



## **AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY PHNOM PENH**

### **MEDIA RELEASE**

#### **AUSTRALIA SUPPORTS COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT IN CAMBODIA**

The Australian Ambassador to Cambodia, HE Penny Richards, announced today that the Australian government, through AusAID, will provide up to A\$3.02 million over the next 20 months to increase citizens' ability to voice their opinions. The project will improve the capacity of Provincial Departments of Information (PDI) in three provinces – Battambang, Kampong Cham and Kampot – to deliver information to the local public. Australia's funding will facilitate access to information, and increase transparency and accountability on issues that affect people's daily lives. Australian support will help to improve both the amount and quality of information flows between local citizens and their government. HE Penny Richards made the announcement at a project launch and signing ceremony presided over by HE Khieu Kanharith, the Minister for Information, at the Ministry of Information.

People's right to information is an integral part of the democratic process. Freedom of expression is a fundamental human right. This project is particularly timely as it will support enhanced participation of rural communities in the upcoming Commune Council elections in 2012 and the next National Assembly election in 2013. Australia is pleased to announce its continued support for provincial radio, including talkback programs (first established in 2009), the production of feature stories, live broadcasts reaching communities, and a multi-media platform.

The Cambodia Communication Assistance Project (CCAP) will be managed by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) and the Ministry of Information. It will build on existing long-term and strong relationships developed through Australia's previous support to the Cambodian media through the Cambodia Radio Development Assistance Project (CRDAP) in 2005, the Cambodia Demand for Good Governance (DfGG) project in 2009 and the ABC's involvement in training Radio National Kampuchea (RNK) staff since 1993.

“Providing the opportunity for people to share information and voice their concerns will improve governance in Cambodia” said Ambassador Richards. “We look forward to the Provincial Department of Information radio stations in 3 provinces – Battambang, Kampong Cham and Kampot - setting a new standard of neutral and unbiased quality radio programs, which I am confident will attract a wide audience. We call on all media outlets in Cambodia to broadcast a wide variety of opinions and political debates, giving equal air time to various groups without discrimination or censorship.”

HE Khieu Kanharith, Minister of Information said “There are three crucial pillars in a democratic society: a multi-party system, participation by Civil Society Organisations and an independent media. Australia's assistance to the Ministry of Information is a key contribution to the three pillars. The CCAP will enhance the capacity of our provincial staff, support our provincial radio stations to provide the public with quality media services, especially talkback programs, and will support good governance at the sub-national level”.

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