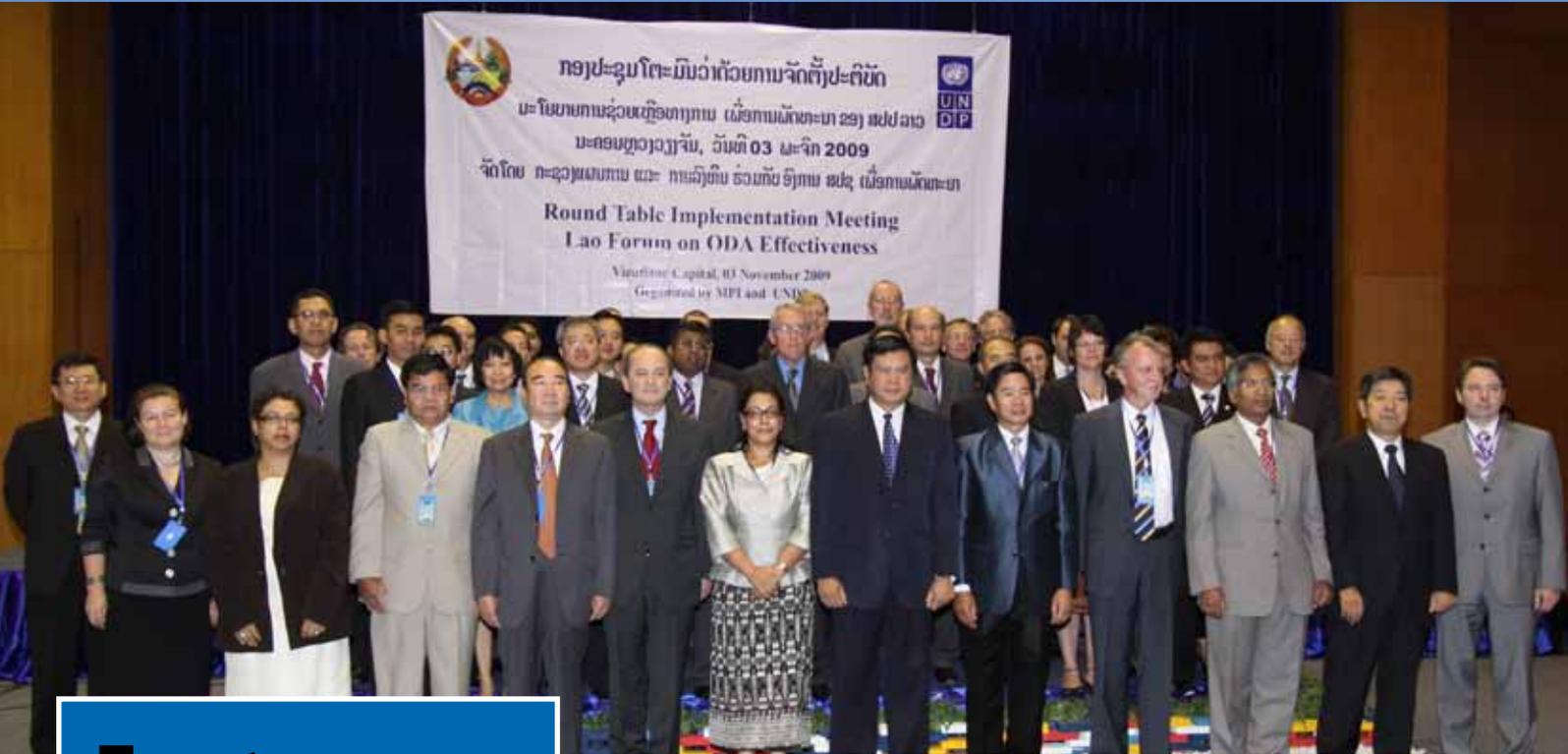




United Nations

Working for Lao PDR

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**Round Table Implementation Meeting
 Lao Forum on ODA Effectiveness**
 Vientiane Capital, 03 November 2009
 Organized by MPI and UNDP

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Progress Made, Challenges Ahead: 2009 Round Table Implementation Meeting

Aid effectiveness is a vital part of the development process in the Lao PDR, which received US\$560 million in aid in the financial year 2008-09, and the Round Table Implementation Meeting (RTIM) is the key annual national platform for aid effectiveness.

