

## PROJECT LESSONS-LEARNED REPORT

Total length of report: 25 pages.

Please refer to the [Deliverable Description](#) for more information on the purpose and use of this report

Project Title:	<b>Governance and Public Administration Programme Sekong- Citizen's Information Programme through:</b> Community radio, Speakerphone, Information Board, Village Statistic and Quarterly news magazine
Country:	Sekong Province, Lao People's Democratic Republic
Related CPAP Outcome	<p>The UNDP Country Programme Action Plan (CPAP) for the Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR) 2007-2011 reflects the development priorities set forth in the country's sixth National Socio-Economic Strategy Plan (NSED) that has incorporated the National Growth and Poverty Eradication Strategy (NGPES), as well as the Millennium Development Goals (MGD's).</p> <p>The CPAP has 9 outcomes which are associated with 3 higher-level United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) (2007-2011) outcomes.</p> <p>One of the UNDAF outcomes is outcome number 3: <b><i>By 2011, strengthen capacities of public and private institutions to fulfil their duties and greater people's participation in governance and advocacy for promotion of human rights in conformity with the Millennium Declaration.</i></b> Under this UNDAF outcome, the GPAR programme had contributed to the achievement of the CPAP outcome <b><i>number 8: Increased efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, and accountability of public administration both central and local levels.</i></b></p> <p>The inclusion of Sekong province as the new member of UNDP GPAR supported projects started last April 2007 and will end on March 2011. The intended outcome of GPAR Sekong is to reduce poverty by <b><i>"Improving Access to Public Services for the Multi-Ethnic People"</i></b>. <b><i>One of its outputs is to improve planning and coordination capacity at district level,</i></b> under this output, the United Nations Volunteer programme supported the Citizen's Information Programme which intended <b><i>to increase citizen's access to public information and development communications in ethnic languages.</i></b></p>
<b>Project Description and Key Lessons-Learned</b>	
Brief description of context	<p>Sekong is one of the smallest provinces in Lao PDR, created in 1984 from villages of the two provinces of Attapeu and Saravane. The province has four districts namely: Kaluam, Dakchueng, Lamam and Thateng. Two of the four districts, Kaluam and Dakcheung belong to the 72 poorest districts in the country. Its population of 98,48, 50,178 <i>are female</i> is composed of 14 of the country's 49 recognized ethnic groups of which the largest are Katu and Tarieng (Talieng), with Taoi and others following suit. Lao Loum (lowland Lao) is a minority between 3%- 10%. Most ethnic groups live in remote forest areas in the east of the province have their own dialects and practice their own cultural and religious activities. Their access to services is limited due to lack of means and inability to communicate in Lao language.</p>

Most of the villages are cohabited with lowland Lao and several ethnic groups, especially those who resettled close to roads and infrastructures in the district and provincial townships.

Sekong is geographically remote being 800+ km. from Vientiane capital but it is linked to the mainstream national social, cultural and linguistic culture. Hilly and mountainous topography limit the reach of radio signal to a small part of the total number of 252 (villages) communities. The FM<sup>1</sup> radio signal in Sekong town does not reach very far, and the AM<sup>2</sup> transmitter signal from Pakse and Savannakhet are not strong enough to cover the whole province.

The Citizen's Information Programme targeted two districts, namely Thatheng and Dakchueng. A brief socio-economic profile of Thateng and Dakchueng showed below:

- **Thateng District**

Thateng is one of Sekong's districts located 70.500 sq km. on the Boloven Plateaus. Bordering Laman to the east, Lao Ngam to the west, Saravan to the north and Paksong to the south. It is 48 km far from Sekong province, having a total area of 64,000 km<sup>2</sup> and about 500-650 meters above sea level. The area is suitable for agriculture and tourism.

Based on 2009 statistic record provided by Sekong Provincial Planning and Investment-statistic division, the district has a total population of 34,399 individuals. The number of household totalled to 5,637. Out of the total population, 17,759 are females. About 4,995 are above poverty line while 11.39% below poverty line.

Thateng has 55 villages with eight (8) different ethnics group composed of (1) Alak, (2) Katou, (3) Seuy, (4) Loven, (5) Ta-Oi, (6) Nge, (7) Taliang and (8) Lao Lum. Among the 55 villages, 10 villages are the first target villages supported by the United Nations Volunteer (UNV) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to increase citizens' access to public information thru establishing of community radio. Part of the activities is to draft a clear roles and functions of the steering committee and conduct baseline survey.

The ten targeted villages are: *Kongtayaun, Done Saa, Thon nai, Kandon, Jounlar, Leak, Houa se, Kamkok, Phaungneua and Palaengneua.*

- **Dakchueng District**

Dakcheung is one of the four districts in Sekong province situated in the Kaseng plateau. Bordering Attapue province and Vietnam central provinces of Daklai and Dakyang to the east, 150 kms from Lamam district and Sekong province to the west. South borders of Sanexay district and Attapue province. North borders of Kaleum district, having an altitude of 1,238 meters above sea level. The total land area of 217,950 hectare is suitable for agricultural and future potential for tourism.

<sup>1</sup> FM- refer to Frequency Modulation airwave band used for commercial/civilian radiowave lines.

<sup>2</sup> AM- refer to Amplitude Modulation airwave band as another commercial civilian radio line for broadcast.

As of year 2009, Dakcheung district has a total population of 19,804 having a total household of 2,616. Out of the total population, 9,981 are females. (source: *Department of Planning and Investment-Statistic record*)

The district has a total of 80 villages which were divided in 8 Jutsumes . It has four local ethnics communities comprises of Lao,Talieng, Yea, and Katou, each ethnics have their own language and culture, however, they use Talieng language as an official language in communication with other tribes.

Dakcheung as one of the two districts, targeted to pilot the citizen's information programme which comprises installation of signboard, speakerphones to ten targeted village and one Community Radio Station in the central district. The 10 targeted villages are: Dakcheung, Dakreun, Dakxoung, Dakdor, Dakyang, Xiengmai, Chaling, Daktriem, Xienglouang and Daktreup

### Main challenges being faced at the start of the project

The Citizen's Information Programme or any other project faces different forms of challenges that eventually led the project into its successes.

