



## Comité de Coopération avec le Laos

Boîte postale 4791, Vientiane, Laos

Tél : (856-21) 25 40 39 - Télécopie : (856-21) 21 69 25

Email : cclvientiane@ccl-laos.org

Site : www.ccl-laos.org

### Revue de presse du 19 au 23 Octobre 2015



Vous trouverez ci-joint un choix d'articles publiés au Laos en anglais dans le quotidien "Vientiane Times"

Bonne réception et bonne lecture,  
Cordialement,  
Bureau du CCL à Vientian

➤ **Vientiane Times** :

- US provides funding for UXO Lao teams to resume work
- Gov't approves emergency budget for polio control
- Korea to assist Laos with railway link development
- Climate change under the spotlight during Research Week
- Gov't needs more reforms to promote investment diversification
- Experts propose ways to achieve healthcare targets
- Ministry tightens up state investment
- Lack of mental health experts a serious concern
- Climate change adaptation to improve agricultural production

## US provides funding for UXO Lao teams to resume work

(By Times Reporters)

The United States has provided new support of US\$2.2 million to UXO Lao, which will enable it to rehire trained technicians it lost in 2014 as a result of funding difficulties.



MrPhoukhieoChanthasomboune (first left), Mr Benjamin Rhodes (second left), US Ambassador to Laos Mr Daniel Clune (third left) and officials from UXO and NRA view the exhibition.

The UXO Lao teams will be deployed in Huaphan, Xiengkhuang, Khammuan, Savannakhet, Saravan, and Champasak provinces, according to a statement from US Deputy National Security Advisor Benjamin Rhodes on October 16. Mr Rhodes said the United States is committed to helping Laos clear UXO from contaminated areas in order to reduce casualties and to increase the productivity of agricultural land to reduce poverty. Since 1993, the United States has provided over US\$83 million in UXO-related assistance to Laos. In 2015, US funding totalled US\$15 million. Priority funding will support the clearance of UXO found as a result of evidence-based surveys of contaminated areas. Victims' assistance programmes will provide direct services to the survivors of UXO accidents and their families and help strengthen the first aid and emergency response of key health facilities and village volunteers in heavily impacted provinces. Funding for risk awareness supports the education of Lao citizens, especially children, about the dangers of UXO. Director General of the National

Regulatory Authority, MrPhoukhieoChanthasomboune, said 2015 is a turning point for the UXO sector, with approval of the new survey procedures that provide a stronger evidence-based system for surveys, and implementation by all five humanitarian clearance operators. This system helps officials to understand clearly the scope of the UXO problem to better estimate the remaining UXO contamination in Laos. It also gives the sector the ability to plan the time and funding required to reduce or eliminate casualties from UXO accidents, he added. MrPhoukhieo said the change includes a more systematic village by village approach in line with the new National Socio-Economic Development Plan indicators. "We have moved from a request-based approach to an evidence-based survey approach, including non-technical survey and technical survey, to establish the Confirmed Hazardous Areas (CHAs)." "Firstly, it ensures a better use of the existing resources, by clearing only UXO contaminated land, with a higher number of cluster munitions cleared per hectare. We have already observed the improved results of UXO Lao and other operators due to this new approach," he added. Secondly, it allows multi-year planning through the allocation of CHAs among clearance operators, in line with the priorities established with local, regional, provincial and national authorities. There are now many defined CHAs waiting to be cleared and, with input from village to national level, a plan to clear these CHAs in the coming years will be developed. "This additional funding to UXO Lao will increase the pace of the survey efforts and more effective clearance; and it will contribute to the full implementation of the new evidence-based concept of operations introduced by UXO Lao at the end of 2014," MrPhoukhieo said

(Vientiane Times 19 October 2015)

## Gov't approves emergency budget for polio control

(By XayxanaLeukai)

