

improvement of court buildings. It has also supported 14 ngos which have provided legal training to provincially-based police and armed forces, teachers and workers, government employees and villagers. If funding can be found, the project may expand to work in land rights, including the handing over of newly de-mined land.

UNDP is seeking new bilateral funding for all of the programs under the project.

#### **d) Bilateral Donors and International Ngos**

The US (USAID) has funded the American Bar Association (ABA)'s assistance to its Cambodian counterpart. The focus has been on developing a legal aid (public defenders) program. The program was having results; however, recently a problem cropped up in which the head of the Cambodian Bar, Say Bory, and the Ministry of Justice insisted that under Cambodian law, only the Cambodian Bar had the legal authority to establish and operate legal aid (up until then, American lawyers were active). US funding to the Bar itself ended after July. A partial compromise has emerged in which the Cambodian Bar will continue to use ABA-rented premises and the services of the ABA lawyer Jeff Falt will still be available in a "less active" way. USAID will continue to fully fund the program of the Cambodia Defenders Project, which is managed by the US-based Human Rights Law Group and which, together with the Dutch-funded Legal Aid for Cambodia (LAC) support some aspects of the public defenders program. The Cambodian Bar itself, however, now lacks funding because of the cuts imposed by USAID and yet has the legal responsibility to provide legal aid.

TAF has been actively supporting a number of other legal initiatives. It has provided a comprehensive training program in contract law for over 100 government officials, judicial officers and members of the private sector. The final phase was conducted by Cambodians who had been trained through TAF, which has four expatriate lawyers on staff. TAF has just published Khmer texts on contract law for practitioners and government. It is also half-way through work on a bench-book of procedures for judges.

TAF representative Jon Summers felt that assisting Cambodia in developing its legal system was an especially promising and significant area. He saw the UNDP/UNCHR mentorship project as having produced good results. He also saw it as realistic to expect that the legal system could be helped to become reasonably impartial and professional. It should be possible, he thought, to identify three or four senior, excellent Cambodian judges and to design with them a project to improve the judicial system, particularly important now when so many new judges have been just named. It would also be key to bring in Asian judges to assist, and, in general, to "asianize" assistance. A donor commitment of three years, he felt, could produce some impressive results.

**France** has several programs related to strengthening the legal system:

- assistance to the national police, a program of 11.3mn francs since 1992, which includes