



**AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY
PHNOM PENH
MEDIA RELEASE**

**CAMBODIANS ADVISE AUSTRALIA HOW TO BETTER ASSIST
PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

Australia will sponsor two prominent representatives of Cambodia's disabled community selected to represent Cambodia at the International Conference on Disability, Disadvantage and Development in the Pacific and Asia to be held in Canberra 29-30 September.

Ms Heng Chanttey, Womens' Representative, Cambodian Disabled Peoples Organisation (CDPO) and Mr Kong Vichetra, Director, Komar Pikar Foundation have worked tirelessly for many years to promote the rights of disabled women, men and children in Cambodia. Ms Heng and Mr Kong have disabilities themselves and were selected for sponsorship after a very competitive process.

"Australia is very proud to support Cambodians with disabilities who are contributing to the important work that local Disabled Peoples' Organisations are doing", said Australian Ambassador, Ms Margaret Adamson as she farewelled the two delegates today.

Ms Heng said she was excited to be able to visit Australia and to discuss issues facing the disabled in Cambodia.

"I am looking forward to telling people from other countries about what is happening in Cambodia and to bring back information from the conference to Cambodia", said Ms Heng.

Mr Kong and Ms Heng will give a presentation about disability and development in Cambodia to international delegates at the conference. Following the conference, they will be part of a region-wide team advising AusAID on how to assist people with disabilities more effectively.

Australia is currently assisting the Cambodian government to develop a National Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities.

New AusAID Disability Strategy

In August AusAID held 16 consultative meetings across Cambodia as part of its new disability strategy. More than 120 Cambodians, including 67 people with disabilities, provided suggestions to AusAID on the best ways to support people with disabilities in developing countries.

"AusAID is developing a new Disability Strategy for our development program and it is vital to include the views of Cambodian people with disabilities," said Belinda Mericourt, AusAID's focal point for disability.

"They told us that people with disabilities often cannot gain access to basic rights such as education and health services, and employment and income generation opportunities. In order to make a real difference to the quality of life for people living with disability, an effective disability plan must reduce the impact of poverty and discrimination faced by people with disabilities and their families. This is our aim," she said.

Cambodia has one of the highest rates of disability in the Asia Pacific region as a result of landmines and unexploded ordnance, as well as disease and increased motor vehicle accidents.

For more information on AusAID's Disability Strategy, please visit:
www.ausaid.gov.au/keyaid/disability.cfm



(L to R) Australian Ambassador HE Margaret Adamson, Mr Kong Vichetra, Ms Heng Chanthey, Ms Belinda Mericourt, Australian Embassy.

***Media Enquiries: Fiona Cochaud, DHOM, 023 213 470
Australian Embassy Phnom Penh
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