



# Technical Assistance Consultant's Report

Project Number: TA No. 6316-REG  
June 2007

## Lao PDR: Asian Development Community Broadcasting Initiative (Financed by Poverty Reduction Cooperation Fund)

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Asian Development Bank's Technical Assistance (TA) No. 6316-REG: **Asian Development Community Broadcasting Initiative** is a pilot project in Laos that utilizes First Voice International's information communication technology strategies, services and endowment of 5% of the WorldSpace satellite network. The purpose of the TA is to test, demonstrate and assess the replicability of FVI's capabilities via the satellite broadcast of "available audiotapes of radio dramas produced in Hmong and Khmu languages developed under the previous and current ADB/UNESCO TAs". Ultimately, the goal of this TA is to contribute to awareness about "Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) vulnerability and risk among ethnic minority groups" specifically for this pilot, the Hmong and Khmu.

Using its satellite capacity FVI broadcast audio programming produced by TA No. 6247-REG: HIV/AIDS Vulnerability and Risk Reduction among Ethnic Minority Groups through Communication Strategies project implemented by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), to target areas in need of HIV awareness and prevention information. In addition, the TA also broadcast audio programs produced by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The radio programs in Hmong and Khmu were broadcast to four villages in the Northern Lao provinces of Oudom Xai and Luang Namtha. Hmong radio dramas covering the topic of HIV/AIDS were produced by UNESCO in conjunction with Lao National Radio (LNR). Khmu and Lao language programs are also planned but were not completed during the course of this TA. Thus, Khmu programs about human trafficking issues previously produced by UNICEF and LNR were included in this TA.

These programs were previously broadcast by LNR on FM and shortwave signal. However, the mountain ranges, weather and weak transmitters at provincial relay stations prevented many areas in Lao PDR's Northern provinces from receiving the FM and shortwave broadcasts. FVI's satellite capacity bypasses these difficulties to allow for a clear, consistent broadcast signal. Thus, villages that might not have previously heard these broadcasts would be able to receive these radio program broadcasts.

This TA was designed as a small scale pilot project budgeted at \$250,000—with ADB contributing a total of US\$150,000. The TA covered four main activities:

1. An Initial visit to introduce the project to provincial governments, identify potential villages for participation, assess villages on specific social and technical criteria and install satellite receivers in relay stations and train relay station engineers.
2. A second visit to villages chosen to participate in order to introduce the listening group discussion model that would run in conjunction with broadcasts, to select listening group leaders, address technical issues identified in the initial visit and further familiarize village participants with project details.
3. A training visit held to train selected listening group leaders in basic use of the satellite technology, discussion facilitation skills and to provide them with per episode starter questions to assist them in guiding listening group discussions.
4. Final visit to assess the outcome of the pilot. The evaluation methodology and results are described in the full report.

The evaluation was based on before and after surveys on content/general subject knowledge and awareness and in-person interviews of project participants. Overall findings were generally

positive with villagers expressing interest in the radio dramas, engaging in the listening group discussion process, showing familiarity with the storylines and providing their suggestions on future program topics.

Though the evaluation results were positive, there are some limitations that should be mentioned. These included a condensed, 1-month broadcast calendar that made the listening group organization and attendance a potentially onerous task for village listening group leaders and participants. Steps were taken to ameliorate some of this for village listening group leaders. However, a more reasonable broadcast schedule is a once a week broadcast and listening group session. Technical limitations included the need to replace and/or upgrade sound system equipment and account for energy requirements. Though these costs were minimal for the pilot, scale-up or expansion will need to take these issues into consideration and budget accordingly.

The project provided evidence of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. Radio dramas are pertinent to the lives of the villagers and were effective in adding to the general knowledge of visitors around the topics of HIV/AIDS prevention and human trafficking. Additionally, the technology provides an effective and efficient method for broadcasting the radio dramas as satellite broadcast enables a clear, solid radio signal that bypasses the geographic difficulties limiting FM and shortwave radio broadcasting in rural Laos.

Additionally, this method of distribution provides a single broadcast method to multiple locations without an increase in the cost of broadcasting. Sustainability is aided by well-researched and high quality radio program development that is educational and entertaining and encouraging of actual behavior change (though the limited time frame of the pilot did not allow for actual behavior change measures). The sustainability of the technology is shown by the limited maintenance and low energy requirements of the satellite receivers and the access to FVI's channel content even after the project broadcast timeframe.

