

NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR THE ACCOMMODATION NEEDS OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES IN CAMBODIA

1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to set out a strategy for the accommodation needs of children with disabilities in Cambodia with priority being given to orphaned and abandoned children with disabilities.

The Royal Government of the Kingdom of Cambodia places a focus on community-based living and rehabilitation for children with disabilities while recognising that small-specialised centres are necessary for short-term transitional care and for the long-term care of children with multiple disabilities.

The development of this strategy has been undertaken by the Disability Action Council (DAC) Children with Disabilities (Accommodation) Working Group representing staff from the Ministry of Social Affairs, Labour, Vocational Training and Youth Rehabilitation (MOSALVY) and the DAC Secretariat plus members from National and International Non-Government Organisations (NGOs). Members have met regularly to discuss findings from information collected from organisations and community groups besides providing input into the National Strategy. Previous research studies undertaken by MOSALVY/DAC provided the basis for the development of the National Strategy.

The National Strategy for the Accommodation Needs of Children with Disabilities in Cambodia has been developed to reflect the Constitution of the Royal Government of the Kingdom of Cambodia and International Treaties including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), United Nations Resolution on Standard Rules on Full Participation and Equalization of Opportunities for People with Disabilities (PwDs) and the ESCAP Agenda for Action for the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The situation of children in Cambodia

Children under the age of 18 years comprise 40% of the total population in Cambodia. During the past decade the overall situation for children has improved but many challenges remain. For example, rates for infant mortality remain the highest in Asia. For many women care at childbirth is also inadequate or inaccessible, so as well as high infant mortality, infants are more likely to become disabled through childbirth.

At least a quarter of primary school children have little or no schooling. Half of the children in the country are malnourished and many suffer childhood diseases to a greater extent than occurs in other developing countries in the region. Children are also involved in dangerous occupations and live in hazardous circumstances that put them at greater risk of disability. Also the incidence of domestic violence is high in Cambodia. In addition Cambodia has one of the highest number of landmines in the world.

2.2 The situation of children with disabilities in Cambodia

Although no nation-wide census has been conducted, Cambodia is acknowledged as having the highest per capita of disability in the world. The Cambodian Social Economic Survey.....% of population

Children with disabilities and families of children with disabilities, generally face even greater difficulties with the added barriers of discrimination, lack of understanding of disability issues, and lack of capacity within the country to adequately meet rehabilitation, education and accommodation needs. In these circumstances, along with the poverty of daily life, many families feel unable to cope and often neglect, abandon or relinquish their disabled child.

2.3 The Royal Government of the Kingdom of Cambodia

The Royal Government of the Kingdom of Cambodia is committed to meeting the needs of all vulnerable groups in the society and, with the support of many non-government organizations is making some progress towards the provision of services to identified groups and individuals. However the needs of people with disabilities remain enormous.

The Ministry of Social Affairs, Labor, Vocational Training and Youth Rehabilitation is responsible for the welfare of children with disabilities through the General Directorate of Social Affairs, The Department of Children's Welfare and the Department of Rehabilitation.

2.4 The Cambodian National Council for Children

Following the endorsement of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child the Royal Government of Cambodia established the Cambodian National Council for Children (CNCC) whose responsibility it is to coordinate the advocacy, monitoring and implementation of the Convention.

2.5 The Disability Action Council

The Disability Action Council (DAC) is the national permanent semi-autonomous body made up of representatives of the Royal Government of Cambodia, NGOs and individuals committed to working for the well-being of people with disabilities in Cambodia. The mission of the DAC is "to initiate, secure and coordinate through participatory practices the services necessary for PwDs to enjoy equal rights and opportunities and quality of life as others in the community". Its role, therefore, involves working with PwDs and organizations working on their behalf, and acting in a professional and advisory capacity to the Cambodian Government's policy makers and legislators.

ON THE BASIS OF THE PRINCIPLES ENSHRINED IN THE CONSTITUTION OF THE ROYAL GOVERNMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA AND OBLIGATIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL TREATIES, THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED.

