

SPEECH

Remarks by Jonathan Ross, USAID Deputy Director Office of Public Health, Number One Stamp Launch

Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications, Phnom Penh

December 1, 2006

Excellency So Khun, Minister of Posts and Telecommunications;
Excellency May Sam-Oeun, First Vice Chairman of the National AIDS Authority;
Ms. Elizabeth Smith, Representative from DFID;
Distinguished Guests;
Ladies and Gentlemen.

It's a great pleasure to be here on behalf of USAID to participate in the launch of the HIV/AIDS Prevention Postage Stamps featuring Number One Condoms. Ms. Erin Soto, USAID's Mission Director, who was scheduled to give remarks, sends her regrets that she could not be here herself.

You may be wondering why I'm wearing a casual shirt in the presence of Excellencies – this is what the HIV virus looks like. Wearing this shirt today serves as a way to raise awareness about HIV – I've already received a number of complements on it which has provided me the opportunity to talk about HIV and World AIDS Day.

Appropriately, the launch of the Number One Condom postage stamp is being held today, a day when the world over people gather to raise awareness about HIV and AIDS, reaffirm our collective commitment to continue to work together against HIV and AIDS, including promoting preventive measures (abstinence, being faithful to one partner or partner reduction, and correct and consistent condom use (widely known as ABC). We also gather together in an effort to reduce discrimination against those infected or affected by HIV and AIDS.

As the largest single donor of HIV/AIDS programs in Cambodia, USAID and the U.S. Government are providing over \$19 million this year alone in support of comprehensive prevention, care and treatment programs. USAID support builds critical local capacity of Cambodian individuals and institutions in an effort to ensure Cambodia has the institutional and human capacity to continue to grow. Critical to this growth is the need for transparency, elimination of corruption and increased Royal Government of Cambodia financial support for HIV/AIDS programs and broader social services.

In partnership with DFID, USAID has been supporting social marketing of Number One condoms since 1994. This collaboration between donors and partnership with the Royal Government of Cambodia has resulted in Number One's dominating the condom market as more than 75% of the condoms available in Cambodia are Number One's with a total of 177 million being sold over the past 12 years.

Though Cambodia is rightly proud of its success in reducing HIV prevalence, there is much work to be done to ensure the response to this disease continues to target those who practice the high risk behaviors that fuel the epidemic. Evidence shows that men are seeking sex outside of brothels where they and their sexual partners are more difficult to reach with behavior change messages and condom promotion. Other high-risk difficult to reach populations of concern are men who have sex with men, who also need to be reached by risk reduction and condom promotion efforts, and injecting drug users. Men who seek sex from beer promoters, in massage parlors and on the streets need to be aware of the risks to themselves and to their partners in contracting HIV. The Royal Government of Cambodia's successful 100% condom use program in brothels must be expanded to ensure condoms are reaching those populations most at risk for contracting and transmitting HIV. USAID is committed to working in partnership with the NAA and the Ministry of Health to implement such programs.

Over the past year, 8,000 Cambodians were infected with HIV and 20,000 died of AIDS – these figures represent individuals – mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, sweethearts, sons and daughters – only through prevention programs can future infections be averted. The launch of the HIV/AIDS prevention postage stamps are an innovative way of raising awareness about HIV prevention. Congratulations to the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications and the NAA for their efforts in issuing these stamps.

Thank you.