Pilot lessons include that the (i) technology is efficient; (ii) content is relevant; (iii) listening group model effective and crucial and (iv) satellite broadcast is not prohibitive in cost. The conclusions are: (i) the pilot met both of its objectives – demonstrate the effectiveness of the technology and an increased level of general knowledge about HIV/AIDS prevention and human trafficking; (ii) the technology is the least complicated aspect of the project implementation; and (iii) exposing communities to information creates a demand for more information but how much, for what purpose and how best to package that information are specific ongoing questions to address.

The lessons learned and conclusions from the pilot were shared in a national workshop in Vientiane, Lao PDR on May 21, 2007. Thirty-five attendees from various Lao government ministries as well as civil society representatives, the project team and a collection of village listening group leaders gathered to discuss the results and share ideas for continuation of the project. It was hoped the workshop would actually generate a government-driven proposal document for a next phase of the project. In the end, the working sessions revolved around three groups – government, civil society, village communities – brainstorming on possible future projects, what these might look like and what their roles might be in the design and implementation.

One specific project continuation possibility is to expand to more rural areas of Laos using the UNESCO/LNR content currently in production (and being funded by ADB) in Khmu and Lao languages. At this time, the Lao National Radio and Ministry of Information and Culture have agreed to develop a committee to review the final report of the project, assess the various

continuation design options and make a decision on what type of further project will be proposed. FVI will present a report recommending various levels of project expansion and the associated costs for the government's consideration.

To conclude, the Asian Development Bank's **TA No. 6316-REG: Asian Development Community Broadcasting Initiative** was a successful pilot project that clearly demonstrated the contribution ICTs, specifically satellite radio, can make in maximizing rural communication efforts and thereby improving the reach and impact of health and other related economic development information.

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Background

Around the globe the HIV/AIDS epidemic continues to spread. In Asia and the Pacific, there are nearly eight million people living with AIDS. One million of these live in the lower Mekong Sub-region – Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), Thailand, and Vietnam. Ethnic minority populations in this area are particularly at risk. Living in highland areas and primarily involved in uplands and subsistence agriculture ethnic minority populations make up an estimated 21 million of the nearly 240 million people living in the GMS. These populations experience poverty, lack of access to education and lack culturally appropriate information in their own languages.<sup>1</sup>

The Asian Development Bank's **TA No. 6316-REG: Asian Development Community Broadcasting Initiative** is focused on ethnic minority populations in Lao PDR. It was designed to increase awareness about HIV/AIDS prevention in Lao PDR among ethnic minority populations by using information communication technologies (ICTs), specifically satellite radio. This TA uses First Voice International's exclusive technology endowment of 5% of the WorldSpace satellite network, which covers all of South and Southeast Asia to demonstrate an innovative and cost-effective approach to reaching remote populations. Using its satellite capacity FVI broadcast audio programming produced by RETA 6247: HIV/AIDS Vulnerability and Risk Reduction among Ethnic Minority Groups through Communication Strategies implemented by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), to target areas in need of HIV awareness and prevention information. In addition, the TA also broadcast audio programs produced by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

For the TA, FVI used their satellite capacity to broadcast radio programs in Hmong and Khmu to four villages in Northern Laos. Hmong radio dramas covering the topic of HIV/AIDS were produced by UNESCO in conjunction with Lao National Radio (LNR). Khmu and Lao language programs are also planned but were not completed during the course of this TA. Thus, Khmu programs about human trafficking issues previously produced by UNICEF and LNR were also included in this TA.

These initial programs were previously broadcast by LNR on FM and shortwave signal. However, the mountain ranges, weather and weak transmitters at provincial relay stations prevented many areas in Lao PDR's Northern provinces from receiving the FM and shortwave broadcasts. FVI's satellite capacity bypasses these difficulties to allow for a clear, consistent broadcast signal. Thus, villages that might not have previously heard these broadcasts would be able to receive these radio program broadcasts.

