



## **AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY PHNOM PENH**

### **MEDIA RELEASE**

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#### **Australia helping Cambodians to tackle COVID-19**

Australia is providing financial support, technical expertise and capacity building to empower Cambodians to respond effectively to the unprecedented challenge of COVID-19. Australia's cooperation builds on our long-standing support for Cambodia's development. Australia aims to build Cambodian systems and institutions that can tackle the health and economic crisis in a coordinated way and that delivers results which last.

"Australia's approach is about empowering the Cambodian Government, private sector and civil society to implement coordinated measures for the benefit of all Cambodians. In the context of COVID-19, it shouldn't be about donors such as Australia leading the efforts and claiming all the credit. Our health sector assistance is helping Cambodia implement its own COVID-19 Master Plan. That way, our cooperation is more likely to lead to measures that are best suited for Cambodia and ultimately have more sustainable impact," said Australian Ambassador to Cambodia Pablo Kang.

"As a neighbour and long-standing friend of Cambodia, Australia has a stake in the health and welfare of Cambodians. We have provided over AUD 150 million in aid to modernise the country's healthcare services over the past decade, which in recent years has involved a focus on strengthening health financing systems," said Ambassador Kang. "This enables funds to be used more efficiently and directed to the right places quickly in a crisis such as the current pandemic."

Australia is the lead grant donor to the Cambodia Health Equity and Improvement Program (H-EQIP), which is implemented jointly by the World Bank and the Cambodian Government. Australia has already paid AUD 40 million into H-EQIP and has committed to contributing a further AUD 10 million over the next two years.

In addition to its long-term work to improve the quality of public health services nationwide, H-EQIP has also mobilised large amounts of emergency funding to enable the Cambodian Government to fund immediate COVID-19 needs. Earlier this month, USD 14 million of H-EQIP funds was rapidly allocated to purchase 20 ambulances and medical equipment, and develop Cambodia's laboratories to respond to COVID-19.

Australia is also re-shaping existing development cooperation initiatives to support Cambodia's management of the health and economic impacts of COVID-19. This includes promoting food security and creating rural livelihood opportunities for those who lose their jobs in the city; supporting the continuity of services for women experiencing gender-based violence; and delivering personal protection equipment and disability-accessible information on COVID-19 to Cambodians with a disability.

Australia will also continue to fund the delivery of piped water to rural communities in Cambodia through its Investing in Infrastructure (3i) Program.

“We estimate that, with Australia’s assistance, 1.1 million Cambodians will gain access to clean piped water for the first time,” said Ambassador Kang. “We hope they’ll use this – with soap – to wash their hands often and thoroughly!”

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