The highly successful 2009 Round Table Implementation Meeting, held in Vientiane on 3 November, was opened by His Excellency the Prime Minister of the Lao PDR Mr Bouasone Bouphavanh and co-chaired by His Excellency Mr Sinlavong Khoutphaytoun, Minister of Planning and Investment, and Ms Sonam Yangchen Rana, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative for the Lao PDR. It was well attended by Government, development partners and resident and non-resident donors.

The 2009 RTIM agenda was built around joint statements by the eight Sector Working Groups on the achievements and progress in the Lao PDR over the past year and the key challenges ahead. A series of pre-consultations also took place before the meeting, giving room for more informal exchanges reaching out to broader communities.

Development partners commended government achievements over the past year, including continued robust growth and poverty reduction. Participants discussed five key issues during this UNDP-supported forum for development dialogue: climate change; private sector development; natural resources management; governance and coordination, and the Government's

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H. E. the Prime Minister of the Lao PDR Mr Bouasone Bouphavanh, at the opening of the 2009 Round Table Implementation Meeting in Vientiane, with (left) Ms Sonam Yangchen Rana, UN Resident Coordinator/ UNDP Resident Representative, and (right) H.E. Dr. Sinlavong Khoutphaythoune, Minister of Planning and Investment, RTIM co-chairs.

The Round Table: Forum for Development Dialogue

The Round Table Process (RTP), led by the Government of the Lao PDR, is the primary platform for in-depth dialogue between the Government and development partners. The Process consists of Round Table Meetings (RTMs) every three years, annual Round Table Implementation Meetings (RTIMs) and Sector Working Groups (SWGs), reporting to the Round Table National Steering Committee chaired by the Prime Minister.

The Lao PDR has participated in the RTP, with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), since 1983. Initially, RTM's were held every three years in Geneva, but following consensus between the Government and donors of the process in 1999, the RTP developed into a continuing, dynamic in-country process. In line with national ownership and the aid effectiveness agenda, this enables more national stakeholders to participate.

High level RTMs, chaired by the Prime Minister, are held every three to four years in Vientiane. At this forum the Lao Government and development partners review and monitor the progress of nationally and internationally agreed development goals. In addition to discussions on development outcomes of the strategies and programmes, development partners commit funds supporting national strategies. The next RTM will be in 2010.

The UN Resident Coordinator/UNDP Resident Representative, the Minister of Planning and Investment, and a number of development partners report back to the Prime Minister on the discussions from each RTIM. Sector Working Groups examine key issues throughout the year in a participatory process and provide inputs to the Meetings. Current SWGs are: Health; Macroeconomic Issues and Private Sector Development; Education; Infrastructure; Governance; Drug Prevention; UXO and Cluster Munitions; and Agriculture, Rural Development and Natural Resources.

More information on the Round Table Process, and core documents from Round Table Meetings, can be found on the website: www.rtm.org.la

"The Round Table Process is the appropriate forum for the exchange of in-depth and constructive dialogue on how we can best deal with the adverse impact and the emerging challenges so that we can create enabling conditions for Lao PDR to pursue its development path in a consistent and sustainable manner."

His Excellency the Prime Minister of the Lao PDR
Mr Bouasone Bouphavanh, in his opening remarks to the 2009
Round Table Implementation Meeting

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key strategic planning document, the 7th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSED) which will be operational for five years from 2011 to 2015.

The Round Table Process has become an increasingly effective mechanism to build consensus between the Government and its Development partners. The positive actions of the Government to discuss the issues and challenges faced by all stakeholders have significantly enhanced dialogue and harmonisation. There are several advancements, e.g. strengthened public financial management and domestic legal reforms, reflected in ratification of two core international human rights treaties as well as the new decree on Not-for-profit Associations.