Villages in these Northern provinces are currently experiencing many negative effects of increased economic development in their areas. Lao PDR has increased and improved many transportation routes in Northern provinces between Lao PDR and its neighbors China, Thailand, Myanmar and Vietnam. Being in crossroad transportation areas between Lao PDR ethnic minority communities are experiencing cultural and social changes that are exposing them to the dangers of HIV/AIDS, human trafficking, the sex trade and increased non-traditional drug use.

The ultimate goal of **TA No. 6316-REG: Asian Development Community Broadcasting Initiative** was to contribute to increasing awareness about these communities HIV/AIDS vulnerability and exposure to other impacts of increased economic development.

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<sup>1</sup> Paragraph from unpublished ADB Small Scale Technical Assistance Memorandum of March 9, 2006 for Asian Development Community Broadcasting Initiative TA No. 6316-REG.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of the TA is to test, demonstrate and assess the replicability of FVI's capabilities via the satellite broadcast of "available audiotapes of radio dramas produced in Hmong and Khmu languages developed under the ADB/UNESCO TA". An evaluation of the pilot focused on the villagers' understanding of the contents of both series of drama, the use of a listening group discussion model, and the general awareness of the participating villagers before and after this experience.

## **Objectives**

The pilot project's objectives were to demonstrate (i) the efficacy of FVI's satellite technology in reaching rural villages with little or no regular, terrestrial radio; and (ii) an improvement in the general knowledge related to HIV/AIDS prevention and/or human trafficking issues within targeted villages.

## **B. Structure of Report**

Section II of this report provides a full discussion of the Methodology of the project and the evaluation as well as some details of the evaluation results. Section III details the overall findings of the project as relates to relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the pilot's methodology. Section IV will discuss lessons learned, conclusions and possible next steps. Finally, an Appendix provides supplementary materials of interest.

## II. METHODOLOGY

### A. Scope

This TA was designed as a small scale pilot project budgeted at \$250,000—with ADB contributing a total of US\$ 150,000. It broadcasts audio programs in a total of four villages in the two northern provinces of Oudom Xai and Luang Namtha. The villages included were:

Oudom Xai – 1) Ban Houa Hyam – Hmong; 2) Ban Nam Haeng - Khmu  
Luang Namtha – 1) Ban Kangmai – Hmong; 2) Ban Nateuy - Khmu

Additionally, satellite receivers were installed in the provincial relay stations in Oudom Xai and Luang Namtha to allow the stations to receive the satellite broadcasts and re-broadcast on their FM signal if they chose to do so.

The TA covered four main activities described below.

### B. Villages and Listening Groups

In selecting villages for this project social and technical requirements needed to be met in order to ensure the budget and time constraints of this pilot. These requirements included:

#### Social

- A village identified as a "cross-border" village and as such susceptible to the issues discussed in **Section A** above.
- General community interest in the programs
- Provincial government support and consensus on village selection with Lao National Radio
- Potential for local village head or other central person(s) with adequate (minimal) technical knowledge and comfort to begin and end broadcasts at specified times

#### Technical

- A pre-existing public address (PA) system or other means (i.e. speakers) of broadcasting to community members
- A secure location to house/store the receiver and antenna
- Provincial government support
- Villages located outside a 20 kilometer radius of provincial relay station broadcast areas or that for some other reason (mountain range separating them from a relay station) prevented the village receiving regular, provincial FM radio programming

### C. Field Teams and Training

Field teams consisted of 1-2 LNR employees (including a member of LNR's Hmong and Khmu reporting teams), 1-2 FVI employees and/or consultant and an ADB employee (for the evaluation visit).

A total of four field visits were made to the provinces as follows:

1) Initial visit to introduce project to provincial governments, identify potential villages for participation, assess villages on the social and technical criteria identified in section C above and install satellite receivers in relay stations and train relay station engineers.

2) Second visit to villages chosen to participate in order to select listening group leaders, address any minor technical issues identified in the initial visit and further familiarize village participants with the project details.

3) Training visit held to train selected listening group leaders in basic use of the satellite technology, discussion facilitation skills and to provide them with per episode starter questions (questions available in **Appendix I**) to assist them in guiding listening group discussions. In Oudom Xai six people were trained to be listening group leaders in Khmu village, Ban Nam Haeng. In Hmong village, Ban Houa Hyam four people were trained. In Luang Namtha in Hmong village Ban Kangmai five people were trained while in Khmu village Ban Nateuy three people were trained. All trainings were conducted in Lao language, with English language portions translated and additional translation, if needed, into Khmu or Hmong language by LNR minority ethnic reporting team employees. (Although a full training manual was not required for this project, a draft/sample of FVI's Technology Training Manual is available upon request as indicated in the **Supplementary Appendix**.)