3 VISION

Children with a disability will be assisted to reach their full potential and have the same opportunities as all other children to active and valued participation in home and community life.

4 MISSION

The Royal Government of the Kingdom of Cambodia will implement inclusive policies and programs over the next five years to ensure that the maximum number of children with disabilities receive care and accommodation appropriate to their individual needs based on the rights contained in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Full Participation and Equalisation of Opportunities for People with Disabilities and the ESCAP Proclamation.

5 DEFINITIONS

Children targeted by this strategy are those who have been born with, or who have acquired an impairment, which has lead to difficulties in their ability to perform daily tasks such as being able to socialise, play, go to school, move independently from place to place or participate meaningfully in a range of family and community activities.

“Children with disabilities” are defined as people under the age of eighteen years who have physical or intellectual impairment, which may present a handicap to social interaction, mobility, education, health and well being and future employment potential.

6 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- ⇒ Children with disabilities have the same rights and needs as other children;
- ⇒ Like all children, children with disabilities are individuals and therefore have a wide range of individual needs, regardless of the type of their disability;
- ⇒ Children’s options are listened to and they are involved in decisions that effect them according to their age and ability;
- ⇒ The home and community in general, provide the base for the accommodation and care of children with disabilities therefore, where feasible, accommodation and care of children with disabilities should remain in the
- ⇒ Community either within their own homes otherwise in foster homes or in group homes;
- ⇒ Appropriate consideration (services) must be given to the special needs for children with multiple disabilities through small specialised centres;
- ⇒ Supportive community services are necessary to assist children and their families to remain living in the community;
- ⇒ Monitoring systems must be established to ensure the well-being of children with disabilities;
- ⇒ Appropriate training of parents and carers is necessary to ensure well-being of the child and their families;
- ⇒ Strategies to ensure the sustainability of supportive services are necessary;
- ⇒ Coordination and collaboration between all key players i.e. Government ministries, NGOs (national and international), civil society and individuals, is necessary to maximise support and for the protection of children with disabilities.

7 GOALS AND STRATEGIES

7.1 Accommodation

To promote and provide, as necessary and appropriate, diverse accommodation (housing) for orphaned and abandoned children with disabilities

Strategies

- ⇒ Collate existing information relating to the numbers of children with disabilities currently in institutional care and/or those requiring specialised care who are currently placed in other institutions;
- ⇒ Collect information throughout Cambodia, initially through government ministries and NGOs, on the extent of the problem, to assist in policy and planning development;
- ⇒ Analyse existing institutional care facilities with a view to upgrading these centres in terms of staff capacity, environment, sustainability, access to community activities and support;
- ⇒ Facilitate the establishment of Group Homes to accommodate children with disabilities in community settings (villages);
- ⇒ Facilitate foster/family care options for orphaned and abandoned children with disabilities;
- ⇒ Promote the inclusion of children with disabilities within existing accommodation facilities for children.

7.2 Training

To provide appropriate training to people who care for children with disabilities to ensure the well-being of the child

Strategies

Provide training for:

- a. Carers of disabled children including centre (institution) staff;
- b. Families looking after children with disabilities
- c. Community based workers

Further develop appropriate training materials;

DAC Community based Workers Training Group to provide guidance and instruction;

Department of Children's Welfare Monitoring Team to assist with training.

7.3 Education

To ensure that the maximum number of children with disabilities who live in the community or within centres have access to education

N.B THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, YOUTH AND SPORTS (MOEYS) AND DAC HAVE DEVELOPED INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICIES AND PROJECTS. Refer to Annex 1.

