LAO PDR

GPAR-SP QUARTERLY
Q1 NEWSLETTER

GPAR Saravane

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Development programmes

Saravane Province is located in the south of the Lao PDR, it comprises eight districts. Five districts are situated in lowland: Saravane, Khongsedone, Lakhonepheng, Vapi and Toumlan; two districts are in mountainous areas: TaOy and Samuoi while only LaoNgam district is considered as the upland district. The total area of Saravane province is around 1,069,100 ha. Saravane is connected to Savanakhet to the north, Champasak to the south, Vietnam and Sekong to the east, and Thailand to the west. The total population is around 331,318 people [170,125 female] (Planning: 2006). The political stability and security of the province are the major strengths. People are engaged in agriculture by growing rice, planting industrial trees, growing cash crop, raising livestock, processing agriculture products and providing agriculture services. 'The five years socio-economic development plan of the province (2006-2010) has been developed and is currently been implemented', said Mr. Khamboun Duangpanya Governor of Saravane Province. With the

Mr. Khamboun Doungpanya
Governor of Saravane Province

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Saravane will share lessons with other provinces

Saravane Province. - The Office of the Governor is currently supporting the implementation of the District Investment Plans for Saravane, Ta Oy and Lackonpheng districts. The total annual allocation for the three districts is 201,492USD. Twenty seven small scale infrastructure projects will be finalized within the next few months. It is important to work towards 'improving efficiency, accountability and transparency in the civil service and in the delivery of public services.' In doing so, inform the Government of Lao PDR on policy issues linked to decentralization and sound financial management. Mr. Sisouvanh Vongchomsy, Vice-governor of Saravane Province

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This publication does not exactly reflects the opinion of EU, UNCDF and UNDP.

Mrs. Bounpheng Mounphosay

Mrs. Bounpheng Mounphosay Minister to the Prime Minister's Office PACSA visits GPAR SP [January 16, 2007]

Mrs. Bounpheng Mounphosay Minister to the Prime Minister's Office, Chair person of PACSA with Nisith Kheopanya visited the Office of the Governor. After a meeting with the Governor, Mrs. Mounphosay had a meeting with the project. Mr. Thavone reported on the implementation of the project. With respect to staffing issues, he expressed his concern about the difficulties of keeping high quality human resources in a remote area such as Saravane. Nevertheless, 'we are finishing the implementation of the investment plans in the three pilot districts and we are refreshing the trainings,' Mr. Thavone Bouvphavong, National Project Manager said. 'We had some difficulties during the implementation of the investment plans' he said. 'If the districts are constructing a school, the project should ensure that the ceilings are properly made for rainy season and hot weather,' Mrs. Mounphosay said. Later on, Ms. Mounphosay and Mr. Nisith visited GPAR SP offices. They recommended to start planning for One-Stop-Shop strategy, Model Office and National Accounting System.

Donor's visit villages

'The District is the project owner of all investments', said Mr. Khamboune Viphonxay from PACSA .

After six hours of driving, Mr Stefan Vigie, UNDP DRR, Juana Aristizabal, EU advisor and Mr. Khamboune Viphonxay from PACSA arrived to Nasay Noi village about 20 km from Saravane district to view the construction of the rural market. The market is part of the district annual investment plan funded by UNDP, UNCDF and EU. About 15 representatives from the local community, local authorities and Lao Women's Union expressed their thanks to the donors and reported on the construction of the market. The rural market will directly support 19 villages, 7,030 people. 'Everyone can come to sell their products,' the Village head said. 'Initially, there will not be any fee for selling products, however in the future it will be necessary to add a fee to keep the operation and maintenance of the market', he said. The maintenance will be the responsibility of the kumbane however 'the district will be the owner of all investments', Mr. Khammoune said. Later on, the donors traveled to the construction of the secondary school in Naikoisao village to attend a meeting with the local community. 'We would like to thank Mr Stefan, Ms. Juana and Mr. Khamboune for coming to this village,' Mr. Thavone Bounphavong, GPARSP NPM said. The school construction is a district investment priority therefore Mr. Stephan asked to the women's representatives what their main priority was. 'The women's primary investment was a health center' Ms. Phuan Deputy Head of the Village answered. However, 'we understand that there are more beneficiaries by building a secondary school', She said. Today, 90% of the secondary school construction is finished, 'we expect to finish it at end of March,' the school director said. The total estimated cost was 365,000,000kip including local contribution. During the Donors field visit to Saravane province, Ms. Juana also visited the DDF implementation in three of the nine small-scale infrastructure sub-projects in Lakonpheng District.

