

Partnerships

Comments on Behalf of the Donor Community By Australian Ambassador Lisa Filipetto Pre-CG Meeting 10 September 2004

Australia is very pleased to have been requested by the donor community to offer comments on the proposed new partnership framework, which has at its core the reformed Technical Working Groups. This is a partnership of the Royal Cambodian Government with donors and other key stakeholders. As with all partnerships, it requires a common vision, an understanding of available resources and a willingness to work together to achieve a common goal. In this case our shared objective is Cambodia's economic and social development, as set out in the Millennium Development Goals.

We thank Prime Minister Hun Sen for sharing with us his vision as set out in the Rectangular Strategy. We know that government ownership and leadership of the development process is fundamental, and donors are committed to work within the framework laid down by the Government.

Making the partnership process work is a necessity, not a luxury. Without such partnership, development assistance funding will not achieve our core aim of poverty reduction; and the economy and society will not achieve the kick start needed from a well co-ordinated development program. There are many competing demands for aid resources around the world, and there are no guarantees that aid to Cambodia will continue at the current relatively high levels. The volume of aid currently available to Cambodia represents both an opportunity and a risk. If aid is used effectively to build capacity and promote growth, we can build a prosperous, self-sustaining Cambodia which will increasingly be able to finance its own development.

We are also acutely aware of the importance of Government being accountable to its taxpayers and constituencies on the use of resources. We hope that through our partnerships we can strengthen the Royal Government of Cambodia's systems for reporting to and consulting with its citizens, and thereby demonstrate to our own constituencies that development resources are being effectively used in Cambodia.

The new framework for Joint Government-Donor Technical Working Groups provides a basis for more effective cooperation on 17 priority sectors and thematic areas. The TWGs are a central element in promoting better partnership between government and donors in Cambodia.

Key features of the new TWG structure include:

- TWGs are government led — they will be chaired and driven by government.
- Donors will play a supportive role.
- The groups will facilitate information sharing, support development of Government-owned sector plans, and develop joint activities and review mechanisms consistent with the Government's plans.
- The TWG will take care not to substitute for government in carrying out core policy making and implementation functions, but will facilitate dialogue and better coordinated support.

In order for the TWGs to be successful, it will be very important that the government clearly demonstrates ownership of the development process. This will require improved cross-ministry cooperation and reduced competition between agencies, and greater coherence within ministries so that different departments support each others' efforts to achieve a

common goal. It will also be important for donors to come to government “speaking with one voice” so that Government does not have to waste time sorting out contradictory messages. In order to play our part more effectively, donors will need to have more responsibility delegated to country missions.

We also welcome the Government’s proposal for a Government-Donor Coordination Committee to provide high level policy direction and facilitate resolution of more complex issues and bottlenecks identified by Technical Working Groups.

It’s expected that the TWGs will also play an important role in facilitating government and donor dialogue with civil society, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders. We recognise the importance of appropriate participation of all stakeholders in the development dialogue.

I would also like to emphasise the considerable achievements we have already made in promoting better development partnerships in Cambodia:

A fundamental step is the decision by Government that the SEDP-III and NPRS-II will provide a single government-owned framework for development and poverty reduction, incorporating the Millennium Development Goals — rather than having separate national development strategies as we do at the moment. Donors congratulate the Government on this decision and are committed to providing future development assistance within the new integrated framework. With a strengthened strategic framework and enhanced financial management systems, we hope that in the future, it will be possible for donor-government partnerships to make increasing use of budget support mechanisms.

There are also many examples of collective donor efforts in developing strategies and programs. The World Bank/ADB/DFID joint country strategy process is one example; recent work towards a sector-wide approach to the crucial area of public financial management supported by all donors in the sector is another.

The Rectangular Strategy provides a strong policy framework and we expect that this will be matched by strong government leadership, as evident from the Prime Minister’s presentation today. Implementation is now the key — including some ‘quick wins’ to raise confidence. Through joint efforts we can achieve the vision set out in the Rectangular Strategy and make real progress towards the Millennium Development Goals. Donors look forward to continuing to work in partnership to promote growth, employment, equity and efficiency.