

*Media Statement*

**RELEASE OF INDEPENDENT DRAINAGE & FLOODING ASSESSMENT ON BOEUNG KAK, PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIA**

***Technical report by Australian engineers anticipates increased severity of flooding around the Boeung Kak area especially to the north. Report highlights inadequate mitigation and potentially major flooding issues unless plans are revisited.***

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A team of Australian engineers carrying out an independent study, in cooperation with Cambodian NGO Sahmakum Teang Tnaut, have confirmed that the filling of Boeung Kak will have significant drainage and flooding implications especially in the Russei Keo district. They also point to significant shortcomings within the developer's (Shukaku Inc) Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) produced in August 2008.

*'The drainage improvements proposed in Shukaku's ESIA are shown to be insufficient to alleviate flooding impacts due to the development of the Boeung Kak area' notes one of the conclusions within the Engineers' report which goes on to add 'the areas of greatest impact are immediately to the north of Boeung Kak ...the culverts recently constructed by the MPP connecting the Toul Kork and Oveng canals are significantly undersized. Without more detailed design and analysis this approach is potentially negligent.'*

In recent months these predictions have already begun to take shape as large areas of Russei Keo were inundated for many weeks causing widespread disruption to schools and businesses. There have also been a number of questions raised about the openness of the community participation process and the core issue of why 133 hectares of prime public open space in the centre of the city is being converted to development by a private company.

*'This report confirms what many have suspected – that the development at Boeung Kak is being undertaken without full regard to the environmental impacts. The MPP has the ability to showcase the development of Boeung Kak as an inspired process involving urban planning, business development and poverty reduction. To date it is difficult to see evidence of any real process. More disturbingly a palpable sense of fear has enveloped the Boeung Kak area and the window for public dialogue and participation has all but disappeared. Few residents dare speak openly.'* commented Hallam Goad, Adviser for Sahmakum Teang Tnaut.

The report goes on to recognise the efforts the MPP and the *Bureau des Affaires Urbaines* (BAU) have made in trying to create a city masterplan in conjunction with the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) flood prevention projects in Daun Penh district but points out that the masterplan does not mention development of Boeung Kak and indicates that the MPP is *'not committed to working towards sustainable development that will showcase Phnom Penh as the 'Pearl of Asia'* (a reference to the 2003 Asia Urbs/ MPP design competition won by architectural graduate Meng Bunnarith)

*The MPP should consider land sharing schemes with current residents and for example, look at retaining at least 80 hectares as a Royal Botanic park or public space/water body for the common good and the patrimony of the City. This would be a fitting tribute to Phnom Penh as one of the truly great and forward looking cities of Asia. The gain in real estate prices, tourism and 'liveability' for the city residents would far outweigh any short term commercial gain and would also help with flooding issues.'* added Goad

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