#### Challenges in terms of the Place:

1. **Remoteness-** in terms of geographical location, Sekong province is one of the remoteness provinces in the entire country. Inaccessibility of most communities in social, economic, political and cultural activities to the national mainstream. During rainy season, service delivery and the delivery of goods beyond the district centres to community and vice-versa is difficult, some main roads are often cut off from road traffic. Due to the hilly and mountainous topography, even radio signals reach only a small part of the communities. Radio station in Sekong Township, Pakse and Savannakhet does not reach very far and not strong enough to cover the province.
2. **Ethnic Diversity-** Sekong is home for 14 recognized ethnic groups which most of them lives in remote forest areas in the east of the province. They have their own languages and practice own cultural and religious activities. Their access to services is limited due to lack of access and inability to communicate in Lao language.
3. **Low technical capacity of the administration in the districts and provinces-** Both district and provincial level administrations struggled with shortage of number and trained personnel specifically in technical and managerial functions. In Provincial District of Information and Culture for example, only 2 staffs are capable on using photo shops and edit articles in Sekong Today Magazines.

(Source: Revised GPAR Sekong Project Document under situational analysis)

**Challenges in terms of the Project Document (ProDoc)**

**1. Lapses and complexity-** The ProDoc designed was too ambitious and showed less knowledge about the identified villages. Examples of such lapses are:

- **Setting-up of Speakerphone in no electricity villages:** the prodoc clearly indicated the establishment of CIP in two districts-Thateng and Dakcheung, In Thateng, 9 of 10 target villages have electricity the remaining village is still pending installation of speakerphone. While in Dakcheung, all ten target villages has no electricity. This basic information data should have been noted in the prodoc as to what alternative needs to be done. Lack of in-depth review or environmental scanning survey was reflected on the prodoc.
- **Radio cost building and equipment:** both building construction and equipment cost were closely copied to UNDP's pilot community radio in Khoun district. Again, the failure of conducting proper survey on Thateng and Dakcheung location was seen during the start and implementation of the project.
- **Personnel staff or volunteers:** the prodoc did not specify the "people" or volunteers who will run the CIP specifically the community radio. The cost or operation expenses were not included in the prodoc.

**other challenges:**

Aside from the above mentioned challenges, CIP faced other relevant challenges that delayed its implementation for more than a year. Lack of proper coordination of the responsible person/s (PO) to the higher level management, in such a way that the setting-up of second community radio was not known to the UNDP higher management.

On the provincial and district level, volunteerism concept is less recognized or given emphasis to the point that the district government had already form or assigned government staff to run and manage the radio. It reflects the low trust of the district authority to the capacities of volunteers.

Women's participation is also seen as a challenge, during the first phase of project implementation. Few numbers of women attended or participated during the meetings and consultations.

Moreover, the CIP specifically the community radio was not properly oriented or define its distinction to government or any radio operating in Laos. Both provincial and district government even the GPAR project management interpreted the Community Radio as "extension" government run and owned radio.

<p><b>Brief description of project</b></p>	<p>The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Volunteer (UNV) programme designs and executes project to UNDP's Governance and Public Administrative Reform Programme (GPAR), and one of its new GPAR members is the Sekong province.</p> <p>The United Nations Volunteer joint the programme initiative and provided fund amounting to 545,400 US\$ to support the Citizen's Information Programme (CIP). Aside from funding, UN Volunteers are working to extend governance initiatives to the district and community level providing technical support to all GPAR Sekong components, not limited to CIP.</p> <p>UNDP has assisted Sekong province since 1986, starting with the road construction from Sekong town to Dakcheung district. This was followed by the Sekong Ethnic People's Development (SEP-Dev) project last 1999 in the field of rural development. The SEP-Dev provided the two districts of Dakchueng and Kaluam with more than 100 km of access tracks and roads to 86 villages, latrines, clean water supplies and other basic small-scale infrastructures, as well as training for villagers in agricultural and technical training for district and provincial staff. The GPAR Sekong built on the result of SEP-Dev and deepens its partnership to all levels of local government.</p> <p>GPAP Sekong sets out to improve <b>"People's Access to Public Services"</b> in the largely multi-ethnic province. The project was originally planned last March 27, 2007 and actually started last April 27, 2007 and estimated date of completion is on March 27, 2011. The project is being implemented by the Public Administration Section, Office of the Governor, Sekong Province. The responsible stakeholders are the PCOP, DoF, NAPP, DepEd, Office of the District Chiefs, PDIC, LWU, LNFC and Lao Youth.</p> <p>The programme relate to the goal of the government of Lao PDR to "build an effective, and efficient, well-trained, honest and ethical public service that is able to meet the needs of the multi-ethnic people in Sekong province.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Issues the project tried to address</b></p> <p>"Access to all forms of media was significantly lower in the villages of Sekong Province than in the other provinces", according to findings by the Regional Indigenous People's Programme (RIPP) and Asia Regional Governance Programme (ARGP) last February 2009 in their project "Communication for Empowerment of Ethnic People in the Lao PDR".</p> <p>The citizen's information programme which consists of a network of community volunteer committees engaged in village statistical and socio economic data gathering , conduct information dissemination through community speakerphones, information boards, two community radios (one each in Thateng and Dakchueng districts) and the quarterly Sekong Today's magazine.</p> <p>Under the project document, it is part of "Output 2- Enhancing Planning and Coordination at the District level". It is aimed to increase citizen's access to public information and development communications in ethnic languages. The project document targeted 20 villages, of which 10 are in Thateng and another 10 in Dakcheung district.</p> <p>Aside from the main issue on information access, there were number of specific issues related to the CIP. These were:</p> <p>(1) The difference and purpose between government own radio and</p>
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community radio;

- (2) Lack of concept about “volunteerism”;
- (3) Unclear project document;
- (4) Less knowledge about the MDG’s;

### **The solutions that project tried to offer and its major outputs**

One of the great challenges in attaining the MDGs is its localization. There must be a maximized campaign to localize these goals. As such, attaining the MDGs entails mutual efforts among the government, stakeholders and the community in the province.

