



**AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY
PHNOM PENH**

MEDIA RELEASE

AUSTRALIA SUPPORTS YOUTH TO SHINE IN RURAL CAMBODIA

An Australian Government grant of close to AU\$200,000 has supported the Bright Hope Institute to expand its tertiary education centre in Kampong Chhnang. This support will enable the Institute to educate up to 800 students annually by 2012, including the provision of up to 100 scholarships to poor rural students and dormitory accommodation for up to 50 female students each year. As Bright Hope Institute is the only tertiary education provider in Kampong Chhnang, many of its students would otherwise not have the opportunity to obtain a tertiary education or would need to travel to Phnom Penh at greater cost and with a higher probability of not returning to contribute to the development of their province.

The recently completed 12 classrooms and four dormitories supported by the Australian grant were inaugurated today [7 February 2011] at a ceremony presided over by His Excellency Touch Marim, Kampong Chhnang Provincial Governor and Her Excellency Penny Richards, Australian Ambassador to Cambodia. Speaking at the ceremony, Bright Hope Institute Director, Mr Seng Sintha explained “The Australian grant has been a catalyst in enabling the Bright Hope Institute to provide tertiary education to rural Cambodians. We have already provided 63 scholarships to poor, rural students and we are also supporting local organizations and government agencies to develop skills through adult training. This demonstrates the positive social and economic impact a private company can have in rural Cambodia.”

Ambassador Richards said “Sustainable development and poverty reduction in Cambodia cannot be achieved in the absence of sustained economic growth led by a vigorous private sector. Through our development cooperation program, the Australian Government is partnering with the private sector to improve the living standards of thousands of rural Cambodians.”

The grant was provided under the Australian Government’s Enterprise Challenge Fund (www.enterprisechallengefund.org). This AU\$20.5 million fund promotes private sector investment in initiatives that extend goods and services or provide employment to poor communities in the Asia Pacific region. It awards competitive grants to commercially sustainable projects that could not obtain financing from commercial sources and that directly benefit the poor. At least half of the project costs must be met by the partner business. Three other companies in Cambodia have also received grants for the expansion of mobile phone banking services to rural areas, insurance for micro-finance borrowers and the development of a fruit-fly control bait to improve fruit farmers’ yields.

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