Strengthening the skills of civil servants

January 17 to 19, representatives from Taoy, Saravane, and Lakonpheng as well as from the Provincial Line Departments attended a Refresher Course on the District Development Fund (DDF). The aim of the course was to reinforce the District Development Fund Planning and Implementation Guidelines and train officials on Procurement and Financial Procedures. 'I would like to encourage the districts to implement their Annual Investment Plans in an efficient manner,' Bounthiem Keoxayavong National Project Director said. In his opening remarks, Mr Keoxayavong emphasized the importance of accomplishing the 27 sub-projects in accordance with the Procurement and the Financial Guidelines. Saravane Province is executing 27 infrastructure projects in three districts: Saravane has 5 sub-projects, Lakonpheng has 9 sub-projects and Ta Oy has 13 infrastructure sub-projects. .

In an effort to decentralize local service delivery in the Province, the DDF fund is allocated to the districts based on village participatory planning. To achieve this goal, 'districts are using a prioritization matrix that will help them decide between the proposals and, explain on what grounds one was better than another,' Mr. Sirisamphou GPAR SP Planning and Rural Development Specialist said. Despite acceptance of the matrix, some districts found difficulties in completing it, 'We are not used to these planning techniques (formats) therefore this course will help us to improve our skills' Mr Outhong Mounlansy Head of Saravane District Planning Office said. After the refresher course on Planning Guidelines, the updated Procurement Regulations were presented by Mr Thone Phonephachanh Director of Procurement Monitoring Office from the Ministry of Finance (MoF). The Ministry developed a Procurement Manual for the District and Kumbane Levels based on Decree 03/PM (Jan 2004) and Decree 63/PM dated on March 12, 2004. The 'Manual was developed to achieve regularity and uniformity of government procedures', Mr. Thone said during his presentation. The manual will be used for the implementation of the DDF. The refresher course included financial procedures which will help government officials to carry out their day to day tasks in an efficient manner.

'Ms. Juana Aristizabal EU representative, makes use of the deep well constructed with DDF funds in Lakonpheng District'

11 development priority programmes

(Continued from page 1)

purpose of converting the development plan, into actions 'we have eight Government Strategic Development Priority Programmes and five Provincial Strategic Development Priorities', Mr. Duangpanya said. Saravane province will focus on 11 development priority programmes as follows: Ensuring political stabilization and security programmes; Integrated Agricultural Development Programmes; Industrial and non-industrial Forest Conservation Programmes; Basic Industrial Development Programmes; Promotion of Tourism and Services Programmes; Poverty Eradication Programmes at Village and Kumban levels; International Joining of Economic Cooperation and Promotion of Investment Programmes; Telecommunication and Transportation Programmes; Effective Macro-Economic Management Programmes; Human Resource and Socio-Cultural Development Programmes; Effectiveness of Governance and Public Administration Reform and Service Delivery Programmes'.

Under the latter, Saravane Governance and Public Administration Reform and Decentralized Service Delivery project [GPARSP] intends to improve the quality and efficiency of the government services. Currently, GPARSP is implementing its activities in 4 districts namely Saravane, Lakhonpheng, TaOy and Samuoi and will be gradually expanded to other districts for the end of the project by 2009. 'We would like to welcome all readers to our GPAR Saravane newsletter, it symbolizes part of the progress made in the province,' Mr. Duangpanya said.

Naikoisao secondary school

Sub-project:: Naikoisao secondary school construction

Priority: District Investment

Location: 8 km from Saravane town.

Project: GPAR SP

Estimated cost: 339,805,825* plus Local Contribution

Local contribution: 15,000,000*

Total estimated cost: 365,000,000*

Actual total cost: 353,015,839*

Villages Benefited: 42

Students benefited: 1,200 (621 women)

Households benefited: 3,203

People benefited: 20,306

Income: rice and handicrafts

Women beneficiaries: 10,373

Poor households: 304

Poor people: 1,528 (765 women)

*Prices are in local currency= kip

Source: DDF/DIP Sar/06/Sch/001N.60

Naikoisao Secondary School construction, Saravane District, Saravane Province, Lao PDR

Interviewing Ms. Phuan

Ms. Phuan, Deputy Head of Nakoisao Village

Ms. Phuan, Deputy head of Naikoisao Village attended a three day meeting at the Xe xet Training Center in Laognam District. These trainings provide local officials with information about government policies, public administration reform and decentralization. Ms. Phuan has been Deputy Head of Naikoisao village for one year.

