



Opening remarks by Mr. Dirk Wagener

(check against delivery)

UNDP Deputy Resident Representative (Programmes) a.i.

At the Launching of ODS Center in Sekong Office of the Governor

Monday 26 April 2010

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

Dr. Khammoune Viphongxay, Vice Chair of PACSA

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

Mr. Somwang Khammavong, Deputy Chief of Cabinet and GPAR Sekong National Project Director

Heads and deputies of line provincial departments

Project team, ladies and gentlemen

It is my honor and pleasure to be here today to witness the launch of the **One Door Service Center** in the Office of the Governor. I am also very grateful and appreciative to be here since I know that the opening has been postponed only to allow me to participate.

Please allow me to thank you and congratulate all of you for operating the ODS center successfully since its unofficial opening. I have learned that a number of clients have come already to utilize the services offered by the ODS which is a great start.

ODS is a very effective mechanism to improve public service delivery for citizens since it ensures timeliness, transparency, accountability, effectiveness and efficiency in meeting service needs of clients – the citizens living here in the province. The ODS concept has been adopted by the Lao Government as a useful tool and an expansion of this model is underway throughout the country with your ODS as its latest addition. As you know, the first ODS was opened in Xaysetha district/Vientiane supported by GPAR Central during early 2000s and has been expanded since then to other districts within Vientiane Capital and other provinces under the leadership of PACSA and supported by the GPAR SBSD programme.

Excellency, ladies and gentlemen,

Please allow me to make some observations and recommendations which I believe will be crucial to make your ODS a full success in the

medium and long term and I am sure many of you here will share my recommendations:

- It is easy to establish the ODS center if we have a budget/resources allocated. However, there is a challenge to harmonize and bring other relevant partners, who have been so far working separately in their respective offices, to follow and use a common system.
- Change is always difficult for some and some staff may feel hesitant to move away from their own office and sit in the new environment but we need to encourage them and also equip them with the skills and capacities needed to successfully operate the ODS;
- Some partners may foresee the loss of benefits, revenues or fees from providing services in their own areas to their clients but for the sake of accountability, a transparent and affordable pricing structure of the ODS needs to be enforced;
- While implementing an administrative reform it also important to explain and discuss the underlying objectives which are not only to provide services more effectively and in a more transparent manner: at the end of the day all these reforms have a common goal which is to make the Province and Laos a better for place for its citizens to live in an to reduce poverty. The country is gearing

up to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 and exit the so-called Least Developed Country Status by 2020. Being a civil servant operating an ODS and being a senior official helping to roll-out the ODS means that you are actively taking part in this strive to reduce poverty and to further develop your country. I salute all of you for your commitment and efforts in this regard.

The above challenges and obstacles are temporary and they will be successfully resolved if we ensure that everyone understands the concept, objectives and long-term benefits of the ODS center. In addition, if we share common objectives of improvement of public service delivery to the citizens, we will certainly work toward the same direction which is ultimately to achieve the MDGs.

Excellency, Ladies and gentlemen,

Before I close, allow me to share with you some remarks for future direction of the ODS:

- Staffing for the center: capacity and service orientation needs to be ensured as raised before

- Management of revenue from service provision (for sustainability). We need to actively think this through and also learn from other ODS in this regard;
- Sustainability (operationally and financially) of the center after the GPAR project closure. This needs to be ensured now and is linked to the management of the center's revenues!
- Lessons sharing and experiences exchange with other ODS centers
- Evaluation of the ODS center performance
- Draw lessons learnt from the ODS operations

Finally, on behalf of UNDP and UNV, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you again for your leadership, particularly HE the Vice Governor, Project Board members for their eminent leadership and guidance, line departments and project team for their dedicated commitment and contribution to the success of the ODS center.

....THANK YOU....