Awareness drive, education and proper information dissemination on the MDGs should be put into place for better understanding on the benefits or direct impact of achieving MDGs. By means of establishing information system in the province of Sekong, will help improve basic service delivery thus reducing poverty.

The project is sought to enhance and establish or build a community information programme using a community radio station, speakerphones, information board and print media network in Thateng and Dakcheung districts that will help increase citizen’s access to public information for development activities.

#### ***Specifically, the project tried to:***

- a) Develop efficient communication for public services;
- b) Increase number of citizen’s participation in the decision-making process, including making decisions about the contents, duration and program schedule;
- c) Capacitate local community volunteers, Women’s group and other partners involved in managing and supervising the stations.
- d) Uplift the socio-economic, cultural and educational status of the citizen’s through information dissemination;
- e) Promote and preserve tradition, cultural heritage and moral values of the community.
- f) Educate both the government and community about the MDG’s, its benefits and purposes.

#### ***The CIP is aiming to achieve the following output deliverables based on the project document:***

- 1. A total of 34,399 population or 4,949 households as well as other communities like Lamam and Sekong town proper reached by the radio signal have full access to public information and developed communication in ethnic languages.
- 2. Increased community awareness through dissemination and exchanging of the most relevant information, educational and developmental.
- 3. Replication of the project by other organizations or other community’s initiative.
- 4. Established a well-volunteers sound and sustainable information programme within the villages and district.
- 5. Moreover, the project expects to develop opportunity for the community to express themselves socially, politically and culturally.

Key project successes	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>What has worked well?</u></b></p> <p>The CIP appeared most successful in Thateng District compared to Dakcheung where in the whole target villages has no electricity.</p> <p>The concept of volunteered run information programme, was made realized by the government thus they give support to the community in terms of sustainability issue.</p> <p>The programme produced important and tangible accomplishments including utilizing of village own resources and people to take part on the CIP.</p> <p>Below were the accomplishment of the CIP per project:</p> <p><b>Accomplishments per project component:</b></p> <p><b>1. Information Board</b></p> <p>The information board was fully set-up last March 2009 in 10 villages of Thateng and Dakchueng. The front face of the board highlighted the demography, physical characteristic of the village, health, education, water and sanitation, infrastructure, village map, agriculture and other socio-economic data.</p> <p>The data were being updated by the village volunteers using the village statistic book developed by the village statistician volunteers. The statistic book is being validated by the Provincial Planning and Investment, statistic division.</p> <p>The back face of the board is intended for the community announcements, activities and other information. Health posters and awareness printed in Lao language were also pasted in the back portion such as posters in H1N1, bird flu and proper hygiene. To date, the information board still needs more informative posters on children's and women's right, UXO, environment, nutrition, education and other development concerns.</p> <p>The information board served as the "mirror" of the villages, its profile, people, available resources and needs of the community.</p> <p>In Thateng district, a survey questionnaire was conducted last November 22-26, 2010 conducted by the Office of Information and Culture, volunteers and project staff to determine the impact of the information board.</p> <p>Based on the data obtained from the respondent, the info board produced the following accomplishments:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Replication of information board was also done by UNFPA. Several UNFPA and private information board is now visible in some villages of Thateng. The UNV information board becomes a model board.</li> <li>(2) A total of 55 households learned the importance of proper hygiene and sanitation;</li> <li>(3) A total of 60 livestock animals were sold due to print post announcement made by the villages;</li> <li>(4) In Ban Kandone, 20 households have their own latrine;</li> <li>(5) Ten villages know the criteria on how to become a "culture village";</li> <li>(6) A total of 85 individuals understand and learned the rights of the children;</li> <li>(7) Other announcements such as food distributions by other organizations, vaccines schedule was also posted in the board;</li> <li>(8) Ban Chounla also used their info board as a waiting shed for commuters.</li> </ol>
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## 2. Speakerphone or the mini-radio booth

The second project under the Citizen's Information Programme is the setting up of speakerphone in 10 villages of Thateng and Dakchueng. Coordination meeting and survey was organized within the community to ensure strategic location for the speakerphones.

In Dakchueng district, 10 speakerphone posts were completely installed last March 2009, but due to unavailability of electricity, the building of speakerphone booths and installation of speakerphone equipment was not materialized as planned.

The project is lobbying to other potential partners for support in providing solar panel or other source of power for the speakerphone. Inclusion of Dakchueng speakerphone in new media initiative programme was also recommended by the government and project.

In Thateng, 9 out of 10 villages had been operational since October 2009. Ban Leek as of this moment is still waiting for the availability of electricity although booth had been constructed.

Through series of community meetings involving all the members and sectors within the community, the speakerphone turned to be an information booth.

A 5x5 meters size mini radio booth became visible in 10 villages of Thateng. The idea of constructing a booth came from the community as a common neutral area of information sharing building. The community built the booth from their own resources, an evidence of ownership and volunteerism.

Aside from construction materials and labor, a volunteer from Ban Kandone, Mr. Keoheungsy donated 10x10 meters piece of his land for the construction of their village booth.

Speakerphone booth acts like a radio station within the community, volunteers together with the village chief had drafted a simple 5 hours radio programme for a week, 2 hours in the morning, 1 hour at noon and 2 hours in the evening. After two months of airing, volunteers were tasked to monitor and evaluate the outcome of the draft program. Feedback and comments will be recorded for enhancing of their programs.

*Speakerphone system or mini-radio booth produced the following accomplishments:*

- (1) A market was operational in Ban Chounla since the speakerphone was installed;
- (2) Another 10 villages in Thateng signified their interest to have speakerphone booth in their community;
- (3) Medicine box was place now in the booth, as before it was placed only in the house of the naibans;
- (4) In Ban Housea, a fee of 5,000 kip or less than 1 dollar charges for every personal announcements of the such as wedding, basi, greetings, selling of crops, etc. This money is keep for maintenance purposes and utility expenses;
- (5) As the "centre" for information within the village, the booth also served as the meeting area for the naibans and the community. A plan to build a playing ground or children was also raised by the community in the



future.

