

CAMBODIA BUSINESS INITIATIVE IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT - C-BIRD
“BUILDING SUSTAINABLE PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN BUSINESS AND RURAL AREAS”

ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK SMALL SCALE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE 4575

August 24, 2005

Harnessing the resources of the business community for rural development

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER LAUNCHES AMBITIOUS ADB-SUPPORTED PROJECT TO DEVELOP C-BIRD

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Rural Development H.E. Lu Lay Sreng this morning opened the first meeting of the C-BIRD Public-Private Partnership Task Force. Comprising top-level representatives from Cambodia's leading business associations and related government agencies, and with observers from NGOs and donor agencies, the overall role of the Task Force is to steer the C-BIRD initiative through the eight-month period of the Asian Development Bank-supported technical assistance project.

The Cambodia Business Initiative in Rural Development (C-BIRD) is a program to connect businesses and rural society through innovative partnerships that leverage resources from both sides to develop sustainable income generating activities for rural areas. Or to seek new solutions to build human resources and meet other basic needs. In sum to reduce poverty levels in Cambodia.

The private sector generally has an entrepreneurial way of operating and finding solutions that is based on vision, innovation and planning. This business know-how is traditionally lacking in rural societies. For example, farmers are eager to grow food and vegetables, yet they are disconnected from the

information and resources needed to develop their activity to become a strong and sustained source of income. With the business sector's expertise, farmers can learn the skills needed to create more profitable and sustainable enterprises and activities and generate income.

The Deputy Prime Minister stressed that a C-BIRD partnership is always a win-win activity, with benefits accruing to the business side as well. First, the involvement of staff members from the business enterprise results in higher levels of morale. Second, the company is able to achieve higher levels of corporate social responsibility. And third, to the extent that the C-BIRD activities relate to the core business of the company, either through deepening the supply chain or supplying some raw materials or products to the company, the profitability of the company may also increase. However, even when businesses are mainly concerned with just "giving something back" to their communities, the resulting C-BIRD type of activity will build sustainable activities. For example, building schools for communities or installing solar powered units in rural households create a range of small businesses that may also serve other community needs.

Supported by the task force, the Ministry of Rural Development and the Asian Development Bank will be working over the next eight months to develop the C-BIRD concept and options for mechanisms to support these innovative business-to-rural society partnerships. At the same time, some new C-BIRD partnerships will be developed as pilot projects during the project period.

In conclusion, the Deputy Prime Minister stated: "I firmly believe that Cambodia has many possibilities and opportunities for development that will greatly increase the well-being of our rural people. And I believe equally firmly that the C-BIRD initiative will be able to play a major role alleviating poverty in rural areas."



Deputy Prime Minister Lu Lay Sreng addresses the C-BIRD Task Force Meeting; Other members of the panel include: Mr Shyam Bajpai, ADB Country Director (left); Dr. Kavi Chutikul from Thailand's Population and Community Development Association (far right), and Dr. Peter Brimble, ADB Consultant and C-BIRD Project Team Leader (second right)