Achieving the MDGs by 2015 will advance the Lao PDR towards graduation from Least Developed Country status. This will require not only increased investment and higher GDP, but also quality and sustainability of growth. Several MDGs still require special efforts: child malnutrition, maternal mortality, gender equality, and environment. In view of the scale and significance of the issue, the UN proposed that Food Security and Nutrition be added as a separate agenda item under Cross Cutting Issues. Climate change was raised as a major new concern, and an area for which increased resources should be made available.

In terms of sustainable growth, it was recommended that Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) across resource and non-resource sectors be balanced and diversified. Priority should be given to FDI that generates sustainable jobs and incomes, transfers skills and technology to Lao workers and safeguards environmental assets. The UNCT emphasised the importance of promoting policies and programmes that ensure the most vulnerable benefit fully from development and growth. Many participants voiced strong support for further development of the domestic private business sector to create sustainable jobs and incomes, and the importance of more transparency in foreign investment decision making.

In previous years the Round Table Process has resulted in very tangible outcomes. In 2007 the RTP resulted in formulation of a national nutrition strategy and action plan, and in 2008 it placed emphasis on reaching the MDGs by 2015 as a precondition to exiting the list of Least Developed Countries. The 2009 RTIM has led to an agreement that, for the first time in the Lao PDR, the next NSED will be formulated through a consultative process involving development partners.

MDG-focused 7th NSEDP



In the Lao PDR, development priorities are set by the Government every five years. The strategic National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDP) is a tool that guides all development partners in their work. The aim is to accelerate economic growth and reduce poverty. Equally important aims are achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and exiting Least Developed Country status by 2020.

Consultation with development partners, coordinated by the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI), began during the mid-term review of the 6th NSEDP. This was subsequently expanded into a full consultation process for formulation of the 7th NSEDP, which development partners will use for their country programming processes.

The Government is pursuing four strategies in its aim of exiting Least Developed Country status by 2020. First, the country concentrates on reducing poverty. Secondly and thirdly, rapid growth in the farm sector and rapid growth in the non-farm sectors are required. Fourth, exports must be promoted, while supporting regional development. Achieving macro-economic targets, led by industrial growth of 15%, and strengthening the social sectors, could support the Lao PDR to graduate from being a low income to a middle income country.

Between 2006 and 2010, the country reached several macroeconomic achievements. For example, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth was approximately 7.6% per year, and total investment was nearly 29% of the GDP per year. For the five year period of the 7th NSEDP (2010 – 2015), overall levels of investment identified will be US\$15 billion - three times current investment levels - of which one third is identified for the social and MDG-related sectors. As presented in the Round Table Implementation Meeting (RTIM) in November, the implementation of the 7th NSEDP will request doubling of Official Development Aid (ODA) channelled through the Government.

In order to underpin the development of a feasible strategy, the UN supported five task forces to determine the total public expenditures required to fund social sector activities and to achieve the MDGs, and a study to determine accurate population and demographics.

The UN in the Lao PDR is providing technical assistance for building the national capacity to deliver these Goals, supporting further localisation of the MDGs relevant to the national context and priorities. Informed development planning is also being supported, by promoting increased access to data. Through this process, the UN family is promoting equitable, rights based development which will benefit all members of society, in particular the most vulnerable and marginalised.

Development partners have supported the overall strategic directions of the 7th NSEDP and the identified objectives: providing necessary pre-requisites for improving people's living conditions, reducing poverty and accomplishing the MDGs; stabilizing the economy and promoting rapid growth; ensuring development consistency with socio-economic growth and environmental protection; improving efficiency, reliability and transparency of state and private management; strengthening international cooperation and developing competitiveness; and finally, integrating with other countries regionally and globally.

Throughout the formulation of the 7th NSEDP there will be a continuous dialogue between the Government and development partners, including consultations through the Sector Working Groups of the Round Table Process. After approval by the appropriate authorities in the Government and the State, the NSEDP will be presented at the Round Table Meeting at the end of 2010 for feedback and discussions about supporting financial mechanisms.

