“UN70” commemorates the founding of the organisation in October 1945

The United Nations (UN) is an international organisation founded in 1945 after the Second World War by 51 countries committed to maintaining international peace and security; developing friendly relations among nations; promoting social progress to improve the lives of poor people, conquering hunger, diseases and illiteracy; and supporting human rights.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced the start of UN70, a sixteen-month commemoration that will culminate in the 70th anniversary of the entry into force of the UN Charter on 24 October 2015. This day is celebrated as UN Day every year.

It aims to honour the historic breadth of the organisation’s development, security and human rights work, and ultimately, unite the international community in common causes to enable a strong UN to realise a better world. Thus the theme of this anniversary year “Strong UN. Better World” hopes to capture the importance of multilateralism and the essential role of the UN.

Every day, the UN makes a positive difference for millions of people: by vaccinating children; distributing food aid; sheltering refugees; deploying peacekeepers; protecting the environment; seeking the peaceful resolution of disputes and supporting democratic elections, gender equality, human rights and the rule of law.

Many of the challenges of our times transcend borders, asking for complex solutions which usually require negotiation and compromise. Only when we work together to overcome threats and seize opportunities can all countries – large and small, rich and poor – and all people have their voices heard.

"The 70th anniversary of the UN is an opportunity to reflect – to look back on the UN’s history and take stock of its enduring achievements. It is also an opportunity to highlight where the UN – and the international community as a whole – needs to redouble its efforts to meet current and future challenges across the three pillars of its work: peace and security, development, and human rights." (Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s message for UN70).

In this rapidly changing world, the UN remains humankind’s invaluable instrument of common progress. Let us use this anniversary to reflect on the lessons of seven decades, and reaffirm our commitment to serve the people and build lives of prosperity, security and dignity for all.

www.un.org/un70/en
This year, 2015, marks an important milestone in Lao PDR’s relationship with the United Nations. It is the 60th anniversary of the country’s entry to the organisation. Since 1955, the UN and Laos have had a long history of cooperation. The anniversary represents a significant occasion and an opportunity to both reflect on the history of the partnership and look forward to what is to come. Indeed, one of the major events on the not-so-distant horizon is the goal of elevating Lao PDR from the ranks of Least Developed Countries by 2025. This is the shared vision anchoring the UN’s continued support to the Government of Lao PDR into the future.

Of course 2015 is not only the 60th anniversary of the UN and Laos partnership, but also the 70th anniversary of the UN and the 40th anniversary of Lao PDR, representing a unique convergence of celebrations. Ever since 1955, the UN and Laos and later Lao PDR have been engaged in a mutually beneficial and reinforcing partnership contributing to each other’s growth and evolution.

After Lao PDR was constituted in 1975, a pivotal moment in its modern history came in 1986 as the country embraced crucial economic reform and began to decentralise power and encourage private enterprise. These reforms led to rapid, accelerated economic growth.

Politically Lao PDR has considerably opened up in recent years, ratifying seven out of the nine core Human Rights Treaties and actively pursuing regional and global integration. Lao PDR joined the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1997, the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2013 and acceded to the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) due to inaugurate on 31 December 2015. For a small and landlocked country like Lao PDR, the AEC in particular offers great potential for economic development by improving access to a huge regional market of 600 million people.
Lao PDR is also unique for its ethnic and environmental diversity. While the country’s economy is growing rapidly, it is important to ensure that economic growth is translating into poverty reduction and improvement of the well-being of the people of Lao PDR, rural and urban alike, as well as among all ethnic groups. UN in-country agencies like UNICEF, WHO, WFP and UNDP provide expertise and technical assistance in both policy and outreach and are on the front-line of helping address persistent and, in some cases, growing inequities across different provinces and socio-economic groups.

In other initiatives the UN has contributed to capacity development in the government to carry out high-level policy and strategic research on key development issues, such as regional integration and human development. In the important field of governance, the UNDP has gained the status of a trusted partner of the government.

The next 15 years of working towards the achievement of the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will be exciting for Lao PDR. Things are changing fast in “The Land of A Million Elephants”, but Lao PDR has consistently and actively engaged itself in the UN through the 60 years of its membership. This strong partnership will sustain equitable socio-economic progress as the country transitions from the MDGs into the new SDGs.

The challenge will be to enhance and grow a familiar in-country partnership. The relationship between the UN system, its relevant bodies and agencies and government will evolve. But it is in the affirmation of a shared vision that Lao PDR and the UN continue to work as constructively and successfully as possible to support and enhance the quality of life for all people of Lao PDR over the coming years.
"2015 IS NOT JUST ANOTHER YEAR, IT IS A CHANCE TO CHANGE THE COURSE OF HISTORY."

Ban Ki-moon
UN Secretary-General

A NEW GLOBAL AGENDA

On 25 September 2015, during the UN General Assembly, 193 world leaders committed to 17 goals that will define the global development agenda for the next 15 years: The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The SDGs continue the legacy of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were focused on ending poverty and hunger, ensuring universal health, education, gender equality and environmental sustainability. The SDGs seek to complete what the MDGs have not yet achieved and incorporate new development aspects, such as inclusive economic growth towards shared prosperity, resilient infrastructures and sustainable consumption.

