



**Welcome Speech of Mrs. Bodil Pallesen, ADDA Manager
in Inception Workshop on
“Empowering Agricultural Cooperatives and Civil Society Development in Siem Reap
Province” (EASY)**

Firstly, on behalf of ADDA and the project partner READA and myself, I would like to pay my respect to:

- 1- **His Excellency Pov Piseth, Deputy Provincial Governor of Siem Reap Province and represented H.E Khim Bun Song, Provincial Governor** who agreed to spend his valuable time to chair the **Opening Workshop for EASY Project**
- 2- **Mr. Chea Saintdona, Director of Department of Agriculture Cooperative Promotion**
- 3- **Directors of Provincial Department of Agriculture and Provincial Department of Women’s Affairs, district governors and commune councils** for your participation and support in the organization of the workshop.
- 4- Your Excellency, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentleman,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen present here. I am very happy that you all responded to our invitation and thank you for attending this workshop.

First, allow me to briefly introduce ADDA and our main activities in Cambodia: ADDA is a Danish NGO established in 1994 by Danish and Cambodians living in Denmark with personal contacts in Cambodia and Vietnam. ADDA is a non-profit international organization working for Agricultural Development in Southeast Asia and Africa.

ADDA has cooperated with the Royal Government of Cambodia and local institutions since 1996 to contribute to the poverty reduction of Rural Cambodians, and successfully closing 4 other projects in Siem Reap:

- 1- **Integrated Women Empowerment Project (IWEP)** in 5 target districts of Siem Reap covering 130 villages, and approximately 30.000 farmers
- 2- **Innovative Approaches to food insecurity for urban and peri-urban poor (INFOSE)** in Siem Reap, covering 7 sangkats and approximately 1,800 households
- 3- **Empowerment of Civil Society** advocating for the rights of urban poor in Siem Reap (CISUP) covering 6 peri-urban and urban Sangkats/Communes of Siem Reap from INFOSE Project.. 1500 Urban poor households; civil society in Siem Reap; Local authorities, the Municipality, APSARA Authority and the Cambodian tourism industry benefited from the project.



4- Cooperative and Civil Society Development in Siem Reap Province (COCIS) funded by DANIDA/CISU from 2014 to May 2017 that covering in 6 districts, 29 communes, 115 villages with the direct beneficiaries of 3,500 households.

ADDA and local NGO partners implement of new / recently launched projects in Siem Reap and Oddar Meanchey:

- 1- CISOM Project in Oddar Meanchey Province and
- 2- EASY Project continuing from COCIS Project in Siem Reap Province.

ADDA's core strategies' include formation of **Farmer Field Schools**, development of democratic **Self Help groups** and Agricultural Cooperative with a **majority of women**. Over the years it proved to have significant positive impacts on agriculture, economics, social development as well as environment. We have often seen farmers' income doubled and the strategy has provided the basis for development of well-functioning CBOs.

Emphasis of ADDA is also the capacity building of local NGO partners which eventually lead to a stronger civil society. In Siem Reap we have enjoyed a very fruitful collaboration with READA for almost 10 years.

Last 3 years, we have implemented the COCIS project. COCIS was a successful project in term of poverty reduction by further capacity building of SHGs, development of Agricultural Cooperatives, business development, empowerment of poor through Community Investment Planning, legal rights training and soft advocacy.

Today, we are officially closing the COCIS project and we are very proud to declare further development of core activities by the "Empowering Agricultural Cooperatives and Civil Society Development in Siem Reap Province" (EASY)

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentleman..!!

You have all contributed to make COCIS a success..!! The successes are highlighted as following:

- SHGs are stronger and better functioning for the benefit of members through group business oriented and play wider role in their communities.
- SHGs significantly increased their participation in CIP processes - - local authorities recognized SHGs proposals and supported numerous investments.



- All ACs have viable businesses, they gained members, increased own capital and profit annually.
- ACs members received better terms on loans and cheaper agriculture inputs.
- ACs are operating in democratic, transparent and accountable manner.
- Poor farmers who received the support for their small proposals (ring well, rice bank etc.) have improved their living conditions – they have better access to clean water and lower interest rate on e.g. rice loan.
- 90% of trained SHGs have utilized constructive dialogue techniques to seek support from local authorities, e.g. authorities recognized their need and they obtained better public services.
- Living standards of the poor and poorest are improved and they have better dialogues with the decision maker.
- CPs are empowered and they have the ability to discuss problems, find solutions, and work actively with village chief and commune councils
- People are increasingly expecting transparency and accountability; open forums are seen as an effective form of communication by SHGs and by local authorities
- Commune councils are increasingly seeing integration in the CIP process and the open forum process as beneficial for themselves, - it raised relevant issues rapidly, gets to the point, and avoids misunderstandings; they can use the platforms to dispel false information and have communities understand both the role and limitations authorities face; the ability of the duty bearer during the forum to explain scenarios relieves tension between parties

Today, we can prove that democratic civil society organizations have developed and efficiently advocate on behalf of poor people to defeat poverty and hunger. It can be said that we are playing important roles to complement to the government in order to reach out for the **rectangular strategy phase III** aimed at promoting economic growth, creating jobs, equitable distribution of the fruits of growth, and ensuring effectiveness of public institutions and management of resources.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentleman..!!

We have 3 more years to gain more successes –

- further capacity building of ACs, SHGs,
- Development of a Cambodian Union of Agriculture Cooperative I Siem Reap,
- establish two more ACs and advocacy at higher levels.



Agricultural
Development
Denmark
Asia

This requires that we join efforts to implement the projects; therefore we are looking for fruitful cooperation with the government; the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, the Department of Agriculture Cooperative Promotion, line departments, especially PDA and PDoWA, with District, commune and village authorities in the target areas as well as effective coordination with other projects to avoid duplication of the action but rather develop complementarities.

This workshop is a good opportunity for you to get to know the details of the EASY project and start collaboration. Your feedbacks and recommendations at the early stage of project implementation are most welcome.

Finally, on behalf of ADDA, project partners and myself, I gratefully thank His Excellency, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen for your attention and wish you a fruitful workshop. *Thank you.*