



***Remarks by Ms Sonam Yangchen Rana,
UN Resident Coordinator in the Lao PDR***

***At the Meeting on Support Official Statistics for Mother and Child
5 April 2010 at Donchan Palace, Vientiane***

*Your Excellency Mr. Somsavath Lengsavad, Deputy Prime Minister and Chair
of the National Commission for Mother and Child,*

*Excellencies, Ministers, Vice-Ministers, Members of Government and
Development Partners,*

Distinguished Participants

Please allow me to first thank and congratulate You Deputy Prime Minister for the leadership in initiating the organization of this very important and timely event.

The newest DevInfo initiative being launched today, will better enable the Government of Lao PDR and the National Commission for Mother and Child to further advance the well-being of the most vulnerable mothers and children across the country. This innovative initiative will also help build other important work and achievements related to the Millenium Development Goals (MDG's).

Today's launch is also especially timely. The Government is currently in the process of drafting its new National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDP). In the Plan 2011-15 aimed at achieving high economic growth through private sector engagement, generating more jobs for Lao people and strengthening responses related to the social sectors, including through the MDGs. The 7th Plan will also help advance the country towards graduation from LDC status by 2020.

As highlighted by the UNSG Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, during his visit in Vientiane, achieving the MDGs and meeting the other official UN criteria for graduating from LDC status will require much greater focus on the quality and sustainability of growth and investments in the social sectors in Lao PDR over the next 5 to 10 years.

The focus of the Plan on the achievements of the MDGs or sustainable human development putting people including mothers and children at the centre will

bring Lao PDR very close to graduation from LDC status --- perhaps even before 2020. The strength and results of the 7th Plan will ultimately depend on how it is funded and implemented which in turn will require strong monitoring and follow up capacity.

This in turn, will require much more timely and reliable data on key socio-economic and MDG indicators to help guide the effective implementation, especially in such critical areas in Lao PDR as further poverty reduction, nutrition, food security, maternal and child mortality, gender equality, environmental sustainability, and safeguarding Lao people and the country against the potential consequences of climate change.

In this context, let me also congratulate the Government in particular the National Commission for Mother and Child for its recent development and approval of a National Nutrition Strategy and Plan of Action for 2010 to 2015. Again, timely and reliable data will be essential to guide the successful implementation of this very important strategy and action plan.

Since 2004, the United Nations in Lao PDR, especially through the efforts of UNICEF, UNFPA and UNDP, has been supporting the Government of Lao PDR in monitoring progress towards the achievement of the MDGs and other important socio-economic indicators in the NSEDP through an innovative tool called LaoInfo which is the localized version of the DevInfo.

Here again, I want to acknowledge the Government, and especially the Department of Statistics at the Ministry of Planning and Investment, for its initiative in customizing and applying DevInfo to the unique socio-economic needs of Laos. More recently, the meeting in Siem Riep on DevInfo, provided government and UN colleagues alike strengthened impetus and knowledge to further improve and refine the LaoInfo.

LaoInfo will increasingly enable the Government to better collect, organize and share essential information and data across the various government ministries including at the provincial and sub-provincial levels in rural areas where most Lao people still live and work.

The United Nations in Lao PDR Delivering as One and moving beyond “the business as usual” mode remains fully committed to working with the Government under your leadership Your Excellency Deputy Prime Minister and those of the line Ministries to address the crucial and interrelated MDG issues including nutrition, food security, maternal health, and gender equality that this National Commission for Mother and Child has so effectively championed. In this context, I also want to acknowledge the excellent work of UNICEF under the leadership of Laila helping to organize today’s event with the government as well as that of UNFPA, FAO,WHO, and WFP.

Excellencies, Distinguished participants,

Let me also highlight a number of key efforts that we should consider in our way forward with LaoInfo. We need to continue supporting the development of



useful indicators and the collection, analysis and application of timely and reliable data for evidence-based decision-making. This will require sufficient disaggregation of data, including by gender and by children, to enable effective development and targeting of social protection programs and other efforts to reach the most vulnerable and needy in Lao PDR.

Also very important, we need to further develop and strengthen the culture of using timely and reliable data for planning as well as the effective monitoring and evaluation of development progress and the achievement of meaningful results that truly improve the well-being of Lao people.

We will need effective collaboration and coordination across various stakeholders to achieve efficient results. After all, this innovative tool will only be as good as the data that is put into it. For this, I would like to call upon all Government and development partners to pro-actively participate and work together in further developing and building upon this important initiative to maximize its benefits for Lao people and the country as a whole.

Your Excellency Deputy Prime Minister, let me end my remarks by thanking you for your leadership in this important initiative, as well the Government of Lao PDR for your achievements to the MDG issues of Women and Children in this country.

The next five to ten years will most likely be an especially exciting time for Laos, with many newly emerging opportunities and challenges facing the people and the country. Making effective use of this innovative tool will help the country and the people to graduate to increasingly higher levels of well-being in the years ahead.

Thank you!