



PRESS RELEASE

24 NOVEMBER 2009

Supporting participatory wetland management in Attapeu Province

On November 24, 2009 in Attapeu Province, the Government of the Lao PDR conducted the Inception Workshop for the *Participatory Wetland Management in Attapeu (Support to Lao PDR Water and Wetland Policy - LWP)* project, which will be implemented by the Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office (PAFO) in Attapeu.

The workshop was chaired by Mr. Khenethong Sisouvong, Vice Governor of Attapeu province. About 40 participants and representatives from UNDP, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Ministry of Planning and Investment, IUCN, SUFFORT Project, mass organizations and agencies concerned in Attapeu and target villages and Sanamsay District attended the event.

Lao PDR is rich in wetland biodiversity, and these wetlands are vital for many Lao people, whose livelihoods strongly depend on natural resources. Over the past 20 years, the Government of the Lao PDR has implemented activities to improve the management of the country's wetlands and ratified several multilateral environmental agreements, recognizing the fact that conservation and wise use of natural resources is crucial for achieving sustainable development and poverty eradication. However, results are still limited due to challenges which include a lack of technical and human resources capacity for wetland management at all levels. Lao PDR also lacks supportive policies and incentives for wetland conservation and there are limited livelihood alternatives for communities that rely on wetland resources.

The UNDP-supported LWP Project is a one-year project that addresses the challenges of wetland conservation by supporting water and wetland management policies at central and local government level through strengthening the capacities for sustainable use of wetlands in the Lao PDR.

This includes supporting the potential accession to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands by conducting an economic valuation of one potential site. The project also aims at supporting pilot livelihood activities of communities relying on a range of selected wetlands in Attapeu Province. The project will thus not only focus on the strengthening of national wetland management regulations and policies, but also on strengthening wetland planning approaches in Attapeu Province at village, sub-village, village cluster, and district/provincial levels. In order to improve livelihoods of communities, the project will support village funds and provide trainings on wetland resource conservation and sustainable use for poor households, on marketing and

processing of wetlands and non-timber forest products, and on income generation opportunities based on improved agricultural activities.

With strengthened capacities, Government authorities will be increasingly able to use wetlands in Lao PDR in a sustainable way to improve food security, local livelihoods and sustainable economic development.

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