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**May 10th, 2011**

**Study reveals limited understanding of causes and impacts of climate change among Cambodians**

**Phnom Penh,** A vast majority of Cambodian people (95%) said that their livelihood has been affected by changes in the weather. At the same time, most Cambodians show limited understanding of climate change and how they could respond, according to a survey report entitled *Understanding Public Perceptions of Climate Change in Cambodia* released today by the Ministry of Environment. The report notes that most people think extreme weather events such as flood and drought are more frequent and intense, and they associate weather changes with rising temperatures, farming difficulties, reduced yield, drought, water shortages, and disease.

“This Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice (KAP) survey report is another major step that enables us to better understand public perceptions, and thus mainstream climate change in the country’s development efforts,” said H.E Dr. Mok Mareth, Senior Minister, Minister of Environment. “The dissemination of timely, relevant information will be central to enabling us and our partners to respond to climate change, the world’s greatest development issue of the century.”

Climate change is expected to have serious environmental, economic, and social impacts on Cambodia as the Cambodian people have fewer resources and technology to adapt. In particular, rural farmers, whose livelihoods depend on the use of natural resources, are likely to bear the brunt of adverse impacts. Understanding public perceptions of climate change is particularly important for concerned institutions to design programs that put local communities at the centre of their strategy, as the people are facing variable and reduced yields, water shortages, and an increase in pests and diseases on their crops.

“The findings are essential for all actors to make smarter investments in addressing climate change, particularly develop policies and programs that empower poor and marginalized communities to adapt to and recover from climate hazards,” said Brian Lund, Oxfam’s East Asia Regional Director, on behalf of the agencies supporting the KAP study. “These investments must help vulnerable communities build resilience to the unpredictable weather that jeopardizes their livelihood, especially in agricultural production.”

More than half of the survey respondents think they are unable to respond to weather changes and do not have the information they need to respond to these changes. Most of the people surveyed have incomplete understanding about the causes of climate change. They associate changes in the weather to local activities and do not understand the interplay of causes at the global level. Two-thirds (67%) said deforestation causes the weather to change. Scientific consensus links current climate change to both natural forces and human activities, and the largest known human contribution comes from the burning of fossil fuels, mainly used to produce electricity, heat, and transport.

The Ministry of Environment in collaboration with Danida, Oxfam, and UNDP in 2010 commissioned the BBC World Service Trust to conduct this KAP survey on Cambodian public perceptions of climate change, using a nationally representative sample of 2401 respondents and additional interviews with 101 key informants including journalists, NGO staff and government officials. The report aims to provide comprehensive information for all stakeholders—NGOs, Development Partners, public and private sectors—in developing their response programs to help Cambodians adapt to climate change.

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