

ENHANCING PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION THROUGH COMMUNITY RADIO

Project Background and Description

Citizens' access to information and ability to express their opinions play an important role in the national development process. However, especially rural illiterate ethnic communities living below the poverty threshold often face challenges in participating in the dialogue. To support inclusive development and community awareness, UNDP and the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism (MICT) established the first community radio station in Khoun District, Xieng Khouang province in 2007. The bottom-up, two-way communication approach of community radio has been providing a platform for local people – including the marginalised and most vulnerable – to receive information relevant to their needs and interests, express their thoughts and issues, share knowledge, validate their culture and as a result, make informed decisions.



A volunteer Community Radio in Nonghet District, Xiang Khouang Province, on-air. Photo: UNDP Lao PDR

The innovative community radio project has then been extended to eight priority districts reaching out to around

Project Summary:

- **Duration:** August 2017 – December 2021
- **Geographic coverage:** 5 provinces and possibly more
- **Focus area:** Governance / People's participation
- **Implementing partners:** Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism, and Community Radios with support from Provincial / District Departments and Offices of Information, Culture and Tourism

300,000 people in their own ethnic languages, in rural and remote areas. As the previous project came to an end and to strengthen a collective impetus for greater public participation the new phase of support embarks on a two-fold task: it aims to secure a roadmap to full sustainability through established local ownership of existing community radios, possibly new ones thanks to additional and innovative partnership to extend the broadcasting coverage to more areas including underrepresented ethnic groups living in remote high-risk border districts in particular.

Main Project Objectives and Outcomes

The overall goal of the project is for community radios to be sustainably managed at the local level and to further expand the number of stations and their outreach. By local perspective it means that the community radio station is independently run by a multi-sectoral group of community and district representatives, and able to generate income from various sources to fund its operations to deliver quality programmes.

Expected Outputs

Over the four-year period, the project will anchor on four interlocking outputs to direct the planning and implementation of programmes and activities towards full sustainability:

Output 1: Community media services scaled up to effectively deliver quality broadcasts by improving transmission capacities, expanding geographic coverage and increasing the number of listeners in remote rural areas where access to information and opportunities for public engagement remain limited.

Output 2: Local expertise in radio production and management strengthened through continuous capacity building, learning additional knowledge and sharing of skills at individual and institutional levels.

Output 3: Participatory advocacy and monitoring enhanced to popularize development concepts, the SDGs and national development priorities in a language preferred and understood by rural communities, and to create multiple channels to receive feedback and measure impact.

Output 4: Effective partnerships and mobilization enhanced to ensure financial, social and institutional stability by establishing local sustainability mechanisms and build long-term linkage between development partners and stakeholders.



Haoliang Xu, UNDP Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific Director, visiting the Thateng Community Radio for Development. Photo: UNDP Lao PDR

Strategic Development Focus and Approaches

- **Established local ownership:** (i) recognize responsibilities, commitment and accountability of all sectors in the community; (ii) empower key actors and afford them with equal opportunities, thereby creating shared vision and management roles; (iii) promote the unique individuality of each radio station by addressing specific community needs, identity and preferences.
- **Priority for vulnerable ethnic groups:** (i) increase broadcast time for other ethnic languages as well as establish newer stations to expand coverage; (ii) promote ethnic cultural values and heritage such as traditional arts and music, language and local tourism; (iii) campaign for more volunteers from other ethnic groups and sectors such as women, youth, persons with disabilities, elderly people; (iv) intensify community participation through village visits, remote broadcasts, station-initiated outreach activities.
- **Addressing poverty and exclusion:** (i) contribute to

Funding:

- **Total budget required:** USD 3,000,000

localizing the SDGs and national development agenda by raising awareness and participation in the SDGs campaign; (ii) adopt a flagship development goal that best represents the priority of the district as the station's advocacy focus; (iii) promote other cross-cutting issues that are not commonly discussed in the media or any public forum such as gender, climate change, safe migration, anti-human and drug trafficking, migrant labor, rights of persons with disabilities, etc.; (iv) link Government programmes and services with the communities, convey community issues and concerns with proper authorities.

- **Diverse partnerships:** (i) build good rapport with Government sectors, local organizations and private sector / businesses to initiate or strengthen existing partnerships with mutual gains; (ii) broaden networks by promoting community radio at a regional and global level for resource sharing and learning opportunities; (iii) strengthen cooperation between and among stakeholders, key actors and Development Partners through meetings, forums and regular contacts.
- **Community volunteers for development:** (i) encourage multi-sectoral representation and participation from ethnic communities that are not yet represent; (ii) provide incentives to non-paid volunteers in the form of trainings, short-term learning and transportation allowance; (iii) highlight the role of local exemplars to encourage proactive participation and replication of community media models.
- **Innovation:** (i) the approach of utilizing communications technology through Community Radio is considered innovative as it reaches remote, rural areas and is transmitted in different ethnic languages and has the ability to be replicated, adapted to local circumstances and to be timely in terms of key messages; (ii) the project will explore potentials for further innovations with improved technology and replication across Lao PDR.

Contact Information

Ms. Aksonethip Somvorachit
 Communications Analyst UNDP
 Tel: (856 21) 267778
 E-mail: aksonethip.somvorachit@undp.org

Mr. Jerome Dubois-Mercent
 Head of Governance, Livelihoods and Poverty Reduction UNDP
 Tel: (856 21) 267720
 E-mail: jerome.dubois.mercent@undp.org

Sustainable
 Development
 Goals

