



**AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY  
PHNOM PENH  
MEDIA RELEASE**

**Australia and Cambodia work together to reduce HIV infection**

Australia will support crucial HIV prevention programs in Cambodia under the HIV/AIDS Asia Regional Program (HAARP).

On Thursday 29 January 2009 Deputy Prime Minister Sar Kheng and Australian Ambassador to Cambodia Margaret Adamson jointly launched the Cambodia Country Flexible Program of HAARP.

Through HAARP, AusAID will provide approximately AUD4.5 million over five years to help the Cambodian government, UN Agencies and non-government organisations work with drug users to reduce the transmission of HIV associated with injecting drug use.

Around 24 percent of injecting drug users in Cambodia are estimated to be HIV positive, although there is no official figure. The risk of HIV infection associated with drug use is increasing as the Cambodian economy grows, and drug trafficking routes across South East Asia shift.

In a short time, Cambodia has made great progress in responding to emerging epidemics of both injecting drug use and HIV in injecting drug use. HAARP is aligned with the National Strategic Plan for Illicit Drug Use related HIV Aids and will work closely with the National Illicit Drugs and HIV/AIDS (DHA) Working Group and Secretariat to achieve the objectives of the Plan.

At the launch Ambassador Adamson noted that "harm reduction accepts that people become dependent on drugs, and does not question why or judge them for this. It is hard to stop using drugs. Even with the best treatment available and the best efforts of the drug user, it often takes years to obtain abstinence. Treatment of drug dependence is a long term goal, but reduction of the harms associated with drug use is a quick solution. Using a harm reduction approach, our governments can start today to make an impact on people's lives and prevent new HIV infections."

The Ministry of Health plans to pilot Cambodia's first methadone maintenance therapy program with technical support from the World Health Organisation and financial support from HAARP. This is an exciting development for Cambodia, increasing the type of drug dependence services available and giving heroin dependent drug users a real chance to make positive changes in their and their families lives.

HAARP will also support the National Authority for Combating Drugs Secretariat General (NACD-SG) in the development of a legal framework with will support human rights based approaches to the prevention and treatment of HIV and drug dependence in Cambodia's illicit drug using population.

For more information visit [www.haarp-online.org](http://www.haarp-online.org) or to schedule an interview please contact HAARP Program Director, Anindya Chatterjee on mobile +66 818 022 453 or email [anindya.chatterjee@haarp-online.org](mailto:anindya.chatterjee@haarp-online.org)

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