UN planning for a strategic and results-oriented programme: United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for the Lao PDR

Supporting the Government's 7th NSEDP, the UNCT of the Lao PDR will embark upon a harmonised programming process for the period from 2012 - 2016 by rolling out the UNDAF preparation process in early 2010. UNDAF is the 5-year strategic programme of the UN, aligning to and supporting the national development strategy.

This is a product of partnership between the UNCT, development partners and the Lao Government. National ownership, leadership and management of the priorities outlined in the UNDAF are critical for the UN, as the largest portion of its funding and technical assistance is focused at national and sub national levels.

With less than a decade left in the world's aspiration to achieve the MDGs, the UN in Lao PDR seeks to leverage its commitment to neutrality and technical expertise through its global network, in supporting the Government to achieve equitable and sustainable development.

The current UNDAF and other core documents are available on the UN Lao PDR website: www.unlao.org

Addressing MDG1: The Challenge of Nutrition

The causes of maternal and child undernutrition – food insecurity, poor health and inappropriate care – are predictable and preventable. Yet many countries have failed to achieve a sustainable reduction of child malnutrition, jeopardizing their efforts to achieve their MDG targets.

To address this challenge, FAO, UNICEF, WFP and WHO joined forces to renew efforts against child hunger and undernutrition through the Global Initiative REACH - Renewed Efforts Against Child Hunger. Given the alarming nutrition situation and the commitment of the Government and the UN Country Team to address this challenge, the Lao PDR is one of two countries piloting the REACH approach. This is a country-led approach to scale up proven, effective interventions addressing child undernutrition through the partnership and coordinated action of UN agencies, civil society, donors, and the private sector, under the leadership of national governments.

At the global level, REACH creates a knowledge-sharing platform to capture and disseminate successful operational practices. At the country level, the REACH approach promotes a facilitated, systematic process for joint action planning and implementation to scale-up proven interventions and identify synergies across partners.

Since its inception in July 2008, much has been achieved by the Government and its development partners. Stakeholder coordination has improved significantly, continuous advocacy on nutrition and food security has increased awareness and commitment of all stakeholders to address the “chronic crisis” of malnutrition, and a joint situation analysis resulted in a common understanding on the nutrition situation in the Lao PDR.

Increased collaboration in strategic planning enabled the creation of the first National Nutrition Policy, Strategy and Plan of Action. The documents reflect the local context and are consistent with global best practices. Common goals and distinct responsibilities outlined in the Strategy and Plan of Action – that were signed in November 2009 – will enable well-coordinated implementation and provide full transparency and accountability for all stakeholders.

The next major challenge: Mobilizing resources and implementing the high priority interventions of the National Plan of Action.

For further information, visit the REACH website:
www.reach-partnership.org



“It is increasingly clear that MDG 1 and other MDGs, as well as graduating from Least Developed Country status by 2020, will not be achieved without immediate, decisive and integrated action to address malnutrition.”

Ms Sonam Yangchen Rana, UN Resident Coordinator in the Lao PDR, speaking at the 2009 RTIM

Insects - food of the future



Insects are an important traditional food, with more than 164 insect species being eaten in Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam. Insects are a great source of

calcium, protein, and fats for people’s diets and have conventionally supplemented rice. In this context, FAO is piloting insect farming - to advance knowledge on alternative production of indigenous foods and to promote the link between sustainable natural resource management and nutrition. Insect farming is environmentally friendly, requiring less energy, time and investment than other meats, and encourages biodiversity protection.

“We need to understand that environmental degradation, poverty reduction and food security are strongly linked”, explained Mr. Serge Verniau, the FAO Representative to the Lao PDR.

The pilot investigates the feasibility for farming insects through research, family-based farm production and studies of the nutritional value of insects and aspects of food safety.

