



Opening remarks by Mr. Dirk Wagener

(check against delivery)

UNDP Deputy Resident Representative (Programmes) a.i.

**At the Launching of the Thateng Ethnic Community Radio for
Development (TECRD)**

Tuesday 27 April 2010

Your Excellency Mr. Phonphet Kiewlavong, Vice Governor of Sekong Province and the Executive of the Project Board of GPAR Sekong

Dr. Khammoune Viphongxay, Vice Chair of PACSA and Executive of GPAR SBSB

Mr. Vanthong Phomchanleuang, Director General, Mass Media Department, MoIC

Mr. Houmphanh Soukpasith, Deputy Director General, DIC, MPI

Mr. Dy Sisombath, Deputy Director General, Mass Media Department, MoIC

District chiefs and deputies, Heads and deputies of district line offices

Mr. Sengaloun Bounphasy, GPAR Saravane NPD

Mr. Somwang Khammavong, Deputy Chief of Cabinet and GPAR Sekong NPD

Project team village/community volunteers,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to witness the launch of the first Community Radio for Development in Thateng district, Sekong province (TECRD) today. Before I go further, I would

like to congratulate you for the great success of the construction of the CR in Thateng district despite several difficulties and challenges. This is the result of the dedicated collaboration and cooperation of many parties, particularly the provincial and district leadership, hard work and efforts from PoIC, DoIC, project team, volunteers and communities.

I cannot wait until the end of my remarks to say a big thank you and congratulations to all parties concerned. Without you all, the success we see today may not have happened.

I understand very well that the district and communities have been waiting eagerly for this day. I must accept that it has been a long delay due to many factors before we can the CR set up and launch it today. Let me tell you my word of caution: "Prevention is better than Cure" or "Slower is Better". If we do it well it will be long lasting or sustainable.

Excellency, ladies and gentlemen,

The community radio is a means to serve many purposes: information sharing, disseminating government policies, laws and other information, providing entertainment, communicating with colleagues, friends and family members, announcement and broadcasting of news and traditional events and ceremonies, etc. The TECRD also provides opportunities villagers to interact and sending messages and raising concerns or problems to district, provincial and central authorities for support.

I would also like to reiterate that the TECRD is an important mechanism to allow local communities and vulnerable groups including women to have their voices, aspirations and concerns heard. After a long wait, today you have the radio station in your community. I would like to encourage that the CR is used to its full potential to provide and disseminate information on all areas: health, education, agriculture, transport, production, events, etc.

Excellency, Ladies and gentlemen,

Speaking on behalf of UNDP and UNV, I am very proud of the achievement of the TECRD and look forward to its operations run by community volunteers. However, with your permission I would like to share with you some of the following observations. I am sure many of you here share with me:

- The TECRD has been established with the technical and financial support from the ongoing GPAR Sekong. After handing it over to the community, there are many challenges that lie ahead to ensure smooth and effective operation and maintenance. It is very important that the CR advisory committee and technical team start to plan for its sustainability after the GPAR project closure. We need to come up with the sustainable strategy and plan in terms of human resources and financial resources to run the CR in future. UNDP is currently designing the next phase of its civil society support programme and community media initiative which started in Khoun District/XK province some 3 years ago and I am looking forward to engage into discussion on how this radio station can eventually be included into this programme after the GPAR Sekong project has been concluded next year.
- We need to ensure active participation of communities, district authorities and other partners to enable the CR to operate according to the schedule;
- Radio programming should be open for news inputs from all groups of ethnicity within the districts including vulnerable groups and social groups. All should be welcomed to use the TECRD as a medium for communication and information sharing.
- Resource mobilization and funding strategy need to be developed. One of many possible options is to set up a revolving fund for future operations and maintenance of the TECRD. Resources should be mobilized from all sources of funding: public, private and social organizations;
- I would also like to emphasize that this is a Community Radio thus ownership and responsibility for operations, maintenance and the sustainability lies with the communities with strong support from the advisory committee and technical team.

Excellency, Ladies and gentlemen,

I am now very pleased and on behalf of UNDP and UNV, to formally hand over the TECRD to all the Communities of the Province.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your leadership and guidance, particularly the Vice Governor, PACSA, DIC and Project Board members and Community Volunteers, MoIC, PoIC, DoIC and project team for their dedicated commitment and contribution to the success of the Community Radio. I wish you all the best of luck for the New Year and look forward to another successful community radio operating in Laos. UNDP does share a common vision with The Government of Laos which is to bring Community Radios to all communities in Laos and the Thatheng Community Radio is one part in the fulfillment of this vision. I am also looking forward to return very soon to open the second community radio station in Dackcheung district which is currently under construction.

....THANK YOU....