



PRESS RELEASE

Juth Pakai fosters development debate

Vientiane, 14 February 2006 The United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in the Lao PDR has come together to support continuing efforts to promote meaningful dialogue and constructive debate on issues relating to social, economic and human development, with the release of the Fifth Edition of the development journal *Juth Pakai*.

In recent years, the importance of knowledge sharing in consolidating the process of human development and poverty reduction has become increasingly apparent. Discussion and information sharing between development practitioners is crucial to ensure that the process of human and economic development meets the needs of the poor and is truly participatory in nature.

Published in both Lao and English, *Juth Pakai* ('New Thought' in Lao language) seeks to enhance and contribute to such knowledge networking that generates dialogue and provides a platform to discuss a range of key development issues in the Lao PDR.

The head of the UNCT in Lao PDR, Mr. Finn Reske-Nielsen remarked, 'The fifth issue of *Juth Pakai* is published at an auspicious time, marking 30 years of the Lao PDR and 50 years of Lao membership of the UN...Not only can we see improvements in GDP, agriculture, health and education, but there is also a recognition of the importance of investing in human capacities and thereby the fostering of an environment of discussion and debate on pertinent development concerns. *Juth Pakai* is both a symbol of that progress, and a vehicle for sharing and disseminating information that aims promote equitable development.'

This edition of *Juth Pakai* brings you five articles that were selected from a large pool of interesting research studies. Two of the articles published, deal with public health - a crucial area that demands concerted efforts and sustained commitment. The first article deals with the issue of mental-health, a topic that is gaining importance globally, and a discussion on which would much benefit the people of Lao PDR. The other is a summary of a World Health Organization (WHO) study that highlights the challenges and problems faced by public hospitals, and it offers concrete suggestions for improvement.

A study on the importance of conserving wetlands and aquatic food resources is emphasized in another article. This study explores how the dynamics of conservation and culture can serve to better preserve water resources for Lao's future generations.

Efficient use of water and sanitation services is discussed in an article that reveals some of the interesting pitfalls that are faced and the various advances that have been made. The final article presents a fascinating sketch of the Lao Huay - an ethnic group seeking to maintain their traditional identity whilst embracing new development challenges.

Juth Pakai is available in both hardcopy and on-line at www.undplao.org *Juth Pakai* is published three times a year, featuring articles from both national and international development experts.

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