

CARE worked in Cambodia from 1973 to 1975 providing food relief, medical and education assistance. We then worked in the Thai Cambodia border camps, returning in 1990, to assist the United Nations repatriate 370,000 Cambodian refugees from camps. The CARE Cambodia head office is located in Phnom Penh, with thirteen sub-offices throughout the country, we employ over 300 national and international staff and through working with government, LINGO and communities we have been able to harness the combined energies of over 3000 counterparts, seconded personnel and volunteers.

CARE Cambodia's Programmes are currently made up of:

- Health programme (health system strengthening, maternal and child health, reproductive health and HIV/AIDS – including prevention and care for those infected with and affected by the pandemic);
- Education programme (improving formal educational practice, bilingual education for ethnic minorities; and addressing access through scholarships)
- Rural development (including de-mining and rural development; food security, water and sanitation, Small Economic Activities Development and
- Disaster preparedness and emergency response.

Within these programme areas we aim to address the underlying causes of poverty by undertaking actions to:

- improve access to high-quality education, information technologies and training and better nutrition and health
- facilitate a more supportive and cohesive social environment
- improve access to, and management of, natural resources
- support the development of a policy and institutional environment that supports multiple livelihood strategies and promotes equitable access to competitive markets for all. and
- improve access to financial resources

This latter activity “Improving access to financial resources “ is vital in Cambodia and the region. Where microfinance and micro credit institutions need to be seen as the critical financial tool of the future.

It is CARE's contention that a world without poverty is possible if microfinance becomes a priority – in many countries in the region microfinance is the only way most people will have any hope of earning a living.

CARE's has worked for many years establishing independent microfinance institutions and we are proud to see represented today some of the institutions CARE helped to create.

I look forward to the next two days. I will listen, liaise and learn from you all and especially the quest speakers – for you who have traveled from Indonesian, Lao and Vietnam to PP -Welcome and do enjoy your time here – you will find Cambodia a delightful place to be.

To our Cambodian based friends and colleagues welcome and thank you for joining us.

Thank you