- (6) A total of 200 individuals learned the latest news inside and outside their communities;
- (7) Average of 5 individuals per villages signified interest to become volunteers for their community.

### **3. Quarterly Sekong Today Magazine**

A quarterly informative magazine that highlighted the development and achievements of Sekong province provincial government addressing the needs of its constituents. A total of 1, 300 copies every quarter had been printed and distributed to every agency and community.

The magazine also attracted sponsors such as Viva waters, Dao Chocolate drink, and hotels in Sekong, cable office in Champasack and printing office in Vientiane. To date, the PDIC is working on more community based story which includes youth, women achievements and village success story.

### **4. Community Radio**

The highlight of all the CIP is the establishment of 2 community radios, one in Thateng and the other one is in Dakchueng. Both districts signified their willingness and support the CR.

In Dakchueng, radio station building was completely constructed last March 2010. Re-organization of volunteers was also conducted and first workshop on vision, mission, goals, planning, identification of names and logo as well as radio structure was done. These activities resulted to come-up with a draft documents.

As the launching of Thateng Ethnic Community Radio for Development (TECRD) in Thateng district last April 27, 2010, gave the opportunity for the ethnic to actively participate in various radio activities.

A highly participatory community radio that gave voice to the ethnic people of Sekong. What makes this different from other community radios in Laos is that, TECRD is a dedicated volunteer-managed radio station that provides service to the multi-ethnic people of Sekong.

The TECRD is broadcasting within the power of 105 MHz and can reach as far as Salavane, Sekong town proper and part of Kaluem in Tanuem village. As a first multi-ethnic community radio in Laos-composed of 8 different ethnic groups, the TECRD produced the following accomplishment based on the actual survey conducted by volunteers. These are:

- (1) Estimated 75 callers everyday requesting for songs, greetings and inquiries;
- (2) One mini-livelihood, the mushroom growing earned a total of 4,000,000 kip or 500 US\$ during its first harvest last July 2010. The initial capital for the production including physical construction costs 2,000,000 kip or 250 US\$.
- (3) Clients such as Lao Development Bank, Insurance, Lao-Thai Okra plantation, Norwegian People's Aid, CARE, UNFPA, ETL mobile companies, government and individual signified their intentions to advertise in TECRD;

- (4) A total of 125 farmers increased their harvest and learned new farming techniques while listening to agricultural program of the TECRD;
- (5) Four villages product such as Lao hand weave cloths were sold upon advertised in the radio;
- (6) At least 85 number of households learned the benefits of proper hygiene and sanitation;
- (7) A total of 52 individuals learned safe motorbike driving (*using helmets, avoid using mobile phones while driving*);
- (8) UNFPA started to air their awareness campaign;
- (9) A total of 92 household boils their water before drinking;
- (10) A total of 59 mothers learned the benefits of breastfeeding and vaccination;
- (11) A total number of 64 children learned basic hygiene such as washing hands before and after eating, covering the mouth while sneezing and able to learn their own ethnicity.
- (12) The radio became the venue to know and understand every ethnic's group. Original music composition was done and produced by the villages and aired in the radio.
- (13) Information of segregating plastic waste to non-plastic was also being broadcast resulted to less used of plastic bag in the market.

*(Source: for number 4,7,10 and 11, the volunteers together with office of Information and Culture conducted a survey questionnaire regarding the impact of community radio-300 respondents were interviewed. See Annex\_\_\_ for questionnaires)*

### **5. Village Statistician Volunteers**

The GPAR Sekong through partnership with the District Planning and Investment (DPI) headed by Mr. Bounoy, selected and trained village volunteers to be a statistician.

Pioneered in Sekong, the selection of the volunteers' starts at the Khumbans. Some of the criteria set by the DPI includes: completed at least fifth grade, motivated and committed to render volunteer services.

The Village Statistician Volunteers (VSV) was trained by the DPI using the National training manual book; number 140 dated February 20, 2002 as a guide.

The basic role of the VSV is to gather and summarize village information specifically the socio-economic data of identified villages. After gathering and summarizing, recording of data gathered into statistic books for data base purposes. These data are regularly updated to be useful in identifying poor household and villages as focal points of Khumban socio-economic development interventions.

Statistics also guide district staff and khumbans in identifying priority service projects.

The VSV role does not end on the completion of data gathered, once they are finished, the DPI will issue a memorandum of agreement to establish a village statistic unit to which VSV will serve as the person/s responsible for the unit.

The VSV continue serving and gathered relevant information and report to Bans, Khumbans and district. A monthly report is being submitted by the VSV to monitor and identify activities needed in the villages.

According to the information provided by the DPI-Statistic division, the following are the accomplishments:

1. Sekong province has 235 villages with 28 Khumbans, 112 out of the total villages had been trained on statistic;
2. A total of 101 village statistic book (VSB) was produced and available both in the DPI office and villages;
3. Trained VSV rose to 383, which 114 are females.
4. Aside from VSB, the volunteers also trained in basic GPS-GIS mapping, resulted to one map of Ban Kasangkhan produced.

#### ***The key successes of this project:***

Both in Thateng and Dakchueng, from the start of the project, the government and the communities had committed themselves to participate in planning, designing, decision making, implementation and sustainability concern.

A highly participatory decision making process and series of orientation led the project to its successes. Government and community counterpart also plays a vital key led to the success of this project. Community built a strong sense of ownership.

Part of the successes is the proper coordination with the different stakeholders/partners, NGOs, government agency, private sector and individual consultant in soliciting appropriate ideas and advice in running and sustaining the CIP specifically the community radio.

#### ***Factors supported this success:***

One major factor supported for the success of the CIP is acceptance from both government and communities is highly recognized as evidence by the district government issuance of the Deed of Donation of Land measuring 40x50 meters last February 13, 2009.

A total of 43 village volunteers had been engaged in information system in Thateng with the support of the government's advisory committee. In Dakchueng, re-organization of volunteers was done to take part on the CIP.