4) Evaluation visit to assess outcome of the pilot. The evaluation methodology and results are described below.

#### **D. Listening Group Assessment: Purpose and Process/Evaluation Purpose and Process**

##### **Purpose**

The purpose of the evaluation conducted was to assess if the pilot project met its objectives of demonstrating (i) the efficacy of FVI's satellite technology in reaching rural villages with little or no regular, terrestrial radio; and (ii) an improvement in the general knowledge related to HIV/AIDS prevention and/or human trafficking issues within targeted villages. These objectives were evaluated by the use of surveys and in-person interviews to assess the broadcast signal reception and the use of the pilot's listening group model which involved facilitated, guided discussions of village groups in conjunction with the scheduled broadcasts.

##### **Process**

###### **a. Technology Assessment**

The evaluation of the first objective was based on surveying listening group leaders/facilitators through technology use surveys and in-person interviews of these facilitators during the evaluation field visit. The survey and interview results were meant to assess not only the efficiency of receiving the FVI satellite broadcast signal but also the ease of use of the satellite receiver for village participants. The technology use survey can be found in **Appendix II**.

###### **b. General Knowledge Assessment**

Content knowledge was assessed in the evaluation through the use of simple and short questionnaires in Khmu/Hmong language given by each group leader to listening groups at the beginning of the experience. The effectiveness of the listening group model/discussions was initially meant to be evaluated by the use of before and after general knowledge surveys. The "after" survey was meant to have the same questions as the initial survey with an additional new question. See **Appendix II** for baseline survey questions.

Unfortunately, the evaluation team found very few people in each of the selected villages during the time of the evaluation due to the planting season. Thus, there was little opportunity to measure any change of knowledge awareness through the use of surveys of the same participants before and after the listening groups. Instead, thorough, in-person interviews of available villagers who

had participated in the listening groups were conducted on the content of the radio dramas. The initial surveys conducted at the beginning of the listening groups were also collected.

Given the nature of the topics dealt with in the soap operas villagers were encouraged to discuss in listening group, usually unspoken aspects of their social lives such as their relationship to their children and other youth, their sexual behavior, etc. One month of listening and discussing should have changed their usual concealment of these subjects, and their ability to be more outspoken could be evaluated by having them share their feedback of the radio drama episodes with the evaluation team.

## **Results**

### **a. Technology Findings**

All three villages reported easy management of the technology and reacted positively even when the satellite transmission presented some difficulties (such as a period of a couple of days when the Khmu programs did not air as scheduled). Only in Ban Kang Mai, the Hmong village in Luang Namtha, did these difficulties perhaps result in the eventual loss of interest in the broadcasts and listening group process. However, another reason mentioned by the villagers of Ban Kang Mai was that the scheduled broadcast time of 7:30 to 8:00 pm was too early. This may be attributed to this village having more of a market economy and being less rural than the other three villages. Ban Kang Mai was the only village not to participate in organizing a full month of listening group activities.

### **b. General Knowledge Findings – Baseline Survey Results**

The initial general knowledge surveys were distributed in the four villages. However, in the Khmu village in Oudom Xai, Ban Nam Haeng, the training team could not print the questionnaire prior to their training visit to the village due to electricity problems. The printed questionnaires were delivered after the training session via the team's accompanying cultural officer. Unfortunately, the villagers did not connect the contents of this envelop with the training team's instructions and so did not open the envelope and distribute the questionnaires at the beginning of the listening group process. This misunderstanding left the evaluation assessment with the initial results of only three villages:

- Ban Houay Yam, Hmong village (Oudom Xai)
- Ban Kang Mai, Hmong village (Luang Namtha)
- Ban Na Teuy, Khmu village (Luang Namtha)

#### (i) Hmong Drama Findings

Surveys were collected in both Hmong villages, Ban Houay Yam and Ban Kang Mai.

The initial Hmong Drama questions and responses are as follows:

Question 1: When you go to Nam Tha city, how do you protect yourself against AIDS?

