



INGO Network¹ Statement

2013 High Level Round Table Meeting

November 19th, Vientiane

Excellencies, partners in development and colleagues,

As longstanding partners in the ongoing development of the Lao PDR, we welcome and appreciate the opportunity to contribute to the Round Table process. Our reflections and recommendations are based on a broad range of experience across the multiple levels, sectors and geographic areas we operate in.

As international civil society organizations our mandate is governed by our commitment to core principles: sustainable development; community driven and inclusive approaches promoting good governance; the rule of law; social justice and equity. These principles underpin our multi-stakeholder partnerships and are central to the way INGOs support the achievement of the NSEDP, the MDGs and Lao PDR's planned graduation out of LDC status.

We promote balanced development which considers the basic needs and essential services of the most disadvantaged, namely rural small holder farmers and the remote poor, and the most vulnerable, including women, youth, children, ethnic communities, elderly, people living with HIV and Aids and persons with disability. We support the equal participation of women in decision making and in the economy, both for reasons of equity and in the knowledge that gender equity will accelerate the achievement of Laos' development goals. By promoting social capital and human dignity we contribute to peace and security as well as social, environmental and economic stability. We also actively contribute to breaking poverty cycles by increasing access to productive resources, including secure access to land through UXO clearance. INGOs are uniquely positioned to support development in a country where rural communities represent over 70% of the population. In a rapidly changing development context with increasing demands and pressures, equipping disadvantaged and vulnerable populations with the knowledge, skills and resources to more effectively negotiate opportunities and challenges, including mitigating and adapting to Climate Change and more frequent disasters, is central to participatory development and sustained poverty alleviation.

¹ The iNGO Network is a group of over 70 international non-governmental organisations. It aims to serve, facilitate and enhance the work of its members. Through its services, the Network support INGOs to optimize their contributions to development in the Lao PDR.

Considering these realities, we recommend to prioritize and fast track following actions:

- **Basic needs and essential services**

Food and livelihood security are a precondition to sustainable development. Considering persistent gaps in achieving livelihood, food and nutrition security under MDG 1, we commend recent efforts to expedite a National Food and Nutrition Security action plan, with a focus on mothers and children. As evidenced in recent surveys, INGOs have expansive experience and have contributed significantly to the health, WASH, education, agriculture and natural resource management sectors. We stand ready to contribute to the implementation of the Food and Nutrition Security action plan, including sound monitoring and public reporting that ensures timely steering and quality evidence of achievement. We also reference recent declarations made by the UN Special Rapporteur on Right to Food and encourage that lessons learnt related to secure land, and reliable information and services access be featured in the upcoming 8th NSEDP.

- **Gender equality and social inclusiveness**

It is well known that women, children, youth, ethnic groups and persons with disability experience poverty differently – they are more vulnerable and as such special conditions must be facilitated to both safeguard and promote their right to self-determination, to participation, to protection and to development. Promoting their participation in decision making and equipping them with the skills, knowledge and resources to actively partake in socio-economic development is essential to realizing the goals of a people centered development model as intended under Lao Constitution and prescribed by the NSEDP Growth with Equity framework. We recommend identifying incentives and special criteria for these groups to access scholarships in emerging employment sectors, leadership positions, including those within government, and financial and business services at different levels. We also recommend expediting ratification of draft decrees and laws related to women, ethnic communities and people with disabilities, in close and meaningful consultation with these groups together with civil society organizations, the National Assembly and related public servants and service providers. We also support rolling out a National Skills Development and Vocational Training action plan targeting these groups with active participation of both the public and private sectors to take full advantage of impending ASEAN Economic Community access. We stand ready to actively contribute to its design and implementation. We believe that increasing the engagement of these groups in social and economic affairs will bolster small-medium businesses and entrepreneurship which will in turn contribute significantly to poverty alleviation throughout the country.

- **INGOs: Partners for Effective Development Cooperation**

With more than 70 INGOs participating in development cooperation in Laos – in every province and in all key sectors - our financial and technical contributions are significant. In 2013 alone over \$80M was invested by INGOS to directly benefit the communities we worked with. As civil society organizations we work closely and with a variety of partners,

in particular Non-Profit Associations (local NGOs), public servants and government authorities at different levels. In addition to financial support these partners gain access to capacity building and other complementary resources through our projects and programs.

Our mandate commits us to respond to the needs and priorities of the communities we work with. As civil society organizations we are also accountable for the funds we raise, the physical assets and resources we manage, the quality of the projects we implement and the measured results we commit to realizing in a timely and effective manner. To achieve this we must maintain our credibility with development partners, and simultaneously safeguard the confidence and trust of our primary stakeholders. Our effectiveness in doing so, however, is directly influenced by the environment we operate in.

Decrees, guidelines, partnership modalities, operating conditions and resources allocation which take into account INGO and NPA commitments and demands will ensure that we can continue to actively, efficiently and effectively contribute to the sustainable development of the Lao PDR. In addition, a safe and enabling environment for INGOs and NPAs will protect our unique role and added value as civil society organizations, ultimately helping Lao PDR to meet its socio-economic targets and fulfill the global partnership for development goals it has adopted under the Vientiane Declaration Country Action Plan. INGOs wholly commit to these national goals and in return seek a predictable, flexible operating environment that will maximize our contribution without compromising our operations or accountability.

With the 2015 MDGs and the 2020 LDC target fast approaching, in addition to the ASEAN Economic Community integration, INGOs will continue to strive to effectively support Lao PDR to meet its national goals and international commitments in an informed, effective and timely manner. We look forward to further exchange and stand ready to deepen our cooperation for the benefit of all Lao people.

Sincerely,

The INGO Network Secretariat and Committee, on behalf of its 74 member organizations.