



# state of world population 2005

## ສະຖານະພາບປະຊາກອນໂລກ

**Press release:**  
**Launch of the State of World Population report 2005**  
UNFPA Lao PDR  
12/10/05

### ‘No End to Poverty Without Gender Equality’

#### *New Report Calls for Leaders to End Discrimination and Live Up to Promises Made to World’s Women and Girls*

Global efforts to “make poverty history” will fail unless leaders act now to end gender discrimination, according to *The State of World Population 2005* report, released by UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund.

The report, *The Promise of Equality: Gender Equity, Reproductive Health and the Millennium Development Goals*, calls upon world leaders to fulfill promises made to the world’s women and young people in order to meet poverty reduction goals. Those goals were agreed to at the 2000 Millennium Summit and reaffirmed by last month’s World Summit in New York.

Speaking at a ceremony for the Lao launch of the report held in the Settha Palace Hotel in Vientiane, UNFPA Representative Nobuko Horibe summarised the key message.

“We cannot make poverty history until we make gender discrimination history,” she said. “We cannot make poverty history until women enjoy their full social, cultural, economic and political rights.”

The report says that investing in women and girls makes sound economic and social sense. This is because discrimination leads to lower productivity and higher health costs. It also results in higher death rates among mothers and children, and significantly threatens efforts to reduce poverty around the world.

Speaking at the launch, attended by government officials, ambassadors and representatives of UN agencies and NGOs, Vice President of Lao Women’s Union Mme. Khemphet Pholsena reaffirmed the commitment of the Government of Lao PDR to the advancement of women.

While significant progress had been made, she said: “Women and children in Laos still face many challenges such as poverty, low education, and poor access to health services, including reproductive health information.”

United Nations Resident Coordinator Mr. Finn Reske Nielsen acknowledged the steps taken in Lao PDR towards gender equality as reflected in the National Growth and Poverty Eradication Strategy.

“The challenge remains to translate these impressive national achievements into action and results at the grassroots level,” he said. “Equal opportunities in education and work, freedom

from violence and abuse, and the ability to make informed choices on reproductive health must be extended to every woman in every village in every district.”

Investing in political, economic and educational opportunities for women and girls yields quick wins and high pay-offs that lead to improved economic prospects, smaller families, healthier and more literate children, lower HIV prevalence rates and reduced incidence of harmful traditional practices.

Furthermore, studies show that when women control the family purse strings, they are more likely than men to invest a higher percentage of their earnings in family needs.

The report points out that neglecting reproductive health – including family planning, safe motherhood and HIV prevention – creates an intolerable burden for women and adolescent girls, their families and societies. In Lao PDR the maternal death rate stands at 530 deaths per 100,000 live births, the highest in the Southeast Asia.

UNFPA is an international development agency that promotes the right of every woman, man and child to enjoy a life of health and equal opportunity. UNFPA supports countries such as Lao PDR by using population data for policies and programmes to reduce poverty and to ensure that every pregnancy is wanted, every birth is safe, every young person is free of HIV/AIDS, and every girl and woman is treated with dignity and respect.

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**1955 – 2005: This event is organized as part of a series of activities to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of UN-Lao cooperation.**