



Promoting Child Nutrition in East and South Asia

Landmark Mekong Riverside Hotel
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Opening Remarks of H.E. Dr. Saysomphone Phomvihanh
Vice-President of the National Assembly of Lao PDR

Good morning and a very warm welcome to all my fellow Parliamentarians. It is a sincere pleasure to stand here and greet such an esteemed group of guests to Vientiane and Lao PDR. Allow me to also extend a special welcome to our own respected national members of parliament and nutrition partners from within Lao PDR.

As you know well, we are gathered here over the next three days to discuss childhood nutrition – an issue of paramount importance to each of our countries in terms of current and future economic and social development.

My fellow parliamentarians, the nutrition issues that each of our countries face need to be addressed with urgency. The issue of chronic malnutrition or 'stunting' – and the cycles of poverty and barriers to development this issue creates – poses a substantial challenge both here in Lao PDR and across the region. Together, we can assist to enhance our understanding of this topic along with the various other related issues that will be introduced and discussed in the coming days.

Fellow Parliamentarians, allow me to remind us all of the critical role that we, as Parliamentarians, play in addressing our nations' nutrition challenges and thus toward achieving related MDGs and development goals.

With the power to enact laws and regulations, we are able to influence how nutrition issues impact on economic and social development. Via our various responsibilities, we, as parliamentarians, are able to implement and shape our shared commitments to ending child malnutrition and therefore helping to fulfil our pledges toward ensuring the realization of children's rights.

As many of you know, Lao PDR is part of the Scaling-Up Nutrition movement. By joining this movement, we have made strong progress in addressing malnutrition by addressing nutrition issues through a variety of sectors. We

strongly believe that the returns on these types of investments today will be that much higher in the future.

As you will note in the days ahead, this seminar pays particular attention to parliament's role in tracking and earmarking budgets for scaling up nutrition. It also focuses on the other powers such as lawmaking, oversight, and representation that we, as parliamentarians, can deploy to help reduce rates of malnutrition.

In tangible terms, this means we hold responsibility for addressing numerous important issues related to child malnutrition by ensuring that proper legislation – such as laws related to child food marketing and adequate maternity leave for new mothers – are firmly in place and enforced.

I urge all of you to think creatively over the course of this seminar; to engage in productive discussions; and by the closing session to have produced a list of recommendations that can leave all of us feeling we have provided our very best contributions to the future of our countries and regions' children.

I wish you all a highly productive and successful seminar.

Thank you.