'I like to attend these kind of trainings because they help me to improve my skills', she said. 'However, we need more trainings,' she said

Q.- What would you improve? 'I think trainings have to be longer and more active', she said.

Q.- How do you manage to be deputy village representative and a house wife? 'It is not easy to have both duties, but I am trying to help my village. I have 6 children, they attend the Naikoisao School', Ms. Phuan said. While she works, her husband works in the rice fields. Ms. Phuan is an active woman, she has also been part of the village planning committee under the District Development Fund.

Q.- As you were part of the DDF planning committee do you know what the priorities for Saravane are? 'Yes, I think there are 5 sub-projects. One of them is the secondary school construction in Naikoisao village'.

Q.- Do you remember what the women's main priority was? 'The Nakoisao women first priority investment was a health center however, we also wanted a school', she answered. 'We hope it will be chosen next year', she said.

The Village Management workshops are taking place in 4 districts of Saravane Province. So far, Saravane district has trained 146 villages on Local Administration Law. These trainings will continue to take place in the forthcoming months.

Strengthening the Lao Women's Union

ManyXong Leusysamouth,

Head of the Provincial LWU

LWU has been a partner to GPAR SP project since 2006. 'Three pilot districts were trained on gender mainstreaming and awareness', Ms. Sivan Phimboungnor, Gender rights and development specialist from the provincial Lao Women's Union said. 'Saravan is poor therefore, the education level is very low and awareness of gender equity should be improved', she said during her report to the provincial leading committee. Women depend on men including their health. 'Women have to ask permission to their husbands to plan their family or attend a meeting', she said. She expressed her concern on the implementation of women's rights and gender equality. 'In remote areas, it is difficult to access villages and to create awareness', Ms. Sivan said. She asked if donors, besides GPARSP could support additional activities to strengthen women's rights especially from ethnic minorities groups from remote areas, and reduce poverty from women at village level. 'Language is one of the main barriers faced by LWU', she said.

In 2007, GPAR SP is supporting LWU in organizational structure meetings and gender awareness workshops. 'Every woman working in each sector is responsible to create gender awareness', Ms. Manyxong Leusysamouth Head of Lao women's Union said during a two-day workshop on organizational structure and gender awareness. After the workshop, participants from the eight districts and representatives from line departments completed an assessment questionnaire, 'two percent of the women need to improve their skills', said Ms. Sivan Phimboungnor and Ms. Soymany Xayavong (Deputy Representative of Lao Women's Union). The workshop' main findings were the need to create better planning and trainings for women; clearer management plans; more gender sensitive awareness campaigns and to improve work environment for women. 'I would like you to implement this knowledge in your districts and work areas and transmit this knowledge to the heads of the LWU at village level', Ms. Manyxong said.

'Women have to ask permission to attend a meeting',

Beneficiaries from Lakonpheng

Students from Taphan village are delighted to participate in the implementation of the DDF. Their parents will be contributing for the reconstruction of a primary school at Pak Taphane village. The primary school supports directly 222 students from which 106 are women. There are 7 teachers and one school director, they come from Saravane District, Vapi and Lakonpheng. The new six classrooms will be used for teaching primary school students starting at the age of 6. 'We will also use a room to create a library'. Mr. Phone Director of School said.

In the primary school, students learn mathematics, lao loum and basic English language.

The ten beneficiary villages have already contributed with wood, labor work, sand and gravel. The total local contribution is over 38 million kip, 'more than what was expected', Mr. Phone said. The total estimated project cost is over 45 million kip. The villagers priority investment was school reconstruction and water supply.

Beneficiaries from primary school construction, Lakonpheng District, Saravane Province. Kumbane priority investment

Saravane will share lessons with...

GPAR-SP FACTS

Title
Saravane Governance, Public Administration Reform and Decentralized Service Delivery.

Project ID
00043575(UNDP), 00032148(UNCDF)

Programme period
2005-2009

Project Duration
5 years

Implementing Partner
Office of the Governor of Saravane Province in accordance with NEX procedures.

