

I. Introduction

This brief summarizes the findings of NGO Forum on Cambodia's rapid assessment of policy announcements in the National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) Update 2009-2013 that have been incorporated into a "policy matrix". The brief intends to inform policy makers of line ministries and agencies of the Royal Government with support from Development Partners, civil society organizations and the public on limitation in the policy announcements and the needs to elaborate further details of policy announcements and their linkages to relevant sector plans or strategies and responsible institutions in the upcoming Mid Term Review of the NSDP Update and future national development plans. With this intention, the NGO Forum commissioned an independent consultant¹ to conduct a rapid assessment of policy announcements in the NSDP Update 2009-2013 and produce a policy matrix which list policy announcements following the content of the NSDP Update. The rapid assessment scrutinized the precision of the different announced policy priorities, sector strategies, reform programs and actions included in the NSDP Update. The consultant also consulted policy matrix format used by countries in Africa as well as guiding documents of the World Bank relating to formulation of poverty reduction strategy paper.

The matrix or rapid assessment suggests key findings on the quality of the policy announcements which are summarized in this policy brief. The main finding of the rapid assessment is that NSDP Update policy priorities are clearly articulated and backed by data for some sectors, but they are less clear for other sectors. The conclusion of this brief is that it necessitates the needs to be addressed in order to make sure that: i) future NSDP Update progress

reports provide a comprehensive picture of progress made across all sectors and that accountability is in place by individual or integrated responsible line ministries and agencies of the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) and ii) the NSDP Update can become an effective basis for making decisions on national budget allocations, including alignment of development aid.

This rapid assessment is limited with an individual consultant who has experiences in providing inputs and comments on some but not all sections of the plan. To ensure the reliability of this exercise, the NGO Forum sought comments and verification from around 25 sector NGOs/Groups working relating to different sections of the plan at least two rounds prior to its finalization.

II. Recent history of national planning in brief

The National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) Update 2009-2013 is the successor of the NSDP 2006-2010. The drafting process of the NSDP Update 2009-2013 was officially started with the RGC Circular on its preparation on 28 May 2009 and the plan was approved by the National Assembly and Senate on 31 May & in June 2010. It was later promulgated by the King on 30 June 2010. Cambodia has a long standing experience in national planning. When looking at the last 15 years, five development plans have been in place. The first Socio Economic Development Plan covering 1996-2000 (SEDP I) was followed by SEDP II 2001-2005. During the period of the SEDP II, the National Poverty Reduction Strategy 2002-2005 was also in place.

After the period where two development plans were in place at the same time, the National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) 2006-2010² was formulated as the single overarching national policy document for pursuing prioritized goals,

¹ Mr. Gijs Koop, former advisor in the Development Issues Programme of the NGO Forum, was commissioned to conduct this rapid assessment in 2010. He has worked on monitoring some of the sections in the NSDP from 2006 to 2010 and has been assisting some sector NGOs in monitoring the NSDP's policy announcements during that period.

² This plan was formulated using the comprehensive Rectangular Strategy of the RGC, and synthesizes various policy documents including Cambodia Millennium Development Goals, National Poverty Reduction Strategy, National Population Policy, and others and through extensive consultations held among all stakeholders.

targets and actions. The NSDP 2006-2010 came officially to an end in 2008 ³ and was replaced by the NSDP Update 2009-2013. The two important reasons for the early renewal of the NSDP were firstly the need to synchronize the time period covered by the NSDP Update with the term of the Fourth Legislature of the Royal Government and secondly to ensure that the impact of the global economic downturn on the economy was taken into account.

