

PRESS RELEASE



United Nations Development Programme

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Strengthening the country's capacity to address and prepare for Disasters:

UNDP and the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare inaugurate new project.

At a ceremony held on Thursday 14 January at the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare in Vientiane, which Mr. Laoly Faiphengyao, Vice-Minister of Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, and Ms. Sonam Yangchen Rana, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative, signed and formally initiated a UNDP-supported project to assist the institutional strengthening and capacity development on disaster risk management in this country. The 'Institutional Strengthening and Capacity Development on Disaster Risk Management in Lao PDR' Project has a budget close to US\$1 million, and will be implemented from January 2010 to December 2011 by the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) under the guidance of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare.

As Ms. Sonam Yangchen Rana, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative, highlighted during the ceremony, this is the first ever fully-fledged project of UNDP in support of disaster risk management capacity development in Lao PDR. "Today", she said, "marks the beginning of a very timely and comprehensive initiative to meet the needs of the Government and people of Laos in disaster risk mitigation and for more effective responses and coordination."

NDMO data shows that during 2000 to 2007 more than 1 million people in the Lao PDR were affected by floods and close to 100,000 people by droughts, with the damage caused exceeding US\$8 million. Further losses and damages were experienced during the August 2008 floods along the Mekong River, and more recently from Typhoon Ketsana in the southern provinces which are also among the poorest and most heavily UXO contaminated in the country. The Government, led by NDMC/NDMO, implemented a comprehensive emergency response, the UN assisted the Government with resource mobilization through a Flash Appeal, and many development partners are addressing communities' needs. However, much still needs to be done to ensure sustainable recovery and longer-term reconstruction.

Against this backdrop, this new UNDP project will deliver 5 distinct outputs: enhancing the institutional and legal framework for disaster risk management and developing a national disaster management plan; further strengthening institutional and technical capacities of the NDMO to lead and coordinate disaster risk management, preparedness and response activities; helping to enhance early warning systems and develop Standard Operating Procedures; targeting the grassroots level to enhance communities' capacities for preparedness and response; and, strengthening the Early Recovery cluster. Throughout this project there is a focus on achieving gender equality in disaster risk management and response.

With the expectation that this new 2-year project will continue in the new UNDP Country Programme cycle starting from 2012, the UNDP Resident Representative reiterated UNDP's strong commitment to reducing the impact of disasters on the Lao people.

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