

PRESS RELEASE



United Nations Development Programme

For immediate release

5 June 2009

Your planet needs you!

This year's World Environment Day inspires all of us to play our part.

On 5 June, World Environment Day, the theme "Your planet needs you" aimed to inspire all of us to do our part to conserve resources and look after our own environment.

The world faces threats caused by climate change, and Lao PDR is not safe from these threats. Last August Lao PDR suffered from an extreme weather event that led to serious flooding, which affected communities and peoples' livelihoods in many provinces. With more than 80 percent of the Lao population dependent on natural resources for their livelihoods, this makes the country and the people susceptible to the future impacts, such as extreme floods and drought, of climate change.

As Mme. Khempheng Pholsena, Minister to the Prime Minister's Office, Head of WREA, said at the launch of the National Adaptation Programme of Action on Climate Change and National Capacity Needs Self-Assessment Report in Vientiane last month "climate change presents an urgent challenge to the well-being of all countries, particularly the poorest countries and the poorest people" and that "to effectively address climate change impacts, there is a need for broader international and regional cooperation".

In order to raise public awareness about climate change and other environment problems which are happening both in Lao PDR and globally, and to increase people's participation in environmental conservation activities in their own communities, UNDP Lao PDR was a partner with the Water Resource and Environment Administration (WREA) in staging activities for communities and young people for World Environment Day: UNite to Combat Climate Change.

During the first week of June a singing contest and a "green school contest" were held, trees were planted at 14 high schools, and local communities joined in to take care of litter collection along the roads and canal cleaning. Enthusiastic visitors to an exhibition in ICTC learnt more about the issues facing the country from the ministries, UN agencies and development partners. Other events included a technical workshop for scientists, students, government officials and private companies on Climate Change, a mini-marathon run from Patuxay, and permanent billboards set up at strategic sites to publicize environmental issues.

Mr Singha Ounniyom, Programme Analyst from UNDP/UNEP Environment Unit, welcomed the large turnout of young people at the events. "This shows great hope for the future, that young people understand the challenges ahead and a willingness to tackle them for their future benefit."

Climate change is human induced, and as the UNDP Global Administrator Helen Clarke highlighted on World Environment Day, everybody needs to play their part to turn today's crisis into tomorrow's sustainable growth. "Each of us", she pointed out, "can save our world and mitigate climate change with very simple and easy activities such as switching off the lights when leaving the room, recycling, reducing the use of plastic bags and keeping your own neighborhood clean."

The activities in Lao PDR for World Environment Day aimed to bring to the front of people's minds the steps that everyone can take to mitigate climate change. However, the larger scale strategy to tackle this challenge head on requires action on governance, such as ensuring that local decision-makers have the knowledge and tools they need to make sustainable policy and investment decisions.

“Climate change considerations need to be built into the core of all development planning if we are to have a sustainable future” emphasised Helen Clarke, in her statement on World Environment Day.

UNDP and UNEP are working in the Lao PDR, in partnership with WREA, MPI and National Assembly, on the Poverty Environment Initiative, which aims to increase the understanding of the linkages between poverty and the environment and to integrate the environment into core government strategies in order to develop sustainable futures for all people in the country.

Notes:

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