Results: The answer to the first question is to use a condom/have protected sex. In Ban Houay Yam, the answers instead focused on good conduct, restraint and sex with only one trusted partner. However, in Ban Kang Mai, the use of condoms and protected sex are generally known and mentioned in the surveys.

Question 2: How can a person who has contracted AIDS be cured?

Results: The expected answer to the second question was that there is no cure and it appears this is well understood in the two Hmong villages. Some answers however mentioned that today there

are drugs available to cure AIDS showing that for some villagers more education about this is needed.

Question 3: If we think we have contracted AIDS who do we visit to confirm?

Results: To the third question, the answer was to visit the provincial or district hospital and ask for advice. In Houay Yam, one answer was: "To report to the elders and authorities and let the god of death have us!" Another was to "find a medical doctor, [and] help our wife to protect herself!" completed by "have our blood tested." Yet another response was: "Have my body examined by a doctor, and if it turns out it is AIDS, ask him what can be done for avoiding transmission to others."

Question 4: When a young woman goes to work in the city or to a foreign country what kind of risk does she face?

Results: To the fourth question, the expected answer was: to be lured into prostitution. This question raised abundant answers such as: "to be led to drink and to be seduced and led into transgressing the rules (i.e. sin?)...because when drunk we forget everything and we enjoy to the point of catching AIDS"; and, "when working in the city or in a foreign country, a young girl may catch AIDS. When any youth, boy or girl, goes abroad and does not know how to take care, he (she) will inevitably meet this risk".

In brief, these answers anticipated the subject matter of the radio dramas. A very unfortunate circumstance (already mentioned above in the Technology Findings section) was that in Ban Kang Mai listening groups were not successfully organized so that during the evaluation visit few villagers had really heard the broadcasting. Thus, this village, in spite of its participation in the preliminary survey, was necessarily disqualified for the remaining portion of the evaluation.

#### (ii) Khmu Drama Findings

As mentioned above, initial survey results were only collected in Ban Nateuy.

Question 1: When a young woman goes to work abroad what risks does she face?

Results: The expected answer to this question was that a young woman going abroad risks enslavement by human traffickers. The general answers given were: "endangering her life" and "maybe becoming a slave of other people". A minority of respondents answered with "being cheated, exploited, and receiving far less money than agreed".

Question 2: Do you believe or not that nowadays there are people trafficking human beings in your village?

Results: The villagers of Ban Nateuy are at a crossroads location leading to the Chinese border. Answers to this question included: "I believe there are such traffickers in our village"; "This is absolutely true"; and one respondent added: "This is true for the country in general, in some villages and ours". Still, one villager voiced a different opinion: "I don't believe it".

Question 3: Do you believe or not that there are human traffickers close to you?

Results: Some Ban Na Teuy villagers responded in this way: "I believe there are but don't know where?". A majority of respondents however maintained that "there are for sure - in the country and the village as well".

Question 4: Is the Khmu ethnic group at risk or not from human traffickers?

Results: This last question about human traffickers endangering the Khmu people met with a positive answer from the majority of these villagers.

Again, the answers indicate there was a general baseline level of knowledge of human trafficking among villagers in Ban Nateuy but room for more education about further specifics of the topic.

### **c. Listening Group Attendance Results**

As part of the evaluation process listening group leaders were asked to record information on each of the listening groups held as follows: date of listening group; name of listening group leader and number of attendees with gender breakdown. Due to the short timeline and level of organization required, listening group leaders were paid a small fee of US\$2.00 per listening group held. In Ban Nateuy the fee was US\$1.80 per day with the remaining amount used to purchase petrol to run generators for the loud speakers and receiver.

A summary of the listening group attendance results is as follows:

Ban Nam Haeng, Khmu village in Oudom Xai – Listening groups in this village were well attended with a continuous audience of between 20 and 30 listeners. The villagers and group leaders who attended the evaluation visit showed a high level of familiarity with the radio drama episodes.