Other Partners
PACSA/PMO, FPD/MOF and GPD/CPI.

Donors
UNDP, UNCDF, EU.

Outcome Improve local level provision of public goods and services.

Budget
3.178.040USD.

Status The First three districts are Executing their Annual Investment Plans: 27 infrastructure projects. This fiscal year: GPARSP is also planning in Samuoi District.

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said during the Tripartite Review Meeting [TPR] held on the15th. of March 2007. Mr Vongchomsy, Chair of the TPR Meeting and chair of the GPAR SP Provincial Leading Committee (PLC), reiterated that Saravane will share lessons learned from the public expenditure management, piloting the government district development fund (DDF), with other provinces. 'The project is cutting edge as it has introduced a new approach for financing decentralized service delivery with budget ceilings and bottom up participatory planning techniques', Mr. Stephane Vigie, UNDP Deputy Resident Representative said. The DDF participatory approach 'ensures that local needs are met, while ensuring that accountability and transparency in providing public goods and services are adhered' he said. However, 'It is important that lessons learned from GPAR SP should be moved along to the other GPAR pilot projects,' Ms. Juana Aristizabal, Programme Officer from EU delegation said. 'The participatory approach particularly the involvement of women in planning and budgeting activities are very important as they become important actors of the change,' she

Tripartite review meeting
March 15, 2006

added. The annual report was presented by Mr. Thavone Bouphavong (National Project Manager). Following the progress report, the meeting offered rich comments and suggestions from the participants. 'The ownership of GPARSP is the responsibility of all the line departments; not the project its self. Therefore, the line agencies should be involved in trainings to support the ownership of this process,' Mr Khammoune Viphongxay from Public Administration and Civil Service Authority,' said. The main issues discussed were on the development and the implementation of the District Development Fund such as local contribution, fund flow, trainings and monitoring. 'Local contribution in kind or in cash can become difficult to collect', Mr. Sinthavy Sisoumang from GPAR Khammouane said. He noted that he was very interested in learning and sharing experiences especially about the implementation of the DDF. He asked what kind of local contribution does DDF use and what are the difficulties to use them. In his reply, NPM reiterated that DDF accepts local contribution in kind or in cash, as it creates ownership and participation in the implementation of the infrastructure. The local authorities have accepted the local contribution in cash. However, the contribution can not exceed of 15% of the total cost of the infrastructure. He explained that Lakonpheng is normally contributing 9 million kip, but since the project started they already contributed around 20 million kip. This lesson depends on the conditions of the District. The meeting aimed to inform the donors and local government partners on the progress made on GPAR SP in 2006 and plan for 2007. About 35 participants from the donor community, stakeholders, and national decision-makers such as representatives from the National Assembly, GPAR family and MoF participated in the meeting. The report informed on budget issues: For the period of January to December 2006, $446,309.40USD was spent.

GPARSP challenges and solutions

1.Language barrier– The disparity of education levels and the ethnical language barrier need refresher courses and follow up trainings. Some languages are not easy to understand by the authorities especially the dialects from minority groups. For example in Ta Oy (5 hours from Saravane district), only 2 staff are working for planning, therefore it created a delay on the implementation of their District Annual Investment Plan (DAIP). The solution proposed is to support trainings with translators, on-the-job-training. Human resources limitation is being carried out by learning-by-doing.

2.Innovative procedures.- The District Development Fund (DDF), GPAR project and NEX procedures are innovative procedures for Saravane provincial authorities. Therefore, the project has decided to closely support districts as well as, regularly provide assistance to district planning team and kumban to assure effectiveness and efficiency of district investment plan (DIP-DDF) implementation.

3.Remoteness.– In remote areas, the implementation of activities faced some difficulties. The lack of roads, no communication systems and inadequacy of means of transportation, created difficulties during the implementation of the planning strategy therefore, the weather forecast its being revised (e.g. rainy season) prior implementation of the activities. Ta OY, received telephone coverage from (Lao telecom) just this year. This will benefit communication in the area.

4.District Investment Plan.- Technical support cost was increased from 3% to 5% of total budget allocation per sub-project. With this increment, the district planning team and the district planning committee will have more support during the planning and implementation of their annual investment plans.

5.Local contribution.- The new participatory planning approach allows citizens to contribute with the implementation of the DAIP in cash or in kind. High portion of local contribution (in cash) to District Investment Plan (small-scale infrastructure) created a delay of DIP-DDF implementation. Therefore, for the next fiscal year, the DDF will include a maximum of 15% of local contribution from the cost of the small-scale infrastructure sub project.