The NSDP Update 2009-2013 is the Government's main tool to realize its political platform which is the Rectangular Strategy Phase II. *As the implementation framework, the NSDP contains "the key policy priorities for the specific area; and second, the actions, programs and projects that concerned Ministries and/or Agencies will carry out to implement these policies" ⁴.*

Based on a rapid assessment of the NSDP Update, NGO Forum drafted a matrix table ⁵ of policy announcements in the NSDP Update and filled out information into five columns on 1) policy priorities; 2) relevant sector strategies, programs and reform programs, and actions; 3) timing; 4) the lead or responsible agency for implementing them; and 5) the availability of baseline data, targets, and funding needs. This format was chosen based on our belief ⁶ that these are important aspects of good and effective policies. It is however stressed that a full review by sector experts would be necessary in order to do justice to the complexities of the individual sectors. Nevertheless, the rapid assessment points to a number of important issues presented below that deserve the attention of Government policy and decision makers as well as their development partners. The matrix of rapid assessment follows the contents in the NSDP Update which specified individually in matrix table:

Policy Matrix

- POLICY MATRIX 1: Good Governance
 - o Fighting Corruption
 - o Legal and Judicial Reform
 - o Public Administration Reform
 - o Decentralization and De-concentration
 - o Reform of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces
- POLICY MATRIX 2: Environment for the Implementation of the Strategy
 - o Peace, Political Stability and Social Order
 - o Cambodia's integration into the region and the World
- POLICY MATRIX 3: Favourable macro-economic and financial environment
- POLICY MATRIX 4: Partnership in Development
- POLICY MATRIX 5: Enhancement of the agricultural sector
 - o Improving agricultural production and diversification
 - o Land reform and clearing mines
 - o Fisheries Reform
 - o Forestry Reform
- POLICY MATRIX 6: Environmental Protection, Conservation and Climate Change
- POLICY MATRIX 7: Disaster Management
- POLICY MATRIX 8: Rural Development
- POLICY MATRIX 9: Further rehabilitation and construction of transport infrastructure
- POLICY MATRIX 10: Water resources and irrigation systems management
- POLICY MATRIX 11: Urban Drinking Water Supply
- POLICY MATRIX 12: Development of the Energy Sector

³ See Circular on Guidelines for Preparation of NSDP update: "the term of NSDP 2006-2010 will be deemed to have ended in 2008"

⁴ NSDP Update 2009-2013, paragraph 331, NSDP Update 2009-2013 can be downloaded from website of Ministry of Planning at www.mop.gov.kh

⁵ The completed matrix table is available on NGO Forum's website: www.ngoforum.org.kh and available upon request at our office.

⁶ The belief also came from our review of other countries experiences in developing this policy matrix.

- POLICY MATRIX 13: Development of Information and Communications Technology
- POLICY MATRIX 14: Strengthening Private Sector and Attracting Investment
- POLICY MATRIX 15: Creation of Jobs and Ensuring Improved Working Conditions
- POLICY MATRIX 16: Promotion of Small and Medium Enterprises
- POLICY MATRIX 17: Creation of Social Safety Nets
- POLICY MATRIX 18: Strengthening the Quality of Education
- POLICY MATRIX 19: Enhancing Health Services
- POLICY MATRIX 20: Implementation of Gender Equality Policy
- POLICY MATRIX 21: Implementation of National Population Policy

III. Main findings of the rapid assessment

1. Some sections of the NSDP Update have no link to relevant sector plans and reform programs. In addition, there is no reference as to where the 17 sector plans /reform and their progress reports are published.

While the NSDP Update highlights essential policies, strategies, actions, and projects it leaves more details to be spelled out in sectoral plans and reform programs like for instance the Education Sector Plan and the Public Financial Management Reform Program. The rapid assessment found that a substantial number of components of the NSDP Update do not include references to existing relevant sectoral plans / reform programs. This is for instance the case for the sections on: fighting corruption, land reform⁷, fisheries reform, forestry reform, environmental protection and conservation and climate change, and rural development.

For sections that did include references to sectoral plans and reform strategies⁸, no details as to where the sector plan and its progress reports can be obtained are provided⁹.

2. Lead agencies are clearly identified in the NSDP Update, except for the area of population policy.

For all but one area in the NSDP Update 2009-2013, the rapid assessment found that lead agencies were clearly identified at the ministry level. The NSDP Update does not identify a lead agency for the implementation of the national population policy and states that “All line ministries and agencies play a role in implementing Royal Government’s population policy.”

3. Policy announcements in the NSDP Update provide overview of priorities that ministries and agencies are taking during the 2009-2013 period. However, some ministries/agencies are much more precise in stating their ambitions than others.