Ban Houay Yam, Hmong village in Oudom Xai – Results of attendance figures here shows a sharp decrease in attendance after two episodes. Attendance slowly increased initially and decreased again to end with only half the initial number of 30 attendees. Connecting this result to the lack of participation in Ban Kang Mai, the other Hmong village, it is possible the storyline did not captivate the listeners. Focused on young girls led into debauchery once exposed to the city life, this sad story (closely reflecting data collected during production fieldwork) is perhaps too realistic to offer entertainment for the general audience. However, group leaders still recorded details of each listening group conducted and participants proved to remember the story. At least a limited number of villagers were interested in the plot.

Ban Nateuy, Khmu village in Luang Namtha – This village also showed constant attendance of between 20 and 30 listeners. Attendance may have been made easier due to the fact that the Khmu language series had only 10 episodes broadcast three times compared to the 15 episodes of the Hmong series which were broadcast only twice each. There were some technical problems due to heavy rain in the village making it difficult to hear the broadcast over the loud speaker system.

Another interesting finding is the generally good representation of women in the majority of the listening groups. Also, in Ban Houay Yam there was a concerted effort to specifically organize youth and elder listening groups.

### **d. Interviews of Village Participants**

In depth interviews were used to evaluate the impact of the soap opera content on the general knowledge of the villagers. In Ban Houay Yam, the Hmong village in Oudom Xai, in contrast to what might be expected a girl's sexual behavior is not criticized, but instead considered part of Hmong traditional sexual freedom before marriage. Some group leaders said "If it was not for fear of AIDS, I would be glad to have such a girl in our village".

Further discussions indicate that the idea of having protected sex by using a condom is still only half understood. The villagers believed that there must be a way to identify an infected person and the evaluation team spent some time explaining that it is impossible to do this without a blood test. Similarly, the difference between early HIV infection and the later development of AIDS is mostly ignored as is the delay between a possible infection and a positive blood test. The radio drama story did not cover all of these details but allowed a good introduction for a lengthy discussion. Although the interview process was only a beginning discussion it was a good measurement of

their actual awareness of HIV/AIDS prevention information after one-month of listening group participation.

In the Khmu village of Ban Nam Haeng villagers were well aware that the radio dramas were meant to be social behavioral lessons for them. In Ban Nateuy, villagers explained that they were interested in the heroines' story of being a victim of trafficking and her subsequent rehabilitation in her village. These villagers also indicated that the story mirrored their experience. They explained that some girls in the village were abducted by a Chinese citizen who showed them photos of a potential husband and convinced them to go with him to China. No one heard from the girls after their disappearance until a fellow villager visiting China came across one of the girls and discovered that instead of being married, she was doing house chores as a domestic slave. He informed the girl's family and they were able to find her and bring her back to her village. In both Khmu villages attendees asked for more dramas about other subject areas relevant to their lives including educational programs and cultural programs such as Khmu music.

### **E. Final Workshop**

A national workshop was held on May 21, 2007 in Vientiane, Lao PDR to share the lessons learned and project conclusions as well as to generate proposals for a scale-up/continuation of the project. A collection of government, community and civil society members were present and shared their ideas on what a next phase or related projects should include. See conclusion for more discussion of final workshop results.

### **F. Limitations of the Methodology**

Though the evaluation results are interesting, there are some limitations that should be mentioned. A clear logistical limitation is that the condensed, 1-month broadcast calendar made the listening group organization and attendance a potentially onerous task for village listening group leaders and participants. Paying per listening group may have ameliorated some of this for village listening group leaders. However, despite results being, for the most part, positive and showing a willingness and interest at the community level it should be noted that a more reasonable broadcast schedule is a once a week broadcast and listening group session. This allows for greater participation and interest in broadcasts of a serialized nature like radio soap operas due to anticipation of the storyline.

Technical limitations also existed. Despite the technical criteria in choosing villages, there were areas the villages fell short technically. For instance, in one village we had to replace an amplifier in order to improve the sound quality of the public address system. In another village, as noted in the Listening Group Assessment Process section, a portion of per listening group fee was allocated to petrol to pay for a consistent energy source for the length of the project. Though these costs were minimal for this pilot, any scale-up or expansion of this project will need to take energy issues and sound equipment upgrades into consideration and budget accordingly.

### **III. MAIN FINDINGS**

Despite the limitations of the pilot some substantial findings resulted.