6.Gender Mainstreaming – Initially there was a lack of women's participation in kumbane meetings. A strategy for women participation in village / kumbane meetings is being developed. It is also being proposed to Leading Committee to create a subsidy for gender awareness.

7.Citizen's participation and information sharing.- Villager's participation in meetings and information flow was difficult due to difficult access, remoteness and lack of communication systems therefore the meetings are taking place in areas closer to the kum banes (mapping). Additionally, districts and kumbanes have information boards to post their annual investment plans and annual district allocation. In doing so, create transparency and accountability during the implementation of their District Investment Plans. 'We have to be careful with local contribution and inform citizens about this process'. Thavone Bouphavong GPARSP NPM said. during the annual meeting.

8.Ownership & sustainability.- GPAR SP has developed an trickledown awareness strategy and changed its vision to not use the word 'project' to raise awareness that GPAR SP is a support team working under the government machinery.

9.Support.- Governance, Public Administration Reform and Decentralized Service Delivery needed closer guidance from PACSA / MoF to conduct functional review, implement PIMS and National Accounting System. This has led to quarterly meetings with GPAR Central and /or MoF and DIC respectively. However it is 'a sensitive issue is therefore we have to work closely with the local and national sectors'. Mr. Thavone said.

10.Fluctuation.- The fluctuation of the exchange rate (e.g. US dollars versus Lao Kip) created a budget shortfall for the initially planned DIP, thus the project management unit, the project steering committee and funding agencies will consider subsidizing the shortfall to implement the 2006– 2007 DAIP's.

Besides this lessons, the district has proposed to include remoteness as an indicator to allocate DDF funds. Actually, the district receives allocation based only on population size and relative poverty.

The fluctuation of the exchange rate (e.g. US dollars versus Lao Kip) created a budget shortfall for the initially planned District Annual Investment Plans

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'Towards good governance and quality service delivery'

The Governance Public Administration Reform and Decentralized Service Delivery Project (GPAR SP) is being executed by the Office of Governor in collaboration with the Provincial Departments and District Offices of Planning, Finance, Committee of Organization and Personnel, the Sectors of Health, Agriculture, Communication Transport and Construction, Education along with the Lao Women's Union. GPAR SP is part of the National Governance, Public Administration Reform Program (GPAR) under PACSA auspices and is supported by UNDP, UNCDF and EU in partnership with MoF (Ministry of Finance) and CPI (The Committee for Planning and Investment) and COP (Committee of Organization and Personnel). Last October, GPAR SP signed a Memorandum of Understanding with MoF and UNCDF-UNDP to clarify mechanisms for financing planning and budgeting for the districts. This year, activities are taking place in Ta Oy, Lakhonpheng, Saravane and Samuoi Districts. For further information please contact us at gparsrv@yahoo.com.

If you are interested in contributing to this newsletter, please send your draft (100-150 words / arial /12pts/ A4) to the address enclosed and we will publish your article in the coming editions.

Create by Adriana Serdan UNV

Information Board...

GPAR SP news

1) Mr. Inpone Senekhamty was born in Khammouane. He has attained a master degree in regional rural development planning in Thailand after studying his degree in Ubekistan (the former USSR). Mr. Inpone has 14 years of experience working for WFP and Agriculture Ministry. He speaks English, and Russian. He loves football and reading.

Roles and responsibilities: CB has the responsibility to coordinate the communications inputs for the entire project. Developing a sound, two-way, communications strategy for the project and for the provincial/district offices. Main communication responsibility is to liaise and communicate with NPM, Provincial and district administration offices and Citizens increasing public feedback on public service delivery and public awareness of local government activities.

Please join US to welcome Mr. Inpone to our project as Capacity Building and communications facilitator specialist

2) GPAR SP has also shared experiences with other projects such as GPAR XK, LEAP, UNV, UNCRD.

FORTHCOMING ACTIVITIES

-DPT verification and appraisal of sub-projects

-Preparation of the DPT report and submission to DPC

-DPC Discussion and prioritization and recommendation of the District Investment Plan

-Submission of draft investment plan first to district head and then to provincial governor for their approval.

-Citizens feedback survey

-Radio Survey

GoL with the support of the UNDP, UNCDF, EU.