Strategies

- ⇒ Formal mechanisms established with MOEYS (Special Education Bureau)
- ⇒ Attendance at DAC Children with Disabilities Education Committee
- ⇒ Mechanisms established between... Provincial, District and Commune Authorities
- ⇒ Maintain links with UNICEF, UNESCO, NGOs
- ⇒ Contact maintained with NGO's through meetings of EDUCAM

7.4 Prevention

To assist with the prevention of disability in early childhood

Strategies

- ⇒ Consolidate formal links with the Ministry of Health (MOH): Department of Prevention, Health Promotion Unit; Maternal Child Health (MCH); Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs) Training; Immunisation Programs
- ⇒ Attendance at MEDICAM meetings to consolidate links with NGOs

7.5 Support Services

To provide or facilitate community support services, as necessary, to enable children with disabilities to live within the community

Strategies

- ⇒ Provide or facilitate awareness-raising programs and support for people living in communities hosting accommodation houses for children with disabilities
- ⇒ Provide or facilitate assessment, counselling and referral services for families of children with disabilities
- ⇒ Provide or facilitate the provision of appropriate equipment and therapy aids to enable children with disabilities to obtain maximum functional capacity i.e. wheelchairs, splints, hearing aids, ramps to buildings etc
- ⇒ Establish formal links with the National Rehabilitation Centre, Provincial Rehabilitation Centres and NGO community based programs and projects
- ⇒ Provide or facilitate the provision of respite care services as necessary and appropriate
- ⇒ Promote access to recreational facilities within the community
- ⇒ Promote the development of vocational training and income generating opportunities for children with disabilities and their families

7.6 Coordination and collaboration

To enhance the formal and non-formal linkages between Government Ministries, Communities, NGOs and IOs to avoid overlapping of services and to initiate and implement new strategies and programs to fill identified gaps in services.

Strategies

- ⇒ Formalise the DAC Children with Disabilities (Accommodation) Working Group as an Advisory Committee with specific Terms of Reference i.e. composition of members of the Advisory Committee (representatives of Government Ministries, CNCC, NGOs, IOs (i.e. UNICEF), children with disabilities and their families, community groups), the functions of the Advisory Committee etc
- ⇒ Promote and implement inter-ministerial and inter-sectoral meetings and workshops
- ⇒ Attend meetings of the CCC Child Welfare Committee, EDUCAM, MEDICAM and other NGO forums

7.7 Child Protection

To ensure that the Rights of the Child as they relate to children with disabilities are protected

- ⇒ Establish formal mechanisms with the Cambodian National Council for Children
- ⇒ Establish selection criteria for children with disabilities to be accepted into orphanages, specialised centres, group homes etc

- ⇒ Policy development on Staff selection, Job Descriptions and Discipline procedures for staff misconduct
- ⇒ Establish guidelines on child discipline and restraint
- ⇒ Enhance/establish referral, reporting, monitoring and evaluation systems between MOSALVY and NGOs
- ⇒ Assist in providing awareness-raising programs to teachers, social workers, medical and para-medical personnel and community groups

7.8 Finance

To ensure that adequate funds are available for the sustainability of services to support children with disabilities

Strategies

- ⇒ Establish criteria for financial support for community carers and families
- ⇒ Establish criteria for financial support for children with disabilities living in centres/orphanages
- ⇒ Further Government subsidies and annual budget to be sought and allocated
- ⇒ Establish a philanthropic Trust Fund or Foundation

7.9 Research

To conduct / facilitate participatory action research, based on ethical guidelines, to increase knowledge and awareness if issues relating to accommodation and related needs of children with disabilities

Strategies

- ⇒ Establish links with research institutes to undertake research, based on ethical guidelines, on identified areas/issues
- ⇒ Identify appropriate volunteers to be involved with research studies
- ⇒ Ensure results of research studies are distributed to relevant authorities and organisations.

8 MANAGEMENT AND COORDINATION OF THE STRATEGY

Role and Responsibilities of MOSALVY and DAC

MOSALVY is responsible for the welfare of children with disabilities. The Department of Children's Welfare, Under the General Directorate of Social Affairs has the Children with Disabilities Bureau. The Department of Rehabilitation with the Community based Rehabilitation Bureau is also responsible for people with disabilities.

The Department of Children's Welfare will be overall responsible for implementing the National Strategy in partnership with the Disability Action Council through the Children with Disabilities (Accommodation) Committee. The DAC will act in an Advisory capacity. A national program will be established for the development of policies and guidelines, standards, systems, and for the provision of support to provincial and community service providers.