Supporting the Lao PDR at the historic SEA Games



The 25th Southeast Asian Games (SEA), the highlight of the year's public events, was held in Vientiane in December. It was the first time that

the country staged such a major sporting event. The operation brought great acclaim from national and regional participants.

During both the preparation for and the staging of the Games, UN agencies supported the Government to help ensure that both Lao communities and visitors enjoyed the events in safety and comfort.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) supported the Ministry of Health preparations for the SEA Games as part of ongoing capacity building in the areas of food safety, surveillance and response and emergency health management.

In the many promotions published during the Games, in line with government initiatives to upgrade food safety, travellers and residents were encouraged to eat safe, nutritious food and exercise regularly.

Human Trafficking: supporting awareness-raising and capacity-building

Human trafficking, an issue of concern for the Lao PDR, is being addressed by the Government and UN development partners. Government attempts to promote safe labour migration has been instrumental in the ratification of 8 ILO international labour standards covering labour, gender discrimination and child labour, and the United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking (UNIAP) facilitates a strong, coordinated response to human trafficking in the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) and beyond.

Along with several other agencies, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is currently providing support, working within the Lao legal sector to strengthen the legal and law enforcement institutions to prevent and combat human trafficking. Implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Justice, this effort aims to strengthen the capacity of the criminal justice institutions, including the judiciary and the government law enforcement bodies, to prevent, investigate and prosecute cases of trafficking in human beings and related forms of organised crime. A key component is the Core Training Group, a unique cross-cutting group from the Lao legal sector, that has provided training to peers in seven provinces, and also raised awareness about the human issues involved with senior officials at central level.

During the preparation for the SEA Games, several simulation exercises on H1N1 and food borne diseases were conducted, to scope response capacity during emergencies. By identifying capacity gaps, officials were better able to mitigate emergency risks.

With crowds gathering at venues around the city in large events like the SEA Games, enhanced surveillance allows fast responses and minimisation of health threats, whether naturally occurring or man-made. The focus for the surveillance and response staff, located at Games venues and central hospitals, was on information needs and communication flows.

In another focus, to ensure the safety of children during the SEA Games and beyond, a coalition of NGOs and UN agencies led by the Lao National Tourism Authority and the Tourism Police worked together to conduct a campaign around child safety from sex tourism. The hotline number 192 was launched as part of an ongoing campaign supported by UNICEF, UNODC, UNIAP, UNV, AFESIP, VFI, World Vision, Plan International and Friends International.

UN expert on religious freedom: first visit to Lao PDR



The United Nations Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Ms. Asma Jahangir

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Ms. Asma Jahangir, visited the Lao PDR from 23 to 30 November 2009, at the invitation of the Government, in the first mission to the country by a UN human rights expert monitoring religious freedom. The Lao PDR recently ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Special Rapporteur is mandated by

the United Nations Human Rights Council to identify any existing or emerging obstacles to Article 18 of the Covenant, which enshrines freedom of religion or belief.

Ms. Jahangir, a human rights lawyer based in Pakistan, held meetings in Luang Prabang and Savannakhet provinces as well as in Vientiane. She met respective Government officials concerning religion or belief, and discussions were also held with representatives of religious or belief communities, INGOs, development partners and the United Nations in the Lao PDR. The Special Rapporteur will present a report containing her conclusions and recommendations to the United Nations Human Rights Council in March 2010.

Climate Change highlighted on UN Day 2009

Climate Change, one of the great challenges of our time, was the theme of UN Day 2009. With over 70% of the population dependent on natural resources for their livelihoods and a national economy that relies heavily on the natural resource base, the Lao people are claimed to be highly susceptible to the impacts of climate change, which was an emerging issue of importance at the 2009 RTIM.

UN programmes are being developed and implemented to support the country in this issue, and in order to strengthen the position of the Lao delegation at the COP15 negotiations in Copenhagen in December, the UN supported reinforcing delegates' capacities and negotiation skills.

