

**Human Development Report and Media Awards 2011
Launch Event**
Sustainability and Equity: A Better Future for All



Lao PDR

Remarks by Mr. Minh Pham
UNDP Resident Representative

Don Chan Palace Hotel, Sky Lounge, 14th floor
Tuesday 15 November 2011
10am – 11am

*Dr. Bounthavy Sisouphanthong, Vice Minister, Ministry of
Planning and Investment*

*Mr. Somsanouk Mixay, Vice President, Lao Journalists
Association*

Development partners, UN colleagues, Members of the Press

Ladies and gentlemen

A warm welcome to all of you here this morning, and
thank you very much, Dr. Bounthavy, for your opening
remarks.

I have been told that this may be the first-ever launch in Lao PDR of the global Human Development Report. Today we are also launching the inaugural Human Development Media Awards. Both of these events are very significant. As Dr. Bounthavy has already noted, the theme of this year's Report, sustainability and equity, resonates very closely indeed to the development challenges that we face here in Lao PDR.

Human development is about putting people at the centre of development. It is about creating an environment in which people can develop their full potential and lead productive and creative lives. It also is about expanding the choices people have to lead lives that they value.

UNDP reflects these key elements in the publication of the annual Human Development Reports that focus on relevant global themes. This is why the Reports are of such value.

They have had profound effects around the world on the way policymakers, civil society and the news media view development. In short, they have taken the focus away from purely economic gain to look at human capabilities.

This year's global Human Development Report, *Sustainability and Equity: A Better Future for All*, highlights the importance of environmental safeguards and the links to achieving equity.

Lao PDR has achieved tremendous development gains. And, at a time of global economic uncertainty, the country also has maintained impressive growth.

In the 2011 Report, this has been reflected in the rise of Lao PDR's Human Development Index value. Moreover, since the Reports were first launched in 1990, the country has seen a 39 percent increase in its HDI value.

Critically, this year we have also seen an improvement in the inequality-adjusted Human Development Index value, with Lao PDR moving up six places in rank. This index looks specifically at the issue of equity, which is central to development.

However, there is a way to go. As the Report notes, despite the human development progress of recent years, accelerating environmental destruction puts a "double burden of deprivation" on the poorest households and communities.

This represents a particularly serious challenge in Lao PDR, where poverty remains an issue, where inequalities are rising, and where pressures on the environment are significant. In addition, the vast majority of Lao people still lives and works in rural areas. Thus, for most, their dependence on natural resources for food and incomes further raises the stakes in enforcing environmental preservation.

To achieve human development, all sectors of society must play their role, including the media. This is why this year we are also launching the Human Development Media Awards. Mr. Somsanouk Mixay, vice president of the Lao Journalists Association, will further introduce this concept in his remarks shortly.

I would like to thank the Ministry of Planning and Investment and the National Economic Research Institute for supporting this launch.

I also would like to thank the Lao Journalists Association for organizing the Human Development Media Awards. This showcases the increasingly important work of the Lao media for national development.

Thank you very much.