Replication of donating land to be used for community radio station was done in Dakcheung last March 2009. The district government of Dakcheung handed over to the community a piece of land measuring 4,374 sqm2

Moreover the following are the specific factors led to the success of CIP:

**Strong partnership and support with stakeholders** (Ministry of Information and Culture, Provincial Department of Information and Culture, Lao Front for National Construction)- series of consultation meetings from different partners and stakeholders regarding the project followed by reviewing activities that has been undertaken by different partners and evaluate and plan for the next activities.

1. **Ministry of Information and Culture (MoIC)**- technical assistance and follow-up visits were made by the technical staff of MoIC. Since the installation of TECRD equipment done by CommSystem last March 2010, the MoIC made its validation and inspection on all the equipment and kind enough to fix properly all the equipment including antenna alignment.
2. **Lao Front for National Construction**- has fielded its volunteers in the community who assisted the identified volunteers per villages in the various components such as billboards, broadcast, print and physical upkeep of the facilities.
3. **Provincial Department of Planning and Investments (DPI) and Office of Information and Culture (OIC)**- provided needed statistical services such as information and data of village statistics through its Village Statistical Volunteers. This information was part of the daily announcements over the radio as well as posted in the billboards to be used by the villagers. Information on market prices, news and personnel items affecting the affairs of the village was used for informed decision making.
4. **The Local Government support** is currently strong at the provincial and district level.
  - a. The provincial government has declared its support to the project in previous Project Board meetings. Through GPAR, the specifications and design of the radio station building has been approved by the Department of Public Works, Transport and Post.
  - b. At the district level, the leadership has supported the formation of the sectoral/government representatives to become a **Community Radio Advisory Committee**, to pave way for more freedom of expression by the community radio volunteers.
  - c. The District Government has also facilitated and issued the Deed of Donation for the site of the community radio station. This was formally granted last Feb. 13, 2009 to the village chiefs (naibans) who represents the community information volunteers.
  - d. The local government through the district and village leadership also provided environment to mobilize seven community volunteers in each of the 10 target villages.
  - e. GPAR Sekong appreciates the local government for the support keeping and providing the independence of the project development and management process at this stage,
5. **Mobilizing Community Information Volunteers**
  - a. Developed the gains from mobilizing Village Statistics Volunteers, the project and community continuously recruiting volunteers. Encouraging more people to form part of the CIP. These volunteers will form the backbone of the community

	<p>information system, by harnessing the local talents and resources from the youth, the ethnic and other sectoral group organizations (such as the Lao Front for National Construction, Lao Youth, and Women's Union).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b. This strategy is the core institution of the CIP specially the community radio. While the project recognizes the large influence of government media, this project has uniquely mobilized in full the commitment of local community village volunteers from the community in the operation, support and management of the community radio station.</li> <li>c. Currently, there is no government staffs in the operation and management as well as maintenance of the community radio station, as the local government Thateng District has agreed and committed to play an advisory role and provider of material and policy support.</li> <li>d. All the seven community volunteers in each of the 10 villages in Thateng have been actively participating in any CIP activities. In Dakcheung district, the Project and the PDIC has re-organized the previously identified volunteers.</li> <li>e. Radio management structure have been discussed and finalized. The board of directors composition both government and communities was properly discussed and detail job description for board of directors were done along with by-laws.</li> <li>f. Strategic planning was taken into place to come-up with short objective workplan and long term goals plan. Revisit of the strategic planning before and after the launching, quarterly monitoring and evaluation and review of strategic planning for semi-annually and annually basis. Part of the strategic planning is the inclusion of marketing strategy plan for the first month implementation of the TECRD.</li> </ul> <p><b>6. Project support from major development agencies such as UNDP, UNV, GPAR Sekong.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. These institutions have guided the process in project development and management. The relationship continued by providing a venue for dialogues and exchange of experiences in development communications that benefited the ethnic people of Sekong.</li> <li>b. UNDP had provided technical assistance in project development and management. It has provided the project a opportunity for GPAR Sekong to i) conduct study tour in Khoun Radio in Xiengkhouang, ii) training on news and magazine gathering, editing and printing.</li> <li>c. Aside from its traditional technical assistance and volunteer recruitment role, UNV organization has provided budgetary support to the project. UNV has significantly contributed to the strategy of community volunteer mobilization and rectification of project concept, components and management.</li> </ul> <p><b>7. Coordination And Linkages With Parallel Development</b></p>
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	<p><b>Communication Initiatives</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sekong has sent its delegations twice to learn from the experiences and lessons of the Khoun Community Radio for Development in Xiengkhuang Province. It has generated materials from the same initiatives in ISIS-Manila; DXUPI Community Radio for Peace and Development in Mindanao, Philippines; Local Governance Support Programme-Canadian International Development Agency, Cotabato City Philippines; Act for Peace programme of UNDP Philippines; DXLake Buluan-a community radio in Buluan Maguindanao, Philippines; Radio Bundlekhand in Orchha India.</li> <li>Setting up of community radio project needs comprehensive planning from field preparation up to airing. Available reading references and internet web designed for community radio served as additional guide as well as coordination to some institutions or organizations for positive outcome of the project.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Project shortcomings and solutions</b></p>	<p><b><i>The main challenges of this project</i></b></p> <p>Sustainability seems to be greatest challenges in this entire project. As the GPAR Sekong project comes to end by 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2011, the need for proper exit strategy should be taken into consideration. A proper and official turn-over agreement should be planned before the project final closure.</p> <p>Aside from sustainability, no monitoring and evaluation scheme or tools being introduced or identified by the implementers.</p> <p><b>Challenges per project component:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Information Board-</b></li> </ul> <p>As the information board accomplished many things, it also faces numbers of challenges or shortcomings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>(1) Physical structure-</b> the roof of the board is too heavy for its post. In ban Chounla, after 4 months being installed, the board was damaged by heavy wind. The community initiated to replace the post into wood.</li> <li><b>(2) Inability of the community to update regularly-</b> Most of the volunteers and people from the community are farmers, therefore they tend to cater first in the farm field rather than updating the board. Though most of the information needed in the board were based on statistic book, once updated by the volunteers, the tendency of immediate removal of the data pasted on the board due to weak materials like scotch/masking tape written with permanent marker.</li> <li><b>(3) Unavailability of information-</b> Although 7 volunteers per villages were indentified and took part of the whole CIP, the volunteers find it difficult to request from other INGO's, private companies, UN agencies and government offices for any information that will create awareness to the community. The project initiated sending request to all INGO's operating in the country as well as other UN agencies but only few responded and until now , waiting for those</li> </ol>

requested materials like posters, brochures and others.