The SDGs are closely interconnected and are grouped into three areas of action which aim to end extreme poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and address climate change.

The goals and their sub-targets represent the aspirations of millions of global citizens. They are the result of over two years of intensive public consultation and engagement with civil society.

This new global agenda has an unprecedented scope and significance, since it was accepted by all countries and is applicable to all, taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development, and respecting national policies and priorities.

FAO/ Oscar Castellanos
www.globalgoals.org

Members of the UN Communications Group from UNICEF and WHO travelled to Phongsaly Province together with journalists to enhance the visibility of maternal, child health and nutrition challenges and UN programme activities. These programmes also illustrated how the UN works together in these areas.

We conducted interviews with provincial and local health staff and volunteers, villagers and mothers, and presented the impact of our activities from the perspective of both the service providers and users of free health services (available in six out of seven districts).

The Maternal and Child Health program is a national priority of the Lao Government and the Ministry of Health. However, a lack of funding and shortage of staff has deterred us from achieving the health-related MDGs, but we will continue to strengthen the staff capacity and provide medical equipment and motor vehicles for the district and village level staff.

- Director of Phongsaly Provincial Health Department, Dr Bounsaly Chitdaphone.

Mr Akou, 44 years old, seen here with his daughter Matu, 6 years old. He hopes to make money to provide better education and improve the nutrition of his daughter. Many children from the Arkha ethnic group in Sanomay Village of Boun Tai District are encouraged to study regardless of their gender.

I was trained as a nurse in Phongsaly Provincial Hospital but I had to return to Deun Village for family reasons. There, I was appointed by the village as the Village Health Volunteer. I provide health education and advice on maternal and child health to all women of child bearing age, and I encourage them to go to the Health Centre for free antenatal checks and delivery.

- Village Health Volunteer, Ms Ankeo from Deun Village, Boun Neua District.

Ms Vanh, 27 years old, from the Phunoi ethnic group with her daughter Wankeo, five months old (her third child). Her second child died unexpectedly two months following birth and she does not plan to have another baby. She hopes Wankeo will be healthy, so she breastfeeds her and takes her for her routine immunisation at the Health Centre.

Maternal, Neonatal and Child health activities such as outreach services, school meals, school deworming, free antenatal and birthing services and free distribution of iron folate supplements would not be possible without the generous support of donors like the Government of Luxembourg.

The UN will continue to work together to support mothers and children in Lao PDR.

- WHO/Irene Tan
‘I have seen general improvements in health in relation to MDGs 1, 4 and 5, and donors like the Government of Luxembourg and UN agencies have played an important role. I hope the ownership will eventually transfer to the district and village levels to implement these maternal and child health activities in the field.’

- Deputy Governor Mr Pheng Lylavong.

‘The collaboration between the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health for the school deworming program started in 2007 and faced no resistance from parents. There are many health promotion programs that are school-based, which include vaccination and nutrition-related activities like deworming and provision of school lunches.’

- Director of District Education Office, Mr Khamsay Vongsack.

Ms Chanping (25 years old, Lër ethnic minority) has recently given birth to a baby girl named Dakeo, her first newborn. She has received antenatal checks at the Health Centre, given iron folate supplements during her pregnancy, and delivered her baby at the Health Centre. She is now breastfeeding Dakeo, who has received all her routine vaccinations from the Health Centre. She has also attended the family planning training sessions provided at the Health Centre and hopes to have another baby next year.

‘I received training for Community Based Distribution at the Phongsaly Provincial Hospital three years ago; I currently support 7 villages with family planning activities providing contraceptive pills and injections, as well as condoms.’

- Community Based Distributor from Vang Doi Village of Boun Neua District, Mr Maisat.

School children from Boun Neua Primary School queuing up to receive their deworming tablet as part of a bi-annual school deworming activity, funded by the Government of Luxembourg.

Ms Boulaphanh and her husband from Vang Doi Village have one daughter aged three, and with the help of family planning, they plan to have a second child soon.

Photos: UN in Lao PDR 2015 / Daniel Hodgson
MESSAGE FROM THE
UN RESIDENT
COORDINATOR

Dear Reader,

2015 is an important year for the United Nations, both globally and in Lao PDR. Just recently, a new global development agenda was adopted by the UN General Assembly: the Sustainable Development Goals. These 17 ambitious objectives cannot be reached with development aid alone. Their achievement will require every one of us to contribute, rethink and recreate our world.

This year also represents the 70th anniversary of the United Nations and the 60th anniversary of Lao PDR’s membership. It is a time to celebrate, but also a time to look back. A range of events and celebrations will commemorate UN Day and the cooperation between Lao PDR and the UN, including a youth photography contest and a photo exhibition.

Together with our partners, we are developing a new Lao PDR - UN Partnership Framework (2017-2021), describing the UN’s future support to national development priorities and achieving Lao PDR’s aspirations.

I would like to thank our partners for their participation and support in this joint visioning. I look forward to further exciting possibilities to assist Lao PDR in achieving its aspirations.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Photo: UNDP Lao PDR/Daniel Hodgson