

SPEECH

Remarks by Erin Soto, USAID/Cambodia Mission Director, U.S.-U.K. MOU Signing Ceremony

Sunway Hotel, Phnom Penh

June 18, 2007

His Excellency Professor Eng Huot, Sec. of State, MOH

His Excellency May Samoeun, First Vice Chairman, Nat. AIDS Authority

Dr. Ly Penh Sun, Deputy Director, NCHADS

Mr. Marshall Elliot, Head of DFID South East Asia

Dr. Michael O'Leary, Representative, WHO

Ms. Alice Levisay, Deputy Representative, UNFPA

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentleman

It is a pleasure to be here today with DIFD and our Government of Cambodia counterparts. USAID and DIFD are signing a Memorandum of Understanding under which we will jointly fund a new, five-year project, with a single donor, USAID, taking management responsibility of the activity.

This is a particularly special occasion in as much as it represents two important steps: a step forward in achieving our mutual goals for development in the health sector and improving the health of the Cambodian people. And a step forward on the part of USAID to improve the alignment of our assistance to Cambodia.

Under this new project USAID and DFID will partner with the Royal Government of Cambodia to support national social marketing systems which promote health products, education and services to prevent HIV transmission, increase birth-spacing and to reduce child mortality. The project will provide vital support to achieving the objectives of key Cambodian strategic plans for the health sector and the response to HIV.

The strong DIFD and USAID partnership in Cambodia is not new. This joint-project emerges from over a decade of positive and fruitful collaboration in support of key health goals of the Royal Government of Cambodia. With the Royal Government of Cambodia and other donors, USAID and DIFD have achieved significant results. For example:

- The reduction of national HIV prevalence from a high of 3% in 1998 to less than 1% today.

- Slowing the spread of HIV transmission through support to the Government's "100% Condom Use Policy." Together we have increased access to affordable condoms through a variety of creative distribution channels.
- Contributing to the increase in access to and use of modern birth spacing methods from 19% in 2000 to 27% today.
- Supporting the Royal Government of Cambodia to measure health achievements and identify remaining challenges through quality research such as the Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey (2005) and HIV surveillance systems.

The new joint DIFD-USAID project will use two (2) key approaches: social marketing of health commodities and behavior change interventions. Social marketing approaches complement public health care delivery but build on the strengths of the private sector. They have proven to be highly successful in Cambodia. As mentioned earlier, the purpose of this new project is to increase the use of high quality health products and services to prevent the spread of HIV; to improve access to reproductive health commodities and services; and to decrease child mortality for easily preventable diseases (malaria, diarrhea, possibly ARI).

The signing of this new agreement between USAID and DIFD underscores our commitment to improving donor alignment under national programs and is particularly timely as the questions of how donors can better harmonize their assistance to Cambodia will be a topic of discussion at the high-level Cambodia Development Cooperation Forum meeting (the CDCF) that begins tomorrow here in Phnom Penh.

On behalf of the USG, I wish to thank DFID for its confidence in USAID to manage our shared assistance, and we look forward to working closely with you to ensure your interests and concerns are addressed.

Finally, we look forward to working closely with our Royal Government of Cambodia counterparts to scale up what has proven to be an effective approach to delivering health services.

Thank you.