



## Media Release

23 April 2008

### **HAARP: New Australian Aid Program Works With Drug Users to Help Stop HIV/AIDS Epidemic**

***Australia's International Aid Agency, AusAID, today launched the HIV/AIDS Asia Regional Program (HAARP). HAARP works with governments, regional agencies, civil society organisations, and drug user networks, to reduce the spread of HIV associated with drug use among men and women in South East Asia and China. The eight year, AUD\$59m program was launched in Chiang Mai, where government representatives from around the world have gathered for a UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board meeting.***

The sharing of needles and syringes among injecting drug users (IDUs) is one of the major causes of HIV transmission in many countries in South East Asia. Without an effective prevention strategy, the number of HIV cases in Asia will rise dramatically.

"HIV continues to spread among people who inject drugs, not only because of a lack of services but also a lack of coherence in drug and AIDS control policies," said Dr Peter Piot, Executive Director of UNAIDS. "There is an urgent need for increased access to the essential elements of harm reduction for people who inject drugs".

The global emergence of HIV and its rapid spread among IDUs has increased the need for effective strategies to address these epidemics. HAARP's harm reduction approach recognises that HIV prevention among drug users must involve public health and public security together with drug-users and community organisations, to enable a coordinated and effective approach.

"Through advocacy, knowledge-sharing, partnerships and the scaling up of effective harm reduction services, HAARP aims to facilitate change at both community and government levels, and develop capacity for future harm reduction strategies" AusAID Minister Counsellor for the Mekong, Phillippe Allen said.

HAARP builds on the AusAID funded Asia Regional HIV/AIDS Program (2002-2007) which focused on progressing adoption of harm reduction approaches in Burma, China and Vietnam. In addition to these countries HAARP supports programs in Laos, Cambodia, and the Philippines. A Regional Technical Coordination Unit based in Bangkok provides technical assistance and ensures shared learning and coordination.

HAARP forms part of AusAID's Asia Regional Strategy, which highlights the need to address major trans-boundary challenges such as HIV/AIDS.

###

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@hlspworldwide.org](mailto:anindya.chatterjee@hlspworldwide.org)