

## **SPEECH**

### **Remarks by USAID/Cambodia Acting Mission Director Joan Silver, Workshop on A Policy Framework for Cambodia - The Right to Access Information**

Phnom Penh Hotel

July 25, 2007

Excellencies Senior Minister Men Sam An and Chheng Saroeun from MoNASRI;  
Members of Parliament and the Senate and other RGC officials;  
Mr. Kurt MacLeod, Country Representative for Pact;  
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good morning.

Only one month ago, on June 21, I had the honour of serving as a witness to the signing of the Action Memorandum between USAID and MoNASRI. That Memorandum provided for USAID's support for developing the Royal Government of Cambodia's policy framework for an Access to Information Law.

It is a great pleasure to be with you again today, to see the remarkable progress that has been made in this short time, and to emphasize once again, the importance of this work.

The inter-ministerial drafting team has produced a high-quality Draft Policy Paper that will be discussed here today. This is a significant achievement, for which MoNASRI deserves much credit.

I want to highlight in particular, the collaborative nature of this effort, which also includes representatives of the Ministries of Defense, Interior, Information, Justice and the Council of Ministers – all of whom have provided comments that have contributed to the relevance of the Draft Policy Paper.

I was particularly pleased to learn that the drafting team has focused on coming up with a Policy Framework that is relevant to the Cambodian context. I understand that the team has identified and addressed issues such as:

- The present capacity of Cambodia's civil service to support access to information, for example, records management and retrieval;
- The cost of providing access to information versus people's ability to pay;
- What information should be protected; and
- How disputes should be resolved.

Today, as we review the Draft Policy Paper, we will have the additional benefit of input not only from a broader group of Cambodian Government officials, but also from other aid donors and from representatives of Cambodian civil society such as Non-government Organizations.

Finalizing the Policy Paper will be a very important achievement, but it is also important to start thinking ahead now, about the next steps - that is, moving from a Policy Paper to getting an Access to Information Law drafted and approved.

USAID hopes that, after the Policy Paper is finalized, the process of reviewing it can proceed quickly. It will be important to also involve, at this stage, a wide range of stakeholders to ensure the relevance and acceptability of the final Policy Framework, and the legislation that will flow from this.

We are optimistic that the process of drafting Access to Information legislation can start sometime in 2008. USAID is ready to provide additional support and technical expertise through Pact's Good Governance Program, to assist in drafting of the Law.

In closing, I commend you all, on behalf of USAID, for the excellent work that you are doing. I also commend you for your commitment to ensuring that the people of Cambodia have the access to public information necessary for them to feel confident that governance is transparent and responsible.

I wish you all an informative and productive time today.

Thank you.