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WWF-Laos

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Media Release

Immediate Release

Smart Use of Aquatic Resources About to Launch in Siphandone

Vientiane, 3 October: WWF-Laos and Department of Livestock and Fisheries (DLF) promote the smart use of natural resources in Siphandone islands by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in Pakse, Champasak Province concerning the Management and Sustainable Use of Fisheries and Aquatic Natural Resources in 4000 islands – Siphandone.

The four-year project, funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the WWF Network, will be implemented by WWF-Laos in collaboration with DLF and Champasak Provincial Agriculture and Forest Office in the largest wetland in Southern Lao Landscape, Siphandone, within Khong and Mounlapamok Districts.

This project aims to improve the local livelihoods that mostly rely heavily on fisheries and aquatic natural resources in Siphandone by engaging local communities and other beneficiaries with management and sustainable use of resources.

“At the end of the day we hope the developed management plan for the priority wetland site, Siphandone, of global significance along the Mekong River will be approved and implemented”, said the Country Director of WWF-Laos, Somphone Bouasavanh. “This will not only be smart use of resources, but also help save the Mekong icons, Irrawaddy dolphin, which currently recorded only 6 threatened individuals left in the trans-boundary pool within Siphandon.”

In 2011, this small and isolated group of river dolphins, which drew about 20,000 tourists to Siphandone islands and generated income to local communities who live around the site, the boat owners, restaurants, hotels and guesthouses for instance, are now threatened by gillnets. From January to April this year WWF recorded almost 200 gillnets floating close to the dolphin pool.

“This project will strengthen and improve the system of monitoring river-related activities in the area and will define regulation for fisheries and aquatic natural resources to support law enforcement in order to ensure sustainability in the Siphandone,” said the Director General of Department of Livestock and Fisheries, Dr Bounkhouang Khambounheung.

The project also aims to diversify local livelihoods and enhance environmental awareness in order to strengthen communities’ capacity to adapt to continuously changing environmental conditions. This is to support local communities to establish the community fisheries organizations that will establish, and manage the fish conservation zones. These zones will allow fish and aquatic species to breed and increase the number of population.

This project will ensure at least 700 households, who rely heavily on aquatic natural resources, fisheries for instance, to benefit from complementary income activities.

Note for editor

Who sign the MoU

WWF's representative:

Mr Somphone Bouasavanh
Country Director
WWF-Laos

Department of Livestock and Fisheries' representative

Dr Bounkhouang Khambounheung
Director General
Department of Livestock and Fisheries

About WWF

WWF has a long history of engagement in the region, the organization helped establish conservation programmes in Thailand in the early 1980's and has been active in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam since 1990.

WWF-Laos: www.panda.org/laos

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