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REPORTS OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ON OPERATIONAL MATTERS

Agenda item 9

*For information**



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DEVELOPMENT PROJECT APPROVED BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (1 January–30 June 2004) — LAO PDR 10306.0

Assistance to Food-Insecure Households in Transition

Number of beneficiaries	366,700 (female: 176,100; male:190,600)
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Duration of project	Three years (1 August 2004–31 July 2007)
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Cost (United States dollars)

Total cost to WFP	5,588,685
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WFP food cost	2,860,000
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* In accordance with the Executive Board's decisions on governance, approved at the Annual and Third Regular Sessions of 2000, items for information should not be discussed unless a Board member specifically requests it, well in advance of the meeting, and the Chair accepts the request on the grounds that it is a proper use of the Board's time.

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NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

This document is submitted for information to the Executive Board.

The Secretariat invites members of the Board who may have questions of a technical nature with regard to this document to contact the WFP staff focal points indicated below, preferably well in advance of the Board's meeting.

Director, Asia Regional Bureau (ODB): Mr A. Banbury

Senior Liaison Officer, ODB: Mr K. Sato tel.: 066513-2383

Should you have any questions regarding matters of dispatch of documentation for the Executive Board, please contact the Supervisor, Meeting Servicing and Distribution Unit (tel.: 066513-2328).



1. In the Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR), subsistence agriculture is the dominant livelihood basis of approximately 80 percent of the population; 76 percent of cultivated land is devoted to rice production. Yet in 10 out of 18 provinces and in half of the country's 141 districts, there are insufficient quantities of this staple. The upland population, estimated at 1.5 million, is largely comprised of ethnic minorities who are among the most food-insecure groups.
2. This project aims to strengthen the livelihood basis and improve the long-term food security of vulnerable people, primarily ethnic minority communities and households, by protecting, expanding and diversifying their productive assets.
3. Emphasis is given to communities that are in transition from swidden¹ cultivation to more permanent agricultural practices and from opium production to cultivation of other crops, and to those that are not yet linked by rural roads and markets. The project builds on the successful experiences of development project 5874.0, a pilot for food-assisted development operations in the Lao PDR which started in late 2000 and ended July 2004.
4. The immediate objectives and outcomes are:
 - improved immediate household food security in selected villages, through participation in food-assisted activities;
 - improved longer-term household food security through protection, expansion and diversification of livelihood bases and food-security strategies;
 - diversified food-assisted activities to contribute to sustainable, long-term household food security; and
 - increased capacity and ownership for village communities and government institutions in management and implementation of food-assisted development programmes.
5. Immediate food security for households is improved through participation in food for work (FFW), which provides rations for the creation of productive assets. These may include paddy fields, fishponds, tree plantations and micro-irrigation schemes; access tracks may also be created to improve access to markets and health and education facilities.
6. The project will dedicate 9 percent of food resources to an innovations component. Possible innovations include: (i) farmer-to-farmer training; (ii) skills training, especially for women; (iii) assistance to families of opium addicts undergoing detoxification; and (iv) assistance to former opium farmers and others in transition to different crops.
7. The project will continue the successful approach of planning and implementing activities with international agency partners. Additional partners will be sought, including national institutions such as the Lao Front for National Construction and the Lao Women's Union, as there are no national non-governmental organizations.
8. New aspects of the project will include expansion of government ownership and management, coordinated through food-aid committees at the central, provincial and district levels. WFP will support districts to increase their responsibility and capacity for direct FFW implementation, initially in one district in each of three provinces and gradually expanding to three districts in three provinces.

¹ A swidden is an area of land cleared by slash-and-burn methods.



9. The project fits in the framework of the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NPEP),² in which the Government identified 42 priority-target districts that largely overlap those identified by WFP's vulnerability analysis and mapping. NPEP is in line with the Government's top poverty-alleviation priorities, which include "achieving permanent food security."
10. The project expects to assist 366,700 beneficiaries. An estimated 84,200 people — 31,200 women and 53,000 men — will participate in FFW activities. The cost to WFP will be US\$5.6 million.

² Prepared in place of a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP).