The joint UNDP-UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme) Poverty Environment Initiative (PEI) works with the Ministry of Planning and Investment and the Water Resources and Environment Administration to develop partnerships that improve the capacity of the Government and other stakeholders to integrate the environmental concerns of poor and vulnerable groups into policy, planning and investment processes for poverty reduction and achieving the MDGs. PEI activities, rolled out from mid-2009, focus on integrating poverty-environment concerns and opportunities,



UN Day 2009, Vientiane: Her Excellency Mrs Pany Yathotou, Vice-President of the National Assembly, makes a presentation to the winning student delegation from the UN Security Council Simulation Event, with Ms Sonam Yangchen Rana, UN Resident Coordinator.

including climate change, within the 7th NSEDP; raising awareness of poverty-environment linkages amongst decision makers; and building national and provincial capacity to consider environment concerns in investment, land use and development planning. The programme design was driven by extensive consultations in Oudomxay, Phongsaly, Saravan and Savannakhet provinces. Phase 1 involves support to Investment Management (MPI) and Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (WREA), and activities are developed in coordination with the ADB/IFAD grant for Sustainable Natural Resource Management and Agricultural Productivity Enhancement Project.

Government of Lao PDR and UNICEF reaffirm their commitment to children



From left: UNICEF Regional Director for East Asia and the Pacific, Ms Anupama Rao Singh, Standing Deputy Prime Minister Mr Somsavath Lengsavath, UNODC Representative Mr Leik Boonwat, and UNICEF Representative Ms Laila Ismail Khan, Vientiane, September 2009

The needs and rights of children will remain a key priority as the Lao PDR moves towards its broader development goals, senior government officials told a review of the 2007 to 2011 Cooperation Programme between the Government and UNICEF.

Chaired by Standing Deputy Prime Minister Mr Somsavath Lengsavath and UNICEF Regional Director for East Asia and the Pacific, Ms Anupama Rao Singh, last September's meeting examined the achievements of UNICEF-supported programmes for health, education, water and sanitation, child protection, HIV/AIDS, and advocacy and communication. It also assessed the outstanding challenges facing a programme which has a budget of US\$53 million over its five year term.

Expressing appreciation to UNICEF and other international organizations for their support to the Government's efforts to advance children's rights, Mr Somsavath pointed to a number of notable achievements, including the 2007 national measles campaign, the improvement in primary school enrolment and in ensuring access to quality learning, and the enactment of a new children's law. As UNICEF Representative in the Lao PDR Ms Laila Ismail Khan, highlighted, "Children across the country are being touched by our collaborative work in diverse ways that are boosting their chances of survival, growth and development."

The Regional Director hailed the role played by the Commissions for Mothers and Children at national, provincial and district levels in ensuring that children remained at the centre of the government's decision-making, planning and budgeting. At the same time, Ms Rao Singh urged the Government to increase its budget allocations for children and women, and to invest in strong social protection mechanisms that would shield the poorest communities against external shocks such as the current global financial crisis. "In terms of maternal and neonatal health, we have important unfinished business," said Ms Rao Singh. "Too many mothers die in child-birth and too many young children do not thrive – or even survive – as they should."

Typhoon Ketsana: coordinated UN response

On 29 September, devastating storms and floods caused by Typhoon Ketsana hit the southern Lao provinces Savannakhet, Attapeu, Saravan, Champasak and Sekong. The UN immediately responded, supporting the Government relief effort for people and communities who had lost homes, livelihoods and other resources by providing food, water and hygiene supplies and coordinating technical support.

In response to immediate, medium and long-term humanitarian needs, the Government and the UN launched a Flash Appeal to the international community for US\$10 million, later revised upwards to around US\$11 million based on the findings of a joint assessment (*Joint Assessment of Impact and Needs arising from the September 2009 Ketsana Typhoon: 17 November 2009*).

Undertaken by the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) of the Government, UN and INGOs, the Joint Assessment quantified losses and assessed requirements for immediate and long-term recovery. According to the Assessment, an estimated 180,700 people, 23 percent of the area's population, were

affected, with 9,600 households displaced. Livelihoods and infrastructures of communities were destroyed, compounded by the storm striking during the lean season when household food stocks were at their lowest and farmers were about to harvest their crops. Education was disrupted; UXO were displaced; and health risks increased from damaged or contaminated water supplies and disrupted access to health services.

