Lancang Mekong Seminar on Community Driven Development

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From November 22-23, Poverty Reduction Fund (PRF), Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry held Lancang Mekong Seminar on Community Driven Development at Landmark Mekong Riverside Hotel and honored opening remarks of H.E Thongphat Vongmany, Vice Minister of Agriculture and Forestry and co-chaired by H.E Nichola Pontara, the World Bank Country Manager to the Lao People’s Democratic Republic and Their Excellency the Ambassador of Cambodia and Thailand with attendance of representatives of the Lancang Mekong cooperation countries, local Government officials, representatives from mass organizations, academia and international organizations over 100 people.

The Lancang Mekong cooperation seminar on the Community Driven Development held amidst the joyful atmosphere, where all walks of life here in the Lao PDR are celebrating the 44th Anniversary of the founding of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic.

This seminar will serve as a significant platform for promoting mutual understanding and exchanging experiences and best practices aimed at strengthening cooperation in the area of Community Driven Development as an effective method for the Rural development and Poverty eradication.

H.E Thongphat Vongmany, Vice Minister of Agriculture and Forestry said that in Laos, the CDD has been strongly encouraged by the Government through various channels, particularly through the implementation of the Poverty Reduction Fund Project (PRF). As the national CDD project established in 2002, PRF program is the Government of Lao PDR’s key initiative supported by the World Bank and its financing partners to eradicate mass poverty by 2020. Main activities of the intervention consist of the rural infrastructure and facilities construction along with local capacity building.

H.E Thongphat Vongmany added that the Community Driven Development is not a project but the process of political and socio economic change from the grassroot which is a concrete implementation of the directive of so-called Three Builds? or Sam Sang, namely build the province as the strategic unit, build the district to be the overall strengthened unit, and build the village as the developed unit.

The PRF CDD project selection principles are project simplicity, cost effective, siding with the poor, participation, accountability and effectiveness. Based on these principles, the PRF CDD approach has been implemented, whereby communities themselves decide on how resources are allocated, manage sub-project funds, and implement sub-projects. PRF Program builds local capacity by providing technical support for communities, to ensure that all community members, including women and
different ethnic groups, participate in the decision-making process and benefit from the PRF interventions over a number of years, covering more than 2000 poor villages within the poor districts with the beneficiaries counted for 30% of the country population particularly the poorest groups, thus, contributing to Lao PDR’s achievement to MDGs, creating good conditions for the more sustainably poverty reduction and the Self Resilient Communities development.

Nowadays, under the context of SDG, poverty eradication still remains the top priority for the Lao PDR. It is in the transition towards the more qualitatively sustainable poverty reduction. The Lao PDR is in process of drafting its 9th Five-Year National Socio-Economic Development Plan, striving to graduate from the status of Least Developed Country, thus moving the country forward to the status of upper middle-income country in line with green and sustainable development by 2030.

In this regard, the 348 Decree on the well-being and development criteria and the 65 Instruction on the prioritized areas have been developed as the guidelines and detailed indicators for the rural development and poverty eradication interventions. These will need to be accompanied by a move to higher value -addition activities, technology extension, education and increased access to capital, market information and access. The scope of social protection schemes will need to be widened to include the informal sector and the poor, also the environment protection will be promoted.

In this regard, the CDD approach which is becoming more important and playing bigger role in the Lao rural development and poverty reduction complementing the big project development carried on by the government and its development partners as well as private sector investment.

Finally, two days’ seminar Lao PDR capable drawing experiences and lesson learned from Lancang Mekong cooperation countries and domestic participants and it will bring this significance lesson into the draft of national rural development strategy 2030.