**(4) Information board location-** both in Dakchueng and Thateng, consensus building was decided by the villagers to place the board. In Ban Khountayun for instance, although it was installed along the road but the growing plants and huge stone blocked the person/s who wants to read the information.

**(5)** The lack of mandate by the provincial and district chief to push all government agencies to support the info board by providing relevant information.

- **Speakerphone system or mini-radio booth**

In terms of speakerphone or mini-radio booth, this project also faced numbers of challenges and shortcomings, such as:

- (1) In Dakcheung, all the ten target villages have no electricity at this moment, the possibility of delaying the implementation of the project although all speakerphone post was installed last March 2009. Communities and government is long been waiting for any decision from the UNDP and project. As of today, the only solution for this delayed project would be the inclusion of Dakchueng speakerphone in new media initiative programme.
- (2) In Thateng, 9 villagers had been operating since October 2009. During the first 2 months of operation, 3 out of 9 installed equipment was damaged due to inexperienced supplier of speakerphone system installed by a signboard maker in Sekong. This incidence faced the project in a negative position and ordered the replacement of all speakerphone even though there were only 3 equipment were not working. The failure of the project to conduct investigation and unclear contract between the supplier and UNDP procurement unit left the project no choice but to replace everything.
- (3) In terms of speakerphone equipment, no proper orientation given by the supplier-as part of the agreement that they should train volunteers on basic operation and troubleshooting. The possibility of mishandling the equipment or damage, which may lead to speakerphone closure.
- (4) Since M and E is lacking, there is a strong possibility of naiban “control” over the speakerphone, as experience in Ban Donsa.

- **Community Radio**

The major challenges in CR are its overall sustainability, it does not limit to financial aspect alone, active participation by volunteers, however, is the key to success for many community radio stations.

Part-time radio volunteers who are full-time community members can successfully maintain a station's sustainability after the project ends. If people invest their time and resources in something without any pay, it is an indication of commitment and sustainability.

Volunteerism, nevertheless, is not universal, in Sekong alone; volunteers are not given much recognition and appreciations. Clear evidence of less recognition on volunteerism is the result of draft Mid-term evaluation report conducted by international consultant last August 2009. The draft report did not highlighted the contribution of UNV both technical and financial support.

However, all aspects of sustainability—social, institutional and financial—should be incorporated into the overall strategy of community radio. Major factors that led to the station closures included lack of financial sustainability and inability to

maintain equipment, along with other factors beyond the control of radio station personnel, such as intermittent electricity. A number of stations were not able to meet monthly operational costs ( electricity, water, maintenance) as most of the fund were used to pay for full-time staff.

- **Sekong Today Magazine**

One of the challenges mentioned by the international evaluator during the Mid-Term evaluation is that, the magazine highlighted more on government stories rather than the Sekong citizens.

The absence of sustainability is another challenge although the magazine had attracted advertisers from large company but there are was no clear guidelines on its way forward.

As suggested to summarize the stories in English was also not material due to incapability of the PDIC staff to translate in English. The project on the other hand seek assistance to the Department of Education to help the PDIC staff translate summarize stories into English.

- **Volunteers**

The over-all key success to this project is the volunteers, the people who will render time without expecting in return. In case of the Dakchueng volunteers, half of the 7 selected volunteers per village last February 2009 were no longer available. Some migrated to other villages and others loss their momentum in waiting for the project to be materialized.

In Thateng, although 70 volunteers were identified and actively participated during the planning until project implementation, decreasing number of at least 30% were observed, thus the need to continuously encourage new volunteers to participate in CIP. Part of the decreasing numbers of volunteers is the lack of follow-up activities like capacity trainings and education exposures.

### **How were they overcome (if they were)?**

Every project has its own shortcomings and successes, in the CIP, the project together with key stakeholders and communities designed well sounded strategies to answer some lapses in the project documents. Series of coordination from the MoIC, private solar company and INGOs as well as communities for any possible solution to address the issues.

Capacitating volunteers using local consultants and radio visits paved way to a more understanding of handling radio and speakerphone in terms of technicality.

The project and stakeholders, also provided continues motivating the volunteers by assisting them in their planned activities.

Moreover, the project also seeks possible assistance to other potential partners by sending proposals to different international non-government organizations.



