



## PRESS RELEASE

By the Economic Department, Economic Planning and Finance Committee of the National  
Assembly of Lao PDR  
UNDP – UNEP Poverty Environment Initiative

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### **National Assembly Technical Staff Receive the Training on Public Involvement in the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment**

On 5 – 7 February, 40 technical staff of the National Assembly (NA) of the Lao PDR attended the Training on Public Involvement (PI) in the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (EIA), held in Thalat, Vientiane province. Training was organized by the NA Economic Department and the NA Training Center. It was delivered by the Department of Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (DESIA), Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE), with the technical and financial support from the UNDP – UNEP Poverty and Environment Initiative (PEI).

National Assembly (NA) is the key institution with a mandate of representing the people, advocating for improvements in the quality of life, and articulating the needs of the people. In line with that **Hon. Bounpone Sisoulath**, Vice President of the NA Economic Planning and Finance Committee opened the event highlighting “This training aims for the NA technical staff to deeply understand impacts of the improper management of investment projects and an excessive use of natural resources on the environment and people of our country, and to get familiar with the process of public involvement in addressing such impacts.”

Participants have learned about the legally binding procedures for public involvement, the roles and responsibilities of companies, environmental and other government authorities, as well as about the rights and role of affected people in EIA. They were introduced to the range of tools for informing and involving the public. As an example, the international non-governmental organization Village Focus International (VFI) has presented the series of posters, flyers explaining in simple terms the rights of people in the process of resettlement and livelihood restoration. VFI has also introduced the handbook for grievance mechanism for the cases of disputes and conflicts. These tools have been recently applied in the two areas affected by the large hydropower plants’ constructions.

Not to be swamped by the theory participants travelled to the large Phonesavath village, Meuang Feunag district, Vientiane Province, inhabited by the people relocated from the 16 villages originally based in the Nam Ngum 2 dam construction area. They met the village people, the representatives of district authorities and the company running the resettlement project since 2009. Despite of all consulted actors admitting to the initial challenges in communicating about the relocation and compensation plans, they all

confirmed that now it is their continuous mutual communication that makes the project a successful example of participatory livelihood restoration. Besides providing houses and basic infrastructure, the developer also conducts regular training for women addressing maternal and child health, human trafficking, income generating activities, etc. They also established the Village Mediation Committee dealing with the disputes between the village people and developer. **Mr. Onma Rassavong**, Deputy Director General of NA Economic Department has concluded the meeting with highlighting this project as the model case to be followed by the other investors and government authorities.

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 in the EIA process. They asked for promoting women participation, clarifying who is responsible for information disclosure and dissemination (company or government) and time-frame for different PI steps. Environmental monitoring inspections shall involve the NA constituencies whose role is to represent people. Last but not least they stressed that the address of the complaints and disputes needs to comply with the Law on Petition and the other relevant legislations.

#### For more information

Contact:

Vilaxay Inthaxoum

Communications Coordinator

Poverty-Environment Initiative (PEI)

Tel: 021 254 035

Mobile: 020 2249 3781

Email: [vinthaxoum@gmail.com](mailto:vinthaxoum@gmail.com)