

PRESS RELEASE



United Nations Development Programme

For immediate release

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Finding Local Solutions to Environmental Issues - Launch of the Small Grants Programme in Lao PDR

On 29 September 2009, the UNDP- Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme (GEF-SGP) was launched in Lao PDR.

The global Small Grants Programme, founded in 1992, is rooted in the belief that global environmental problems can best be addressed by involving local people and by generating community benefits and ownership. GEF Small Grants Programme projects are being developed in 120 countries. All of the 11,000 projects funded by the Programme have had the special focus of meeting GEF's environmental objectives while at the same time reducing poverty and empowering local people.

Recognizing the potential benefits of the Programme, Lao PDR joined it in 2008. Since then a national steering committee has been nominated and a Country Programme Strategy developed in a highly participatory process. This Strategy emphasizes the importance of building partnerships with organizations which work in areas of Lao PDR characterized by high levels of rural poverty and high conservation values.

Mr Serge Verniau, Acting United Nations Resident Coordinator, emphasized during his opening remarks that the Small Grants Programme recognizes the essential role that households and communities, applying locally appropriate solutions, can play in protecting the global environment. He expressed his gratitude to WREA, international NGOs, not-for profit associations, and all agencies concerned for their inputs and cooperation during the preparation of the Country Programme Strategy and guidelines.

"I am convinced", he continued, "that the implementation of the Small Grants Programme in Lao PDR will make a significant contribution to communities around the country, through developing community-level strategies and implementing technologies that reduce threats to the global environment and support the achievement of the MDGs, also by gathering lessons from community-level, developing innovations and awareness raising on environmental matters."

The Small Grants Programme provides a critical source of finance and the opportunity to strengthen the capacity of existing and emerging mass organizations, not-for-profit and civil society associations. The approval of the Decree on Associations earlier this year also provides an important basis for further strengthening Small Grants Programme activities to increasingly support civil society associations.

Address: Lane Xang Avenue, P.O. Box 345, Vientiane, Lao PDR

Tel: (856-21) 267 777 Fax: (856-21) 267 799, 264 939

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The Small Grants Programme will work closely with many stakeholders including provincial and district authorities, international non-government organizations and academic institution, to identify community based organizations and not-for-profit associations who can manage small grants to address critical environmental problems. Small grants will be provided to Lao community based organizations, not-for-profit associations, and mass organizations in order to implement projects that conserve biodiversity, reduce the risks of climate change, stop land degradation and reduce water pollution.

Notes:

For more information please contact:

Janet Pontin, UNDP Public Information Unit, Tel: (021) 267 777 ext: 715, Email: janet.pontin@undp.org

Phetdavong Chaleunsouk, UNDP- GEF Small Grants Programme, Tel: (021) 267 777 ext: 658,
Email: phet.chaleunsouk@undp.org

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