#### **A. Relevance**

As the Ban Nateuy village anecdote (Results Section D) reveals, the content of the radio dramas was directly relevant to the participating villages. The villages chosen are villages at transportation crossroads that are experiencing immediate impacts of increased development. Thus, they have been quickly exposed to a modern way of living that is in contrast to their rural lifestyles and cultural heritages. Their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS exposure and human trafficking dangers can be addressed if they have the means to make informed decisions. Methods such as this project's radio dramas are an educational and entertaining way to provide villages with helpful information.

The use of FVI's satellite radio technology is also particularly effective in the rural, mountainous areas of Laos where difficulties remain in receiving terrestrial radio coverage/reception. Satellite broadcasts bypass geographic constraints that make FM reception difficult and are not impacted by weather conditions like shortwave reception. All the villages reported clear signal reception.

#### **B. Effectiveness**

Except for one village, the project achieved its objectives, showing that using simple satellite receivers, broadcasting via satellite improves villagers' general awareness of HIV/AIDS and human trafficking. The project also introduced villagers to the listening group discussion model. Though already accustomed to meetings and discussion, the listening group model provided villagers a forum for more in-depth community conversations on sensitive topics. Listening, understanding and distilling messages expressed through fiction are far more difficult than listening to and discussing directives. The Hmong and Khmu participants in this project and particularly the village facilitators deserve our gratitude for making this ambitious project successful. Not only did they share their experience and learning with the evaluation team they were also aware of the benefit of these programs to their community livelihood and directly expressed their interest in additional programming that would be equally relevant to their lives and situations.

#### **C. Efficiency**

The most obvious advantage of broadcasting via satellite is that thousands of villages can receive the same message at the same time for a single broadcast cost. FVI's broadcast fee of US\$20,000 for 1 hour per day per year remains the same whether for 4, 40, 400 or 4000 villages. The full efficiency of this broadcast cost was not demonstrated in this pilot because of the distribution to only 4 villages but the project did show the single message distribution possibility and its benefits over a door-to-door or village-by-village distribution. This single broadcast mechanism combined with a community ownership model for a satellite receiver (versus a per household radio model) allow for a low-cost communications technology solution.

However, selection of target villages, production of language-specific, relevant radio dramas and securing the participation and interest of rural communities requires a strong field approach (content research, community mobilization, etc.) and experience as well as the help of rural administrative infrastructures and development organizations. Content in particular is an expensive endeavor that this pilot was able to bypass by using pre-produced radio programs. This same method could be applied with costs being used to identify currently useable content/programs.

#### **D. Sustainability**

On issues like vulnerability to HIV/AIDS or human trafficking, long-term projects are necessary to fill the still wide gap in awareness and knowledge existing between rural and urban communities and to promote individual behavior change. Original, well-researched methods like the soap opera drama format disseminate information related to the lives and experiences of villagers in entertaining and educational ways. Different, additional subject areas may be added and processed through the listening group method with every indication of lasting sustainability in the area of knowledge improvement and potential behavior change. Sustaining the cost of new content creation can be ameliorated by aggregating content/programs from a variety of sources.

The sustainability of the technology component is less cost prohibitive. Satellite receivers placed in villages have a long-term life and require little maintenance and upkeep. Additionally, little training is required for villagers to manage these receivers and coordinate with scheduled broadcasts. FVI's Southeast Asia Learning Channel is accessible to the villages free of charge even after the scheduled radio dramas are no longer broadcast.

Community mobilization and participation in arranging listening groups is more sustainable with a long-term project that does not require the organization of listening groups on a daily basis as in this pilot. Arranging listening groups one night a week for a scheduled broadcast will not require the per-listening group fee this pilot used because this organization will be less onerous on villagers.

## **IV. LESSONS LEARNED, CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS**

### **A. Lessons Learned**

As the previous sections of the report mention, there were some difficulties in implementing this pilot project. However, the project overall provided many lessons that are useful for future continuation and expansion. Issues and lessons learned are discussed below.

#### **1. Efficiency of Technology**

The project clearly shows that FVI's satellite broadcast capabilities offer an efficient solution to address the difficulties Lao National Radio faces in reaching rural areas of the country. The satellite broadcast offers a signal that is clear and not impacted by weather via technology that is easy to manage, maintain and power. However, the pilot also makes clear that the rural technological environment required for a continuation of the project needs to be fully addressed. This includes the necessity of adequate amplifiers and other sound equipment such as village loud speakers as well as a consistent power source (solar or otherwise). Very often local government and the villagers themselves cannot solve all these problems on their own without budget/resource support.

