



Government CSO Partnership & Khoun Radio for Development
Projects Joint Annual Review Meeting,
Lao Plaza Hotel, Vientiane
Tuesday February 16th, 2010

Opening remarks by Mr. Dirk Wagener, Deputy Resident Representative
(Programme) a.i.
(Check against delivery)

Dear Mr. Khammoune Viphongxay, CSO Project Board Executive and Vice
Chairperson of PACSA,

Mr Vangthong Phonchanheung, Director General, Mass Media Department,
Ministry of Information and Culture

Mr. Somphone Philavong, NPD, Head of Provincial Department of
Information and Culture

Government Representatives,

Representatives of the United Nations Agencies and Development Partners,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

During the past four years UNDP has worked in partnership with the Public Administration and Civil Service Authority and the Ministry of Information and Culture and its provincial Department in Xieng Khouang, towards increased participation and voice of community and civil society and to enable them to participate in local development. Though our support has been framed so far in two separate projects we have agreed to hold our annual review meeting here today jointly since both projects are closely related and since we are currently formulating a new programme of support in which of both initiatives will be hosted in future.

The new CSO support programme aims at further enhancing an enabling environment since it is widely acknowledged that civil society can play a key role in assisting the government to reduce poverty and to achieve the

Millennium Development Goals by 2015. The next NSEDP – which is fully MDG-based - is currently being drafted and the country is getting ready to focus all efforts on sustaining equitable growth and to achieve the MDGs by 2015. We thus need to ensure that civil society can play its role in this regard.

The aim of our efforts so far has been to strengthen the partnership between the government and social organizations and to advocate and raise awareness on the benefits of such partnership. Another objective has been to increase people's access to information, and through this, to increase people's ability to voice their aspirations and to take decisions about their own development.

In 2009 we witnessed major achievements in the legal framework regarding civil society. In April, the Decree on Associations was passed and is now being implemented. Since then, several not-for-profit associations have applied for registration, which indicates that in the near future we will have several new development actors in the Lao PDR. This is an opportunity for the government and development partners to accelerate development and to achieve the Millennium Development Goals as I have already pointed out.

With regard to our past achievements, let me give you some examples of the results of our cooperation so far.

Since the Decree on Associations was signed in April, the Public Administration and Civil Service Authority have worked hard on setting up all the procedures for formal registration process of not-for-profit associations. The decree has been published both in Lao and English languages and the guidelines and registration forms have been created. Provincial and district governments have received training to guide and

support the registration process. Awareness raising conferences have been organized to inform the general public of the new legal framework. For this work, we congratulate you and it has been our pleasure to support you in this.

Through the Khoun Community Radio we have successfully piloted a community-based approach in which is well suited to mobilize civil society and to increase participation of communities in poverty reduction and the wider development processes. Through the Khoun Community Radio, community volunteers have been directly involved in producing and disseminating information relevant to their own communities.

The radio was set up to ensure increased access to relevant information, especially for ethnic people and vulnerable groups, such as women and children. The participatory approach, adopted from the beginning, has ensured that the community members have a voice in the matters affecting their own development.

The radio has produced programmes from the people to the people - empowering both the programme makers and listeners. Our evidence shows that information shared through Khoun Community Radio has had a clear development impact in the communities. For example, more and more families have brought their children to be vaccinated. Through outreach activities, the Khoun radio project has been able to bring in more volunteers to gather and broadcast information from and to their communities.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let's take a look at the future. The next phase of the two projects we are reviewing today is going to focus on partnership building. It will build on the successes and lessons learned from the previous phases. In the future, we will bring together the two projects and place them under one programme framework. Through this approach we will contribute to the implementation of Vientiane Declaration Country Action Plan which promotes the harmonization of donor activities and programme-based approaches. With this programme, we hope to contribute in a meaningful way to the increased dialogue between the government and civil society in order to achieve greater partnership for poverty reduction. I am also pleased to announce that there will be a separate meeting in the coming weeks to discuss the design of the new programme in more detail before it is finalized and then launched.

However, for today's meeting I very much look forward to discussing the progress of the two projects made so far and to discuss the lessons learned since these will be very valuable inputs into our future programme of support which seeks to build on these lessons, best practices and success stories.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to Mr Khammoune, Mr Vangthong and Mr. Somphone for their personal leadership, the National Project Managers Mr Ampha Simmasone from PACSA and Mr Vongsone Oudomsouk from Khoun Community Radio, for their dedication and professional management of the projects, and of course the entire project teams for their commitment without which the achievements so far would not have been possible.

Thank you.