

## **Remarks by Erin Soto, USAID Mission Director, Ribbon Cutting Ceremony RULE Moot Courtroom**

Phnom Penh, Cambodia

September 25, 2007

Excellency Secretary of State of Education Im Sethy, Excellency Yuok Ngoy, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen. I am pleased to be here today to mark the official re-opening of the auditorium at the Royal University of Law and Economics. USAID is pleased to have provided \$90,000 to upgrade its facilities.

Through this renovation, completed during the summer break with USAID funding, a landmark, Khmer-style building on this campus was preserved. The building now houses, as we see before us, a large, modern auditorium that includes the first moot courtroom in Cambodia. A moot court allows law students a chance to learn important advocacy skills that they will keep with them throughout their legal careers, whether in the public or private sector. This moot courtroom was utilized in the very successful first Cambodian mock trial competition, funded by USAID, and held here in June.

Each year, this courtroom will benefit as many as 5,000 law students and 100 professors. It will provide a modern facility for interactive legal education and a proper forum for teaching trial advocacy to Royal University of Law and Economics law students, and others in the legal community. It will also provide innovative classroom space for law clinic practical instruction, another component of USAID's work in the legal sector.

This building is but one example of USAID's significant efforts to improve the quality of Cambodia's legal system. Others include support to legal aid service providers, training legal and judicial professionals, a model court in Kandal and a court monitoring project.

As you know, a strong and independent judicial system is critical to the development of Cambodia. A strong legal education system is the foundation of an independent judiciary.

The benefits of our efforts here, and other endeavors I've mentioned, will extend, in time, to the wider legal and judicial community.

I look forward to continuing our fruitful cooperation with the Royal University of Law and Economics. We thank the Rector, His Excellency Youk Ngoy, for his vision and leadership. Thanks, too, to Secretary of State Im Sethy, always and vocal supporter of modern education techniques. And, we thank EWMI and the American Bar Association for their work in facilitating the renovations.