The government has approved an emergency budget to buy 500,000 doses of polio vaccine to distribute to target groups in Borikhamxay, Xaysomboun and Xiengkhuang provinces. The budget was approved after an 8-year-old boy in Phameuang village, Borikhan district, Borikhamxay province died from the type 1 poliovirus last month. Manager of the National Expanded Programme of Immunisation, Dr Anonh Xeuvongsa, said Xiengkhuang and Xaysomboun were neighbouring provinces of Borikhamxay and it was possible the virus had spread there. The programme will give vaccines to children aged 10 and under. "The campaign is being implemented under the Ministry of Health and WHO's direction," he said. Each child needs three doses for effective lifelong immunity. Dr Anonh warned that only vaccines can prevent the polio virus. If any child does not receive the full vaccine of three doses, they are still at risk of poliovirus illness. Laos intensified its efforts to eradicate polio in the 1990s with the last case reported in October 1996. Laos and all other countries in the WHO Western Pacific Region were officially certified as polio-free in October 2000 and have maintained their polio-free status until now. Dr Anonh, who is Deputy Director of the National Centre for Maternal and Child Health, explained the benefits of vaccination as the nation campaigns about polio shots for children less than one year old. "Once your immune system is trained to resist a disease, you are said

to be immune to it. Prior to vaccines, the only way to become immune to a disease was to actually contract it and, with luck, survive it. This is called naturally acquired immunity," he said. With naturally acquired immunity, you suffer the symptoms of the disease and also risk the complications, which can be quite serious or even deadly. In addition, during certain stages of the illness, you may be contagious and pass the disease to family members, friends, or others who come into contact with you. Dr Anonh explained that vaccines protect not only yourself but also others around you. If your vaccine-primed immune system stops an illness before it starts, you will be contagious for a much shorter period of time, or perhaps not at all. "Similarly, when other people are vaccinated, they are less likely to pass the disease on to you. Vaccines protect not only individuals but entire communities. That is why vaccines are vital to the public health goal of preventing diseases," he said. If a critical number of people within a community are vaccinated against a particular illness, the entire group becomes less likely to get the disease. This protection is called community, or herd, immunity. On the other hand, if too many people in a community do not get vaccinations, diseases can reappear. For this reason, the latest vaccination campaign presents a good opportunity for the Lao population to stay free from polio as 196 countries attempt to eliminate this virus from the world by 2020.

(Vientiane Times 19 October 2015)

## **Korea to assist Laos with railway link development**

*(By Times Reporters )*

The Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) will provide grant aid of US\$3 million (more than 24.3 billion kip) to help Laos carry out a feasibility study for a railway link from Vientiane to VungAng in Vietnam from 2015 to 2017. Resident Representative of the KOICA Office in Laos, Mr Kim Hahng-joo, and Director General of the Railway Department at the Ministry of Public Works and Transport, Dr Sompong Pholsena, signed a record of discussion on the project on October 14 at the KOICA Laos office in Vientiane. The project aims to develop railway transportation in Laos, to contribute to human and institutional capacity building in the fields of railway development planning and engineering technology, as well as contribute to the acceleration of Asean economic integration by enhancing rail connectivity between Laos and Vietnam. Before signing the record of discussion,

KOICA sent a group of Korean experts from the Korea Rail Network Authority and University of Seoul to Laos to carry out a pre-feasibility study and implementation survey for the 550km section of the proposed railway between Vientiane, Thakhek, Mueang and VungAng in Vietnam last March as well as in July. As a result of the two visits by the experts, KOICA made detailed plans for the project's implementation and finalised the record of discussion with the Ministry of Public Works and Transport based upon mutual agreement. Mr Kim said "It is expected that this project will resolve the logistics and transportation related challenges Laos now faces as a landlocked country." "Therefore, this project is timely and significant for Laos to transform from a landlocked into a land-linked nation, accelerating Asean economic integration," he added.

*(Vientiane Times 19 October 2015)*

## **Climate change under the spotlight during Research Week**

*(By Times Reporters)*

Talks and activities as part of the 5th Research Week for Development under the theme "Climate change and Development" will take place on October 22-23 at the French Institute in Vientiane. The joint Lao-French programme aims to encourage research in Laos and the sub-region, supporting public stakeholders in their decision-making and attracting young Lao students to the world of scientific research. The opening speech will be given by the French ambassador to Laos, Ms Claudine Ledoux. The event has been organised by the French Embassy and the French Institute, in partnership with CIRAD, a French research centre working with developing countries to tackle international agricultural and development issues.