	<p><b>Were the project results attained? If not, what changes need to be made to achieve these results in the future?</b></p> <p>In Thateng district where in the whole CIP was first implemented and operational, the result is said to be satisfactory. However, there is a need for continue support in technical and funding until the community is capable enough and equip with necessary skills in running the whole CIP, specifically the community radio.</p> <p>In Dakchueng district, the result can be categorized as low. One main reason for this is the unavailability of electricity within the ten target villages. The electricity was recently installed in the district alone last December 2009. The impassable road during rainy season also hinders the implementation of the project.</p>
<p><b>Lessons learned</b></p>	<p>Based on the number of challenges/shortcomings and limitations of the CIP, the following lessons or areas of enhanced knowledge were identified and can be used or replicate to other similar projects.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The CIP is a great tool or aid in localizing the MDGs, which are the most important lessons that can be learned from this initiative. It promotes understanding and knowledge about the benefits as well as the role of communities in helping the government in attaining the MDG's.</li> <li>2. The CIP encourages participation, thus it built a <b>Citizen's decision making</b> concept. The whole programme are well participated in terms of planning, organizing and consensus building of the government and the communities involved. The project only served as the facilitators while the communities plays the main actors with support from the government. Involvement of all sectors such as women, youth, elders, differently able persons, naibans and district officials from the start of project planning until its operation and sustainability.</li> <li>3. The programme highlighted or highly recognized the contribution or counterpart of both the communities and the government. During the preparatory phase of the CIP, the project emphasized the importance of ownership. The concept of counterpart was made possible thus it established a <b>"partnership-based"</b> programme. Every project implementer should ask for any contributions from the community and government. Contribution does not limit to financial alone, rendering time and services to the project could also be called contributions or counterpart. If the community shared resources to the project, the strong possibilities of sustainability will be achieved.</li> </ol> <p>Example of such counterparts are the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District government of Thateng and Dakchueng donated and issued deed of donation for the building of community radio station;</li> <li>• The donation of land was replicated by a volunteer in one target village in Thateng district. The volunteer donated his piece of land for the construction of mini-radio booth or the speakerphone broadcasting booth to his community.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In Thateng district, all ten target villages constructed their own mini-radio booth measuring 5x5 meters by their own resources, pooled fund, labor and time.</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. The fourth lesson that can be gained from the CIP is the importance of utilizing communities own resources which include its people. Capacitating the people especially women in different information techniques would deeper the spirit of participation and volunteerism. Good example of this is the village statistician volunteers (VSV). The VSV is pioneered in Sekong, capacitating villagers to become a statistician and gather first-hand data within their communities. This initiative done by the Department of Planning and Investment-statistic division enables the villagers to participate in supplying accurate data that will help the government in identifying possible assistance in line with the MDG's.</li> <li>5. The CIP provides <b>“sharing of skills”</b> or transfer of knowledge to other volunteers and district. Training of trainers showed positive effectiveness to the other district and it enhanced learning capability of the Thateng volunteers in conducting workshop in Dakcheung district. Aside for passing of skills, district government as well as the project had gained trust and confidence among volunteers capacity to train others.</li> <li>6. The sixth lessons that can be taken from this project are the good <b>“relationship building”</b> between the community and the government. Mutual understanding, education awareness and cooperation were seen significant in this project.</li> <li>7. <b>“Every voice”</b> heard and given emphasis by the district authority thus full encouragement and motivations were being applied. The concept of “giving change or opportunity” to others were also developed.</li> <li>8. The CIP helped empowered youth and women by giving them most of the opportunity in radio production and broadcasting. Strong self-confidence among volunteers had boosted self esteem and became more active in developmental activities thus applied in their own daily lives.</li> <li>9. Livelihood initiative was also seen as good lessons that can be learnt from this project. A mini-mushroom growing and vegetable planting created opportunity for possible sustainability of the project and not to depend on donor alone.</li> <li>10. Volunteerism was seen effective in over-all CIP components. Government and communities shared inputs and ideas thus create a common solution to attain its goal. The CIP served as the neutral “space” for both the government and communities to communicate and address solution to the issues and concerns.</li> <li>11. Last but not the least lesson learn, the CIP united all the ethnic people of Thateng. They build strong foundation of friendship, cooperation and equality.</li> </ol>
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### **What could have been done differently/ better?**

Although the CIP produced many achievements, the project could be more realistic if at the beginning there is a proper in-depth review and environmental scanning of the village situations or status.

Proper coordination to all person/s involved, stakeholders and agencies should be well planned to avoid miscommunication between the higher level management and the project front liners.

In terms of radio equipment, a need to survey more on other possible equipment suppliers available in the countries to avoid inexperienced company to install the radio equipment. In Thateng, the radio experienced technical problem installed by the company. A clear contract and transparent bidding should be taken into place.

### **What mistakes should be avoided if the initiative were to be replicated?**

The CIP or any other project faces failures and successes before and after implementation. In this project, there should be an in-depth environmental scanning and survey of the area before identifying which villages to be considered a target. There should be clear criteria in choosing target villages to avoid delays on implementation or delivery of services. Example of such mistakes is the setting-up of speakerphone in ten targeted villages in Dakcheung where in fact the whole villages have no electricity. Although the project initiated and conducts series of research and survey on the other possible power alternatives to be used in Dackhueng speakerphone, it turns out to be more costly if using solar and unsafe if using dyanamo or mini-hydro power.

In terms of community radio, there should be a proper orientation to the provincial and district authority. Experience in Sekong, the government and even the GPAR has less knowledge about the concept of community radio, how it is differ from government and commercial radio station. There should be a dialogue within the stakeholder's and educate the government as well as the community on the concept of community radio.

### **How easy would it be to replicate the successes in a different context/ country?**

The successes of the whole programme created strong potentials for replication of other project implementers, programme developers and other institutional ground for developmental activities.

The CIP highlighted the transfer of knowledge (TOT). In most of the projects or programmes, TOT is commonly practice. This method has been designed to provide satisfactory learning process to the other beneficiaries. Transfer of knowledge could also save time and fund on the part of the implementers.

The programme also demonstrate "expansion" in some areas, request from other villages to benefit from the existing project had reached the district chief and project management, the intensions of the other villagers for the same project.