IASC partners, coordinated by the UN, are fully engaged in activities at provincial and district levels to respond to people's immediate, medium and long-term health, agricultural, infrastructure, protection and livelihood requirements. With the Lao PDR rated as one of 12 countries in the world likely to face the highest risk of floods in the near future, the UN is continuing a close dialogue with the Government on the nature and scope of partnerships among the Government, INGOs and the UN, in order to best support the country during times of emergency.

The Flash Appeal and Joint Assessment documents are available on the UN Lao PDR website: www.unlao.org

"In My Own Words": Mr Sert's story



October 2009: Mr Sert, in Ban Hindam, Sanxay District, Attapeu Province, lost his house and large parts of his harvest in floods following the storm. He told his story to WFP staff working in the area.

"Everything happened so fast, within an hour the water was already at roof level. I had just enough time to gather my family, take a small bag of rice and flee to the mountains, where we stayed for 5 days.

When we came back to Ban Hindam it was chaos. The mud was still as high as my knees and it was very difficult to clean and repair the houses. All of us lost many personal belongings because the water flushed them away, especially small things like cooking materials or tools, and we couldn't find them.

My house was completely washed away, and only some sticks are left in the ground. I have to rebuild a new one but still need some materials to finish it. My harvest was devastated. This year I could only harvest ten bags of rice instead of fifty. We have five children, so we can't even feed ourselves for two months.

I don't know what I will do now, I really don't. Usually I would ask my relatives or friends but they are all in the same situation. Nobody has enough food for the whole year. I am so upset, all the hard work in the field and all I harvest is ten bags of rice."



United Nations

Working for Lao PDR

The United Nations in the Lao PDR

Laos joined the United Nations in 1955, 10 years after it was established. The first UN agency office opened in Vientiane in 1957.

The United Nations Country Team Commitment to the Lao PDR

The United Nations Country Team in the Lao People's Democratic Republic is committed to supporting the efforts of the Government to improve the life of all citizens, especially those most vulnerable. We shall continue to work closely with the Government and all development partners for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Our collective endeavour is to assist the people of Lao PDR to achieve progress and better standards of living for all.

United Nations Development Assistance Framework for the Lao PDR (2007-2011)

UN Country Team in the Lao PDR

ORC Office of the UN Resident Coordinator

Resident UN Agencies

- FAO** Food and Agriculture Organization
- IOM** International Organization for Migration
- UNAIDS** Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS
- UNCDF** United Nations Capital Development Fund
- UNDP** United Nations Development Programme
- UNFPA** United Nations Population Fund
- UN-HABITAT** United Nations Human Settlements Programme
- UNICEF** United Nations Children's Fund
- UNIDO** United Nations Industrial Development Organization
- UNIFEM** United Nations Development Fund for Women
- UNODC** United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
- UNV** United Nations Volunteers
- WFP** World Food Programme
- WHO** World Health Organization

Resident International Financial Institutions

- ADB** Asian Development Bank
- IMF** International Monetary Fund
- WB** World Bank

Non-Resident UN Agencies

- ESCAP** United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
- IFAD** International Fund for Agricultural Development
- ILO** International Labour Organization
- ITC** International Trade Centre
- ITU** International Telecommunications Union
- OCHA** Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
- OHCHR** Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
- UNCRD** United Nations Centre for Regional Development
- UNCTAD** United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
- UNEP** United Nations Environment Programme
- UNESCO** United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
- UNHCR** United Nations High Commission for Refugees



While I am satisfied that we sealed a deal, I am aware that the outcomes of the Copenhagen conference, including the Copenhagen Accord, did not go as far as many would have hoped. Nonetheless they represent a beginning - an essential beginning. We have taken an important step in the right direction.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on the outcome of the UN Climate Change Conference, New York, 21 December 2009

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