

## **PACSA - GPAR SBSB Governance Strengthening Workshop for Heads of District Administration**

**Monday, 27 July 2009**

**Vientiane, Lao PDR**

**Remarks by Ms. Sonam Yangchen Rana**

**UNDP Resident Representative/UN Resident Coordinator**

*Your Excellency Mr. Syphouk Vongphakdy, Vice Chairperson of the Public Administration and Civil Service Authority, distinguished representatives from the Government, colleagues, ladies, and gentlemen;*

I am very pleased to be here today for the opening session of the fifth Governance Strengthening Workshop for Heads of District Administration. At the outset, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Her Excellency Madam Bounpheng Mounphoxay for her inspiring leadership in taking forward the comprehensive strategy to improve governance in Lao PDR. I look back to the initial discussions with Mme. Bounpheng and her team at PACSA, last year, to launch these workshops - and indeed, feel very satisfied to note that the goal of building awareness on governance reforms among senior officials of all 140 district of Lao PDR has been achieved.

Excellency, ladies, and gentlemen; laws, regulations and programmes to improve governance are useful only if they are successfully implemented. And a large part of this implementation has to take place at the district level. Be it One Door Service or Immunization Campaigns, it is your team in the districts that have the responsibility to convert policies into action to benefit the Lao people. This can only be achieved when you – our colleagues from the provinces and districts – are aware of national policies and programmes.

During this five day workshop, you will have the opportunity to hear about a wide variety of policy initiatives and pilot projects on improving governance. Some of these pilots have delivered very impressive results. For example, the success of the pilot project on District Development Funds in Saravane has led to the much larger GPAR SBSB Programme being implemented by PACSA; District Development Funds are now implemented in four more provinces and will cover 27 more districts by 2010. Please examine the lessons they offer for your work, and see how they can be useful for you. I understand that some of the participants at earlier workshops have already sent proposals to the government on ways to improve the governance in their districts. It is important that the presenters hear your questions, concerns or doubts, so that they can be addressed, before these initiatives get mainstreamed and implemented widely.

As you may know, the UNDP is working closely with the Government on several areas, which will have an impact on your work at the district level. To touch upon a few, many of you are aware of the Millennium Development Goals, which have to be achieved by 2015. National

efforts are ongoing to speed up the progress towards the MDGs, and that they are interpreted in the new 7<sup>th</sup> Plan. This will need strengthened government programmes in agriculture, education, health, and public works sectors, and will require working at the district and community level. As a result of the global economic crisis and loss of jobs, prices, and markets, hardships are faced by very poor households. The Government with international partners, including the UN, are exploring options to support households affected by such hardship, through social protection programmes. The success of these efforts will also depend very much on the involvement of the district administration. I hope that these workshops with heads of the district administration will provide a good starting point for widened awareness and strong commitment on these and other issues.

Many of the governance improvements that will be discussed here take time to design and implement. The creation of Municipalities is one such area, which can have an important impact on the systematic and speedy development of urban areas. Complex decisions are required about services, taxation, and financing to be managed by municipalities and many such matters. Also there are other important on-going discussions about establishing provincial councils in Lao PDR, where PACSA is currently facilitating several high level workshops. I am also glad that you will hear about the important steps being taken to strengthen the Rule of Law, which will strengthen the capacity of the legal system to provide speedy justice.

These and other efforts of the government to address the governance and development are supported by many partners. This requires good coordination to avoid duplication or inefficiencies. The Vientiane Declaration on Aid Effectiveness which works to guide and improve coordination will now be implemented at provincial and district levels. All of you present here have a vital role to play in ensuring coordinated and harmonized efforts at the district and grassroots level.

Excellency, ladies, and gentlemen;

And finally, I am very pleased to see a larger presence of women among the participants, which is in contrast to that of the earlier workshops. I want to thank PACSA for ensuring that capacity building efforts address the goal of supporting participation across genders.

I will end by reiterating the strong commitment of the UNDP and the UN Country Team to address the goals of poverty reduction, governance, and socio-economic development at national, provincial, and district levels. I want to take this opportunity to thank PACSA, under leadership of Madame Bounpheng Mounphoxay, Mr Khammoune, Mr Nisith and their teams as well as all of you, colleagues from the provinces and districts for this excellent initiatives aimed to build national capacities. My thanks also go to H. E. Mr. Syphouk Vongphakdy.

I want to encourage all present here to take the opportunity to learn as much as possible about the various new policies, and find ways to make best use of this information to benefit the communities in your districts. Let me once again thank the organizers for this excellent initiative in capacity building, and wish you all good health and all success.

Thank you.