

Good Practices, Measures and Challenges in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic

To be sent to OHCHR

Good Practices

Cambodia has successfully been implementing actions to minimize the threats of the pandemic. Up to now, there is no death case that has been confirmed. This has happened due to several reasons that could be considered as good practices

- 1) **Strong leadership of the Prime Minister that has enabled Cambodia to act quickly,**
 - a. It is the central command that leads, launches and promotes anti-virus measures including awareness raising, testing, contact tracking and border entry controls.
 - b. Schools, universities and entertainment venues were temporary closed.
 - c. Domestic travel was banned for a time and the Khmer New Year celebrations were cancelled. Thousands of factory workers were quarantined.
- 2) **Capitalizing on existing strong partnership** with development partners, NGOs, civil society organizations.
 - a. Many partners have immediately provided assistance to Cambodia. China, Japan and Vietnam donated medical equipment and supplies. The European Union, Australia, France, Germany and the United States committed millions in funds.
 - b. MOH has been working closely with the WHO representative and Pasteur Institute by providing clear and accurate information about Covid-19 every week and providing the public with advice and prevention measures through the media
 - c. MRD leads and works closely with partners in the Rural Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene sector to promote rural community awareness and enable them to practice handwashing with soap.
 - d. Many NGO partners have contributed through their on-going development programs.
- 3) **Active engagement in dialogues with fellow ASEAN member countries.** Cambodia has participated in several dialogues, exchanging information, experiences and lessons learned
- 4) **Ensuring strong coordination.**
 - a. The Cambodian government established the National Committee for Combating Covid-19.
 - b. MRD has organized coordination meetings and consolidated information from various partners using the 3 W (who, what, where) framework.
- 5) **Active involvement of sub-national agencies and local authorities.** Their roles are vital including in awareness raising. We ensured they were provided with information and technical support to utilize their capacity in working with rural communities.
- 6) **Recognizing the important role of our citizens.** Our communities particularly in rural areas have been assisting the authorities by educating friends and neighbors, distributing

masks and sanitisers. They cooperated with the authorities immediately in following the protocols for prevention.

7) Benefiting from our traditional wisdom

- a. Cambodian people normally wear face masks or kromar – traditional scarf to protect them from the heat when going out, before Covid-19.
- b. “*Respectful social distancing*” is part of our culture. While westerners shake hands, in Cambodia you are greeted with “Sampeah” - palms joined and with a slight bow.
- c. *The traditional custom of solidarity.*

Measures

The government under the wise leadership of **Samdach Techo Prime Minister Hun Sen** has adopted a number of measures to control the Covid-19 pandemic:

- Establishment of National Committee for Combating Covid-19: The Government established this committee to lead Government’s response which is headed directly by **Samdach Prime Minister**. An inter-ministerial committee has also been established to combat Covid-19 headed by the Minister of Health.
- Passing the Cambodia’s *Law on National Administration in the State of Emergency* (also known as the ‘state of emergency’ law). This was formulated in order to prevent instability and insecurity from happening in the society during the Covid-19 Pandemic.
- RGC has developed and been implementing the ‘National Master Plan for COVID-19’ in order to control the transmission of Covid-19 and mitigate health, social and economic impacts of the pandemic.
- The central Government including MRD has guided the sub-national agencies to adopt preventive measures. Sub-national agencies play important role to help combating Covid-19.
- Rapid assessment on poverty situation: The Government conducted rapid assessment in order to identify the poor households who have been affected by Covid-19 pandemic.
- Mobilize resources for supporting poor and vulnerable people: The Government called all relevant stakeholders to support the poor and vulnerable people who are impacted by Covid-19.
- Raise awareness of rural community on Covid-19 and its impacts: The Government has made efforts to combat Covid-19 through awareness raising to make communities better understand its threats, impacts and preventive measures.
 - Different means has been applied in order to raise awareness on Covid-19 and its impacts and proper practice to prevent the spread of Covid-19.
 - MRD has ensured that messages to rural communities get disseminated in a coordinated manner, using information materials that have been developed in collaboration with partners
- Social Assistance Program: The Government launched the Social Assistance Program to provide emergency assistant to poor and vulnerable households. The Government also has provided emergency relief to poor and vulnerable households
- Increase budget for CASH FOR WORK PROJECT up to 100 million USD: This project could create more incomes based on labor through job opportunities for those who lost their jobs due to the Covid-19 Pandemic.
- National budget reduced up to 50% of annual expense: This is one of the Government’s measure to reserve budget for emergency cases in responding to Covid-19.

- Ensuring attention to indigenous communities: The Government follow the principle of leave no one behind. Indigenous communities are not ignored and their rights continued to be respected and protected.
- Promote livelihood diversification to strengthen resilience of rural communities: The government promote agricultural activities which is a potential sector for rural communities to earn more incomes.

Challenges

- Strengthening collaboration within ASEAN
 - Promote the economic strength of the region through diversifying sources of growth by shifting the reliance on external demand to regional demand.
 - Promote integration and connectivity in all sectors to contribute to economic recovery and improve livelihoods.
 - Promote closer coordination and dialogue to identify joint measures in order to reduce negatively economic impacts.
 - Arrange urgent discussions to identify joint solutions under cooperation framework with ASEAN Plus Three on different sectors.
 - Strengthen Digital Connectivity: Share and support the technology during the social distancing such as E-government, E-business and E-Learning to ensure sustainable development within bilateral, sub-regional and multilateral framework.
- Mitigating severe economic impacts: A large number of poor households in rural communities will suffer as factories and businesses remain closed. We need to intensify rural economic development that has been promoted by MRD.
- Strengthening local government leadership and coordination, resource mobilization and operational capacities
- The poor and most vulnerable who mostly live in the rural areas may not well understand the threats of Covid-19 and its impacts. Much more remains need to be done including ensuring sufficient reach to the indigenous communities who live in remote villages
- Ensuring access to water supply, sanitation, and hygiene services for all. At the present level of coverage, many rural households especially the poor, do not have access to water supply which is crucial for handwashing practice.
- Ensuring effective and efficient implementation of rural development programs based on MRD's 2019-2023 Rural Development Strategic Plan.
- Protecting vulnerable populations through a multi-sectoral approach