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment is also participating. Activities arranged for October 22 include the screening of a documentary and a question and answer session with a science journalist and former head of the Science, Technology and Development Department at the French newspaper *Courrier International*. On October 23, the theme of discussions will be "Climate change and development in Laos". The purpose of this introductory presentation is to illustrate, based on concrete experiences in Laos, how the forestry and agriculture sector can address climate change issues while supporting the Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals. Laos has ambitious

plans to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions while at the same time increasing its resilience to the negative impacts of climate change. The National Strategy on Climate Change that was approved in 2010 and the Climate Change Action Plan for the period 2013-2020 define mitigation and adaptation actions in the sectors of agriculture, forestry, land use change, water resources, energy transportation, industry and public health. These national initiatives have prioritised two broad sectors, the first, forest-agriculture with plans to increase forest cover to a total of 70 percent of land area by

2020 to reduce the risk of floods and prevent land degradation, while sequestering carbon to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions. The second, water-energy through the provision of clean electricity from hydropower resources aims to increase the share of renewable energy to 30 percent of total energy consumption by 2030. This panel will give the opportunity for speakers to introduce the challenges of the COP 21-Paris climate conference for Laos, to discuss the country strategy for the reduction of the impact of greenhouse gas emissions, and adaptations to climate change.

*(Vientiane Times 20 October 2015)*

## **Experts propose ways to achieve healthcare targets**

*(By Times Reporters)*

Health officials gathered in Vientiane on Monday to discuss improvements to the healthcare system, aimed at achieving various targets in the years to come. Speaking at the 8th Health Sector Working Group Policy Level Meeting, Minister of Health Prof. Dr Eksavang Vongvichit said the progress made by the health sector was indicated by figures contained in a report on the seventh 5-Year Development Plan. This would show what the Ministry of Health had achieved and the challenges to be addressed in the years to come. Addressing the meeting, Japanese Ambassador to Laos Mr Hiroyuki Kishino said health was among the key sectors for eradicating poverty and improving livelihoods. He was pleased about the untiring efforts made to date by the Ministry of Health to improve healthcare services and to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. "Some positive outcomes have been achieved, while several challenges still remain to be addressed," he said. The first issue Mr Kishino highlighted was financial resources. Under government policy, 9 percent of the national budget is supposed to be allocated to the health sector. Budgetary appropriations for operational costs, excluding

salaries, in the health sector have more than doubled over the past four years, from just under 3 percent in 2010-2011 to just over 6 percent in 2014-2015. But this is still modest compared to the sector's huge resource requirements and is relatively low by international standards. Mr Kishino said he would like to urge continued efforts to secure financial resources based on the following three suggestions. First, it is worth exploring indigenous resources that can be used for important health programmes on a sustainable basis by introducing a special purpose tax on cigarettes or alcohol. Second, more support from development partners is needed. To attract more donor funding, health sector reform is critical, which a new ADB project for health sector reform will facilitate. Third, private investment in the health sector, including by non-profit organisations, will also play a positive role. A paediatric hospital run by Friends Without a Border in Luang Prabang is providing good services. In cooperation with other related ministries, a policy framework to encourage such investment should be studied. The second issue is human resource development. In the health sector, more staff and

quality workers are needed to improve services. So far, some impressive progress has been made in increasing the number of health staff. However, the allocation of additional staff to remote, rural areas and their stay there is still a challenge, since a large proportion currently lives in Vientiane and urban areas. The third issue is governance and management of the health sector. Budget implementation management and monitoring of progress in projects are especially important. It is crucial to realise good governance by improving transparency and accountability in managing the health sector to gain trust in the health system by citizens as well as development partners. "I hope the Ministry of Health will demonstrate its strong leadership in this," Mr Kishino said. WHO Representative in Laos Dr Juliet Fleischl said that

on behalf of the World Health Organisation and representing the development partners in the health sector working group, she wanted to congratulate the Lao government and the Ministry of Health on the progress and achievements made so far within the context of health sector reform. The Reform Framework sets the directions towards achievement of the goals and vision of the health sector reform programme in achieving the MDGs and is the roadmap towards the achievement of Universal Health Coverage by 2025. According to UN estimates, Laos is one of only 19 countries in the world to have already achieved the MDG maternal mortality target of 220 per 100,000 live births. Other health related targets are mostly on track including those for HIV, tuberculosis and malaria, and water and sanitation.