	<p>Capacity building has been achieved for every level of participatory planning and decision making, from the government and communities, which provides a good framework for replication.</p> <p>The used of volunteers is also seen potential for replication in any projects or programmes. Capacitating own people within the villages provides ownership and eventually sustain the project.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Provide any other relevant information</b></p> <p>The CIP aimed to increase citizen's access to public information and development communications in ethnic languages. Over the past year, the project, stakeholders and the community have established a "community-based information programme for the multi-ethnic people of Sekong.</p> <p>The first results of this programme are encouraging. The Thatheng CIP serves as an example ( a model) for its highly participatory community planning and decision. The CIP pilot project in Thateng enabled the whole province as well as other provinces and project implementers to scale up this initiative to a larger area such as inclusion to SCOP project.</p> <p>The sustainability of the CIP lies on the support of the government and volunteers, followed by the donor. Although donors are not a permanent institution in a certain project, the main actors-the government and the community must work hand in hand for the project to be sustained.</p> <p>In terms of community radio, as the main highlights of all the components of the CIP, the need for constant monitoring and evaluation is needed to assess its impact. The TECRD which was recently launched last April 27, 2010 is not yet prepared to be left alone. The need for funding, technical and capacity building support should be placed in plan in order for this radio to at least reach its readiness to be independent.</p>
Follow-up Actions	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Brief record of decisions and conclusions related to follow-up actions</b></p> <p>The CIP way forward was prepared and discussed with government, key stakeholders, project management, radio management and communities. The stakeholder's specifically the provincial district of information and culture and office of information and culture in district level are fully engage with the sustainability strategies of the project.</p> <p>The PDIC together with the project are now preparing for the inclusion of the CIP into Support for Community Organizations Programme (SCOP) to be implemented by 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2011. However, there is an urgent need to provide additional technical support to the volunteers. Aside from technical support, as the GPAR Sekong will come to end on March 2011, there is a need for at least three months operational fund for the Thateng radio enable to maintain its current radio manager and volunteers.</p> <p>The CIP identifies several activities and recommendations that will help sustain the project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) A separate fund for initial operational expenses of the two radios for one year, as the GPAR will come to its end by the first quarter of 2011. <i>(A detailed funding proposal was submitted last February 2010 to UNV, please see annex B for funding proposal document)</i></li> </ul>

- b) A livelihood is also seen potential way to sustain the radio. The location of the radio is very strategic for multi-purpose hall which includes weaving room, seminar and training, a hostel for live-in seminars or tourist visit. Part from that, internet room since there is no available public café in Thateng. Currently, the volunteers had started building a mini hut for mushroom plantation. The proceeds of this activity will be for food consumption of the volunteer broadcaster and the same time sell for additional income.
- c) On the village level, it is also a need to initiate organizing activities among the communities to set-up a village information fund (VIF). This shall be managed by the volunteers at the village level and shall collectively aggregate at the district level to form an information development fund. Fund mobilizations can be in form accessing donations, sponsorships, fund raising events, and even soliciting non-partisan advertisements or promotions, like contest festivals (on station identification, jingles, posters, etc).
- d) Continuing volunteer mobilization and consolidation- by identifying and capacitating second-liner volunteers who can replace and become knowledgeable on the whole aspects of community or village information system.
- e) Policy advocacy and networking- will be continued to generate international, national and local level policy support in terms of favorable laws or media environment on universal right to access information and material support to local initiatives.
- f) Continued strengthening of partnership with government and non-government stakeholders will be continued to build up on the gains made by project in terms of local sponsorship of activities, mobilization of human resources, technical assistance (at the ministry, province and district levels). A post GPAR MOA or commitment by the local government will add a boost to sustain its operations.
- g) Organizing the community radio information network into a formal media non-government organization. The latter stage of the project should organize the volunteers and the network into a formal organization registered under the laws of Lao PDR in order to carry-out its mandate of providing development communications initiatives.
- h) Establish clear linkages to all community radios operating in the country and nearby countries. This will enhance the volunteer capacities thus build a peer-support partnership.
- i) Placing one international communication and management UNV to be assigned in Provincial District of Information and Culture. This post will help the PDIC in enhancing its on-going responsibilities in CIP. The IUNV communication and management specialist will help enhance the on-going lay-outing of the Sekong Today's Magazine, continues coaching the radio volunteers and also provide new ideas in over-all CIP.
- j) Establish a clear and friendly user Monitoring and Evaluation tool to track all the activities of the CIP.
- k) A clear strategic planning.

Project Information	
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Partners:	Provincial District of Information and Culture (PDIC), Office of Information and Culture (OIC Thateng and Dakchueng district), Lao Front for National Construction, Provincial Planning and Investment Office, Statistic section (PDI), Lao National Youth.
Project resources:	<p>Over-all, the CIP had gained advice and support from the following informative resources:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>United Nations Volunteer (UNV):</b> <a href="http://www.unvunteers.org">www.unvunteers.org</a> for its concept of volunteerism;</li> <li><b>United Nations Development Programme (UNDP):</b> <a href="http://www.undp.org">www.undp.org</a> for its project implementation and guidelines;</li> <li><b>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO):</b> <a href="http://www.unesco.org">www.unesco.org</a> for its publication “guide to community radio”; A Filipino author Mr. Louie Tabing, published several books under UNESCO “community radio”. Mr Tabing provided the IUNV assigned in GPAR the needed resources in setting-up community radio.</li> <li><b>ISIS-Manila:</b> <a href="http://www.isiswomen.org">www.isiswomen.org</a> for its technical assistance provided for the Thateng radio. Isis Manila sent one of their staff to conduct basic radio programming and re-check the equipment list submitted by the project;</li> <li><b>DXUpi, Philippines:</b> Set up four years ago under the ‘GenPeace’ (gender and peace) project, ‘DXUP-FM’ serves over 42,000 people in the mountainous Shariff Kabunsuan province of southwestern ARMM (Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao, Philippines). A multicultural community, Upi comprises some 17 ethnic groups, funded by the Canadian International Development Agencies (CIDA). This community radio provided inputs and dialogues via internet on the basic guidelines of setting-up community radio and the people who will run the radio.</li> <li><b>DXLake Buluan, Philippines:</b> A community radio set-up under the support of</li> </ol>

	<p>United Nations Multi Donor Programme Phase 3 in southern part of Maguindanao, Philippines.</p> <p>7. <b>Development Alternative Groups in India:</b> <a href="mailto:www.tara@devalt.org">www.tara@devalt.org</a> for its assistance in providing one full package training in Radio Bundlekhan in Madra Pradesh in India.</p> <p>8. <b>Khoun Radio for Development:</b> for its support and advice both technical and administration;</p> <p>9. <b>Sekong National Radio:</b> for its technical support.</p> <p>10. <b>The Regional Planning and Development Office, Cotabato City Philippines:</b> for supplying strategic planning guide and helping the undersigned develop a monitoring and evaluation tools.</p>
Report prepared by:	<p><b>Ms. Farida Lucas Kasuyo</b> UNV Community Mobilization Specialist</p>
Date:	November 25-December 14, 2010