



## PRESS RELEASE

By Department of Social and Environmental Impact Assessment (DESIA), MONRE  
UNDP – UNEP Poverty Environment Initiative  
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### Training on Public Involvement in the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment of Investment Projects

From 26 to 28 June, Department of Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (DESIA), Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment organized the training to introduce and build capacity in applying recently adopted (February 2013) Guidelines for Public Involvement in Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA). ESIA process, regulated by the GoL Decree on Environmental Impact Assessment No. 112 (EIA Decree), ensures that all operating public and private investment projects in Lao PDR are designed and implemented with the appropriate environmental and social impact prevention and mitigation measures.

UNDP – UNEP Poverty and Environment Initiative (PEI), and the Environmental Management Support Programme supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland (EMSP) have provided technical and financial assistance to the training. The first such training of the series to be organized was held at the Naphakouang Resort, in the Thalat district of the Vientiane province. It has brought together around 50 representatives from the Natural Resources and Environment authorities at the central level, at the level of the Vientiane province and the Feuang district, the representatives of the mass organization and NGOs, as well as the media (TV and the newspapers).

Opening the event, Mr Phetsamone Daralome, the Deputy Director General of the Cabinet Office of MONRE, has highlighted that “the increased number of the investment projects have contributed to increasing national income, created job opportunities for local people and led to poverty reduction. However, if these investment projects are not properly managed, they will generate impacts on the environment and society, for instance, depletion of natural resources, environmental degradation and impacts on livelihood of local people.” He has stressed that “the government has regarded public involvement as an important element in the process of environmental and social impact assessment of investment projects to ensure sustainable development.” Public is granted the right to be involved throughout the whole impact assessment and management process: data collection, development of impact assessment reports, project construction period, operation and decommissioning.

Not to be swamped only by the theoretical introduction to the respective guideline participants travelled to the Phonesavath village where people affected by the Nam Ngum 2



dam were relocated. They have consulted the relocated village people, the district authorities as well as the person from the company implementing the relocation and compensation plan to find out to what extent affected people were and are involved in the decisions made over their livelihood support and improvement. Overall it has been concluded that this case, even though not ideal, is a good example of the project developer and the government support to the affected people and can be presented as such to the other projects, even the other countries. For example, besides providing houses and infrastructure the developer also conducts regular training for women addressing maternal and child health, human trafficking, income generating activities, etc. There is, for instance, the Village Mediation Committee dealing with the disputes between the village people and developer.

Overall, participants were very active and have found the training very useful. They came with the set of concrete suggestions on how to further support the PI guidelines implementation, such as its distribution and training at the level of districts and villages, ensure cooperation and coordination among the line ministries as well as between central, province and district level authorities, and continue supporting women's participation in ESIA.

Mr. Xayavet Vixay, Director General of DESIA of MONRE, has concluded that such "training is very important. Participants paid attention and understood the importance including PI in impact assessment for protecting and reducing environmental and social impact and risk which might occur from development project. Participants have also exchanged knowledge, experience and their points for further implementation and further improvement of PI guidelines." Additional training will be organized for the southern and northern provinces in the next quarter.