*(Vientiane Times 21 October 2015)*

## **Gov't needs more reforms to promote investment diversification**

*(By Bounfaeng Phaymanivong)*

Laos needs to undertake some necessary reforms and updates to its investment policy and laws to create greater transparency for use as a tool to promote economic diversification and foreign investment projects in Laos. In the presentation of the World Bank's Senior Trade Economist Mr Mombert Hoppe at the 8th Trade and Private Sector Working Group Meeting in Vientiane yesterday, he suggested that Laos will need to do more with a clearer investment policy in some law articles regarding domestic and foreign investment projects. "All necessary documents should be centralised and easily accessible and the websites of the authorities in charge of investment must be continually kept updated," he said, adding that improving the business policy and the business environment are key factors in attracting foreign investment. He also added that improvements to the law on investor protection and dispute resolution must also be prioritised to increase the appeal of investment promotion. As part of the promotion of the

trade sector in Laos the Lao government, in collaboration with the Trade and Private Sector Working Group, is seeking to find the key issues affecting trade and private sector development in Laos. At the 8th Trade and Private Sector Working Group Meeting in Vientiane, the government, its development partners and the private sector together reviewed progress in sector programme implementation and discussed future priorities. In her opening remarks, Minister of Industry and Commerce Ms Khemmani Pholsena said the meeting was to review the sector's implementation progress over the past fiscal year and also discuss sector priorities for the next fiscal year and the next five years. "The outcome of this meeting will form the basis for our final Sector Working Group report, which will be our sector's inputs to the background document and joint statement of our sector for the upcoming High Level Roundtable Meeting next month," she said. She also said that the Lao economy has been growing rapidly and

has now become a lower middle income economy but it is still less diverse than it should be, despite a number of reforms to improve the environment for business over recent years. “Our ability to attract foreign direct investment compares favourably with others in the region and investment is entirely resource-seeking rather than efficiency-seeking or about 80 percent of foreign direct investment is invested in the mining and energy sector,” MsKhemmani said. She also noted that much more needs to be done to promote economic diversification from the resource sector through attracting quality

investment and creating more quality jobs outside the resource sector. The meeting was also co-chaired by German Ambassador to Laos, MrMichaelGrau and EU Charge'de Affairs and Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) Donor Facilitator for Laos, Mr Michel Goffin. MrGrau also referred to the future support of vocational education development in Laos through various major assistance projects, funded by Germany, as a priority to enhance skilled workers to meet the demands of various companies at the specific economic zones in Laos.

*(Vientiane Times 21October 2015)*

## **Ministry tightens up state investment**

*(By SouksakhoneVaenkeo)*

The Ministry of Planning and Investment has pledged to monitor both new and old state investment projects to ensure the state budget is being put to the most effective use, while also addressing any irregularities. The pledge came after reports suggested that some state departments had previously carried out unapproved projects, unreasonably high-priced projects, and even ‘ghost’ projects for which a budget had been allocated and disbursed but nothing had materialised. Minister of Planning and Investment SomdyDuangdy said recently that amid current budget constraints, there was a pressing need to ensure that money was well spent. MrSomdy spoke to the media at a press conference held during the three-day biannual meeting between the government cabinet, Vientiane Mayor and provincial governors. The minister promised that officials in charge would do their best to ensure the proper management of state investment projects, especially those with a price tag of 100 billion kip or more. “The Ministry of Planning and Investment will coordinate with the relevant sectors and entrust a task-force committee to inspect mega projects,” he said. Early inspections of new state investment projects will be carried out, while

projects that have been completed would also be inspected to evaluate whether the investment cost was reasonable, he added. New projects deemed to be of little importance could be suspended. “We will ask the government and the National Assembly (NA) to consider suspending less important projects,” he said. Recognising that some state bodies have carried out projects without approval from the NA, the minister said the committee would assess whether these projects had been fully implemented and whether the investment cost was reasonable. “The committee is required to report the findings to the government and the NA to seek guidance,” MrSomdy said. Reports have emerged that many state organisations have spent money on investment projects without obtaining approval from the National Assembly. For example, the State Auditing Organisation discovered that more than 4,242 billion kip had been spent without approval from the NA after they audited 73 state organisations, banks and enterprises as well as state investment projects in fiscal year 2011-12. It was reported previously that auditors also uncovered 25 so-called ‘ghost’ projects in Oudomxay province, in which budgets were repeatedly allocated and spent on the

same projects. More than 320 billion kip in assets including 200 billion kip in cash was allocated for these projects. Mr Somdy said Laos needs total investment funding of about 34,500 billion kip or 30 percent of

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in order to achieve 7.5 percent economic growth in fiscal year 2015-16. Funding for state investment is expected to reach 9,360 billion kip.

