

# Integrated food security phase classification introduced in the Lao PDR

(KPL) An Introduction and Awareness Raising Meeting on the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) was held on Monday in Vientiane Capital with more than 50 participants including representatives from the government, mass organizations, development partners, and INGOs.

The event was co-hosted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations together, CARE International Laos, the World Food Programme Representation, and the EC-FAO Food Security Programme.

Food Insecurity is a pressing concern for the Government of Lao PDR and the population in general, and as also indicated in the new 7th National Socio-Economic Development Plan, many communities still lack adequate coping mechanisms.

"Indeed, in order to ensure a food and nutrition secure Lao PDR, we need to know and reach a consensus as to who, where and how many people are food insecure and malnourished and at what scale, or which groups are at risk or vulnerable of becoming food insecure and hungry, and with a clear and common understanding of why food and nutrition insecurity exists in the country", Mr Serge Verniau, FAO Representative to Lao PDR said in his opening remarks at the meeting. "And, as aptly acknowledged by the Government of Lao PDR, all Lao people should be able to avail of themselves of their fundamental right to be free from

hunger."

The IPC provides global standards and protocols for food security analysis and classification using a food security severity scale. It is a framework to compile and analyze complex food security information from different sources and communicate it in an easily accessible format to decision-makers. The IPC was developed by the FAO-supported Food Security Analysis Unit (FSAU) in Somalia in 2004 and is now being promoted and supported globally by a partnership of UN agencies, international NGOs and donor agencies active in food security analysis and action. These organizations have in fact formed an IPC consortium of eight partner agencies, including: FAO, WFP, the Joint Research Centre of the EC, Oxfam GB, Fews Net, Save the Children US and UK, and Care International.

"As food security analysts, practitioners and policy-makers, we must clearly identify the underlying causes of food insecurity and ensure that resources are allocated in line with the actual needs of those suffering from hunger" said Mr. Verniau.

The IPC helps do this by providing: I) a common technical approach, with recognized and agreed standards and protocols to analyze information coming from different sources, II) a way of working together to build consensus, enabling us to present a more common food security analysis

to decision-makers, and III) a basis to promote policies and programmes that more effectively prevent, respond to and reduce food insecurity and malnutrition.

The IPC is currently gaining momentum as a global tool supported and used by a growing number of governments, UN Agencies, NGOs, donors, and academic organizations. It is in use at national and regional levels in parts of Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Central America.

"While FAO is committed to supporting the Government of Lao PDR towards the progressive reduction of food insecurity and malnutrition and its ill effects, today we would like to emphasize that in order to realize this shared vision of a food secure and hunger free Lao PDR, strong collaboration and synergies is necessary from all sectors, in particular with respect to having an integrated food security and nutrition information system in Lao PDR" Mr. Verniau added.

According to the latest FAO figures, the number of undernourished people, although slightly decreasing, remains unacceptably high in 2010, at 925 million people worldwide, of which more than half, 578 million, live in the Asia-Pacific Region. Monday's meeting was co-organized by the , CARE International Laos, WFP, the EC-FAO Food Security Programme on Linking Information and Decision-Making, and with the generous support of the European Union.