The NSDP Update contains precise policy statements on for instance macroeconomic and public financial management, enhancement of the agricultural sector, education, health, and the implementation of the gender equality policy. In these sections, statements are backed with data concerning the actual situation for particular indicators for 2008 and estimates / forecasts for the NSDP Update period. Examples of clear policies that are detailed in the text with figures of the current situation and targets are for instance: “ensuring that all Cambodian children and youth have equal opportunity for access to basic education...”, “Increasing agricultural productivity”, and “Prudent monetary and budgetary policies in order to consolidate macroeconomic and financial stability”. Together with data on future developments for these sectors, it is expected that future Mid-Term Review of NSDP Update will provide a comprehensive narrative of achievements and challenges that is presented alongside data evidence.

Areas where data supporting the policy statements are lacking include the sections on the creation of social safety nets, forestry reform, fisheries reform, fighting corruption, public administration reform, legal and judicial reform, urban drinking water supply, water resources and irrigation systems management, rehabilitation and construction of

⁷ Except for the National Strategic Plan for Integration of Coastal Areas that will be drafted.

⁸ The rapid assessment counted 17 references to sectoral plans / reform strategies (of which nine needed to be finalized or updated).

⁹ Even though the list of all government line ministries/agencies websites are included in the NSDP Update.

transport infrastructure, disaster management, and environmental protection and conservation. Examples of less clear statements in the NSDP Update without baseline data and targets include: “Fighting corruption”, “Making public service more transparent, responsive, and efficient and enhancing motivation, loyalty, professionalism, and culture of services”, “ensure effective administration of state land and the conservation of state public properties” or “Ensure that ecology system and water environment will not be polluted”. These good policy statements need to be further clarified to the public by explaining “how, how much, and when”. Having this explicit will also benefit future progress reports of the NSDP Update 2009-2013.

IV. Conclusion and Recommendations

As pointed out in the previous section, the rapid assessment of policies in the different sections in the NSDP Update pointed out that there is a significant level of details between different sections. While some sections provide clear policy announcements, backed with baseline data, targets and include a reference to a more detailed sector plans, other sectors provide considerable less details.

The current need for more precision of policy statements in sections of the NSDP Update is that future monitoring reports of the NSDP Update 2009-2013 are unlikely to provide a comprehensive report on progress made at the policy level. A key conclusion from this rapid assessment is that there is a need for the Ministry of Planning (MOP) to work closely with the individual line ministries and their development partners to address this information gap before and during preparations of the upcoming Mid-Term Review of the NSDP Update in 2011 and future national development plans. There are for instance gaps in baseline data and targets in important areas such as social safety nets, forestry reform, fisheries reform, fighting corruption, and environmental protection and conservation.

Another identified information gap that can be filled relatively easily is the inclusion of full references in the upcoming Mid-Term Review of the NSDP Update on where sector plans, reform strategies and their progress reports can be obtained by the public. NGOs would welcome references to websites

containing this information, which should be up to date or available to regular meetings where these are presented. It is kindly requested that the MOP includes this point when it works with line ministries and agencies in the preparations for the Mid-Term Review.

Another consequence of the findings relates to the currently planned further integration of the National Plan, the National Budget and development cooperation financing through closer cooperation between the Ministry of Planning, the Ministry of Economy and Finance, the Council for the Development of Cambodia and Supreme National Economic Council. When consensus on development priorities is built through the NSDP process which are subsequently prioritized and funded, the NSDP Update has to provide an equal level of detail for all sectors in order to inform policy and decision makers and the wider group of stakeholders including civil society organizations. As the integration of the NSDP Update and the National Budget (including development aid) progresses, the level of detail in the NSDP Update has to become similar for all sectors.

The NGO Forum on Cambodia hopes that these comments contribute constructively to the dialogue of the Government’s central agencies with the relevant line ministries/agencies supported by their development partners. All questions, comments and feedback related to this brief can be sent to the NGO Forum for which all contact details are provided on this brief.

For more information on policy matrix of NSDP Update conducted by the NGO Forum on Cambodia as mentioned in the background session, please go to this link: <http://www.ngoforum.org.kh/eng/core/dppdoc.php>.

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