*(Vientiane Times 23 October 2015)*

## **Lack of mental health experts a serious concern**

*(By Phetphoxay Sengpaseuth)*

The health sector remains unable to provide timely intervention to treat people with mental health issues because of the lack of specialists in the field. This means that people who suffer from mental illness do not have access to the treatment and expert help they need and their condition almost always goes undiagnosed. Laos has neither the personnel nor the budget to adequately treat mental illness, said Deputy Director General of the Health Care Department of the Ministry of Health, Associate Prof. Dr Bounnack Saysanakhom. Speaking to *Vientiane Times* yesterday, Assoc. Prof. Dr Bounnack said that while the government allocates considerable funding to the health budget, only 2 percent of this goes towards the treatment of mental illness. He said the government encourages study of the subject at the University of Health Sciences, but students are not interested in this topic. The Ministry of Health will do more to encourage the study of psychiatry at the university and will request a larger budget from the government for this field of medicine, he added. The ministry is trying to provide trainee doctors with a greater understanding of the treatment required for mental health patients in communities. The goal is for doctors to be better able to communicate with patients and gain a more accurate assessment

of their mental and physical health. Medical students have already improved their basic knowledge and clinical skills in the diagnosis and treatment of psychological and sociological disorders. Training focuses on communities and family and social networks because these are often a main part of the treatment of people with mental health issues. WHO statistics for 2002 showed that 154 million people globally suffered from depression, which is a form of mental illness. Around the world, there were 21 million people suffering from schizophrenia, a disorder that affects perception, cognition, behaviour and emotions. This year, the WHO is raising awareness of what can be done to ensure that people with mental health conditions can continue to live with dignity, through human rights oriented policy and law, training of health professionals, respect for informed consent to treatment, inclusion in decision-making processes, and public information campaigns. Mental health refers to our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. Our state of mind affects the way we think, feel, and act. It also helps to determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental well-being is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence to adulthood.

*(Vientiane Times 23 October 2015)*

## Climate change adaptation to improve agricultural production

*(By Times Reporters )*

Laos gained good lessons and experience on adapting to climate change in the agriculture sector after the implementation of a special project in different areas of Savannakhet and Xayaboury provinces. The formal end of the project on Improving the Resilience of the Agricultural Sector in Laos to Climate Change (IRAS) was announced yesterday in Vientiane by the National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute (NAFRI) in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Global Environmental Fund (GEF). The meeting to review the project was chaired by Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, Dr Ty Phommasack and UNDP Deputy Resident Representative to Laos, Ms Azusa Kubota and attended by the project national committee, senior officials from relevant sectors and representatives from international organisations. The project's main objective was to provide food security and reduce the risk of impact on farmers from flooding and drought due to climate change in Laos. The project covered 16 villages in Phieng and Paklai districts of Xayaboury and 17 villages in Outhoumphone and Champhone districts of Savannakhet. From 2011-2015 the project achieved different outcomes such as expanding the knowledge base on climate change impacts in the Lao PDR on agricultural production, food security and vulnerability and strengthening local coping mechanisms. The capacities of sector

planners and agricultural producers to understand and address climate change related risks and opportunities for local food production and socio-economic conditions were also strengthened. The project also provided community-based adaptive agricultural practices and off-farm opportunities were demonstrated and promoted within suitable agro-ecological systems with adaptation monitoring and learning accepted as a long-term process. Dr Ty believed that the project will have produced valuable lessons and a good guideline for Lao researchers to continue to seek better measures for the prevention of climate change impacts. Each year, thousands of hectares of rice and other crops are damaged by flooding and drought due to climate change as well as considerable losses of livestock, with the issue causing agricultural development in Laos to struggle and only expand slowly. The problems have also led to the deaths of many people and destroyed private and public property. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and many other branches of government are working hard to establish measures to reduce then eliminate the problem, Dr Ty said. NAFRI is the sector taking most of the responsibility for solving the problem by adapting the climate change strategy to conditions and ability. One of the measures is IRAS implementation with cooperation from different sectors and UNDP, with support from GEF.

*(Vientiane Times 23 October 2015)*