threw the spotlight on the informal sector of the economy where women are a prominent force. Women own more than 60 percent of micro, small and medium enterprises. However, some 90

percent of them are very small, family-run type of businesses.

Education, health, social protection, skills and access to decent wage employment for women were other issues that came under the microscope at the meeting.

Shantanu Mukherjee, Policy Advisor on Micro-economics of UNDP, proposed for consideration by the participants a narrow-down approach aimed at areas that matter the most. He said focus should be given to skills-job matching and creating conditions for women to benefit in the process.

"For example, there is no point of training people in one particular aspect of job if that job sector is a torment to the country. Also, it's not going to help if a person is going to find it hard to locate a job if the job is located elsewhere," Mr. Mukherjee said. He came from UNDP headquarters in New York to assist the Ministry of Women's Affairs in brainstorming ideas how to make the new approach work in the Cambodian context.

"Cambodia is the only country that applies MAF to promote women's economic empowerment. So it is a trend-setter in this regard," he said.

Ms Meas Savry, who heads the Khmer Women Handicraft Association in Takeo province, was among several representatives of civil society groups that took part in the discussion about MAF action plan. She said she was encouraged by the new approach but added that it must be followed up concrete actions. One of them, she said, should address ways to help poor women find affordable loan to do small business.



Photo: UNDP/Chansok Lay

*Chhel Sovann weaves a souvenir box using palm leaves at her house in Takeo province.*

Chhel Sovann fits in that profile. She self-employs to make decorative items at her wooden house which is tucked in middle of the rice field in Takeo province. The lack of money to buy raw materials has recently forced her to suspend her production and that worried her. But lately she got a reprieve after she found a temporary employment with the Khmer Women Handicraft Association.

The group has recruited 30 women to make various souvenir items to supply to a store in Phnom Penh.

Chhel Sovann earns US\$70 a month. That amount combined with another US\$80 her husband makes each month from working as a construction worker are the main income for her family's expenses.

"I just hope to have a steady demand from the client so that we can keep the job to earn a living to support our children's education," she said.

# UN Secretary-General's message on International Day of Democracy

15 September 2012

Today we look back on yet another year of remarkable events in the story of democracy -- a story that continues to be written by people who yearn for dignity and human rights, for an end to corruption, for a say in their future, for jobs, justice and a fair share of political power.

Their story is just beginning. Democracies are not born overnight, nor built in a year, or by holding one or two elections. They require sustained and painstaking work. Yet, once begun, there can be no going back.

Reform must be real. People do not seek authoritarianism with a human face. They want a virtuous circle of rights and opportunity under the rule of law, a vibrant civil society and an enterprising private sector, backed by efficient and accountable state institutions.

Inclusive dialogue is crucial. Diversity is a strength. We must work to promote pluralism and protect the rights of minorities

and the vulnerable. And women must be at the centre of efforts to build democratic futures. They have been at the forefront of movements for change. They have a right to a real say in governance and decision-making.

The voices of the young must also be heard and heeded. Profound demographic pressures around the world make this an imperative. Faced with bleak prospects and unresponsive governments, young people will act on their own to reclaim their future.

Underpinning these prerequisites -- and essential for long term success -- is democracy education, the theme of this year's observance. It is needed so that all citizens in all nations, in democracies young and old, established or fragile, fully understand their rights and responsibilities. And it is especially needed in countries that have made recent democratic gains so that

progress made does not unravel.

The United Nations is strongly committed to working with partners to develop global and local initiatives that elevate democracy education as an integral part of all education initiatives and as a component of long-term governance strategies. Let us build partnerships between international education experts and Governments to develop and disseminate best practices. Let us develop a culture of civic participation to explore opportunities made possible by new media, and support countries in devising curricula and training methods.

In marking this year's International Day of Democracy, let us use all our creativity to advance this mission. Let us work to bring democracy education to all, and in particular, to those societies in transition that need it most.

*"Let us work to bring democracy education to all."*

## Partnering with youth to build a brighter future for all

**Douglas Broderick**

The International Youth Day was commemorated on 12 August 2012. Once again, the event was the time to renew our focus on young people and engage in partnerships with and for them, if we are to build a brighter future for all.

At the global level, the day provided an important opportunity to explore innovative ways for the United Nations and its member states, civil society, the private sector, academia and philanthropists to effectively partner and collaborate with young people, especially in the areas of employment, entrepreneurship, political inclusion, citizenship and protection of rights and education, including sexual and reproductive health.

In Cambodia, two out of three people are under 25, and more than 30 per cent are aged between 10 – 24 years. The country has one of the largest youth populations in Southeast Asia. Unemployment, higher among youth than any other age group, is the single most important issue confronting Cambodian youth today. Migration for economic and educational opportunities is transforming the composition of village life and sending more young people into urban

centres and into cross border migration, proving new opportunities but also exposing them to greater risks and vulnerabilities. This reality makes us realize how relevant the International Youth Day 2012 theme of "Building a Better World: Partnering with Youth" is globally and to Cambodia.

Increasing the involvement of young people in local development and decision making is a real opportunity and will provide decisions makers with the perspectives and experiences of young people that are needed to inform bold steps forward in social, cultural and economic development of a country. In Cambodia 300,000 young people enter the workforce every year, creating real demand for an increased diversity of employment opportunities. But they are more than just the figures. Cambodia's young people are the potentials at present and for the future of this country.

Conscious of this, the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) has embedded youth as a priority within its strategy, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2011-2015. It recognizes and mobilizes youth specific priorities within all UN agencies working in Cambodia. Cross-cutting youth specific priorities are being implemented within these strategic priority

areas – economic growth and sustainable development, education and health, gender, governance and social protection.

The UN in Cambodia is a willing partner in the development of the National Policy for Cambodian Youth Development and supports ongoing commitment to establish a National Youth Council and action plan to implement its policy.

To strengthen ongoing dialogue with young people, the UNCT has established the Youth Advisory Panel comprising 12 young leaders who represent Cambodia's youth. This ongoing collaboration ensures the UNCT has the opportunity to continue to partner with Cambodia's youth, to be inspired, to hear and discuss their ideas, their approaches to and perspectives on development.

The 2012 theme of International Youth Day "Building a Better World: Partnering with Youth" has great relevance to Cambodia. Through working proactively to forge meaningful partnerships with young people, we can ensure that we lay the foundation for a better world for all.

*Douglas Broderick is the UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative in Cambodia.*



# Photo essays discuss sustainable development

**Phnom Penh** – The United Nations Conference in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on Sustainable Development was over but a group of young Cambodians are trying to keep the discussion on the topic alive – through their photo essays.

Ten young Cambodian photographers have publicized their photos on sustainable development through social media channels, including their personal blogs and Facebook pages. The images captured in their photographs cover a wide range of themes including agriculture, tourism, water resources and sanitation, climate change, sustainable forest and land use.

The photo essays are part of competition project implemented by Department of Media and Communications (DMC) with support from UNDP in Cambodia. The aim is to keep the discussion going on issues of sustainable development by encouraging young people to share their ideas and also to engage their friends in the debate about the Earth's future.

Through a competitive process, 10 photographers were selected from a pool of applicants. As part of their job, the contestants have to promote their own works on their blogs and social network Facebook pages. Top three winners will be selected in the order of highest number of people they manage to engage in the discussion about the topic captured in their respective photographs.

While aiming for the top spot, some contestants said the competition is eye-opening to learn about some of the country's contemporary development issues.

Heang Sreychea chose water and sanitation issues in rural Cambodia as a topic of her photo story. The research and field trip to a village in Aoral district, Kampong Speu province, about 100 kilometers from Capital city Phnom Penh, made her understand how big a problem of access to clean water is for many people in the rural areas. She hopes to inform others about it through her photos too. She did not just post her pictures but also posed questions to attract visitors and engage them in the conversation.

"Along with photos on my blog and Facebook, I asked questions to create



Photo: UNDP/Chansok Lay

*Solar-powered pumping system helps provide clean water to villagers in Kratie province. Access to clean water is among the topics chosen by contestants in a UNDP-supported photo essay competition on sustainable development.*

dialogues with visitors and I also share news about the issues to prove that the water sanitation problems are real. I also hope that through my photos, there will be solutions for people in poor communities," said Sreychea Heang.

Facebook is a media tool quite popular for young Cambodians to socialize and share ideas. As of mid-September 2012, a Facebook page created in July 2012 for the competition reaches more than 150,000 Facebook users and in the first week of September alone, the page attracted more than 10,000 reaches.

The photos from all 10 contestants will

be exhibited for public screening to raise further awareness among the public about sustainable development for the future generations. Winners of the competition will be announced at the end of October.



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