#### **2. Content Relevance**

As previously mentioned, the broadcasted radio dramas were clearly relevant to the cross border villages targeted for this pilot. The evaluation shows relevant content that directly mirrors the experience of villagers and that is in their ethnic minority language are highly appealing to village audiences and encourage their involvement with and distillation of the information. However, the evaluation also makes clear that it is not enough to simply provide relevant content. In fact, once listening groups provided a forum for in-depth community discussion, villagers desired more such as accompanying activities, additional information and details on condom use, where to go for testing and medical assistance, etc.

#### **3. Listening Group Model Essential**

The pilot also demonstrated that the listening group discussion model is crucial for communities to attain a full distillation of information and for maximizing the educational component of the radio dramas. The model allows for community participation, discussion and empowerment of various members of community and aids in the ability of individuals to analyze material and distill information in a way that connects with their own experiences, actions and decision making processes.

The listening group model combined with scheduled satellite broadcasts is an efficient method of outreach that allows for the engagement of large groups of people at the same time, i.e. reach several villages throughout a region at the same, scheduled time. For real impact, community mobilization and engagement are important, as is ensuring technology issues are addressed and a permanent listening group location within villages established.

#### **4. Cost Efficiency**

Satellite broadcast at first looks to be expensive compared to more direct means such as fliers. However, there is proof that broadcasting works and the cost of reaching a larger outreach area via satellite broadcast can actually be more cost effective. Again, FVI's satellite broadcast fee amounts

to US\$20,000 for 1 hour per day for one year and is the same price for 4, 40, 400 or 4000 villages. An up-front investment in community mobilization, content production and receiver and sound equipment is required but the broadcast cost does not change and becomes more efficient the larger the targeted audience. Additionally, satellite receiver costs are relatively inexpensive especially considering the shared use/1-per-village model used in this pilot.

## **B. Conclusions**

Based on the lessons learned the pilot provided the following conclusions:

### **1. Project Objectives Reached**

The pilot demonstrated the efficient, clear transmission of the satellite broadcast signal via technology that is easy-to-use and manage. Additionally, villages showed a gain in knowledge around issues of HIV/AIDS prevention and human trafficking.

### **2. Technology is the Least Complicated Aspect of Implementation**

As with other ICT projects, this pilot demonstrates that technology is the easiest aspect of the project implementation. The more difficult and equally important issue is the need to produce and provide relevant, specific content that directly relates to the lives and needs of the target audience. Just as important is the full participation and involvement of the community and effective mobilization and motivation of villagers to arrange listening groups and engage in group discussions.

### **3. Information Exposure Creates Information Demand**

A significant finding in this pilot is that once communities are exposed to information they find relevant, they want more. In this pilot, villagers requested the inclusion of other subject areas and more programs related to their ethnic cultures. They appreciated that the programs broadcast were in their own languages and allowed for the immediate inclusion of elders and young children in listening and comprehending the stories. Villagers expressed interest in programs related to their traditional culture such as music and oral traditions. Additionally, they requested more programs related to development subjects they sometimes do not clearly understand. A whole range of activities in different fields, such as agriculture, weather and market pricing information, are thus opened to the use of this broadcast and listening group model and all of the villages have expressed an interest in participating in an expanded, continuation of this project.

However, larger questions remain for implementers of rural development projects, such as: How much more content/information is necessary and adequate? For what purpose? What are the most appropriate methods of packaging additional information?

## **C. Next Steps**

The lessons learned and conclusions from the pilot were shared in a national workshop in Vientiane, Lao PDR on May 21, 2007. Thirty-five attendees from various Lao government ministries as well as civil society representatives, the project team and a collection of village listening group leaders gathered to listen to the results and share ideas for continuing the project. It was hoped the workshop would actually generate a government-driven proposal document for a next phase of the project. In the end the working sessions revolved around three groups—government, civil society, village communities—brainstorming on possible future projects, what these might look like and what their roles might be in the design and implementation.

The collection of participants from the Lao PDR government (predominantly Lao National Radio employees) shared several ideas including continuing broadcast of ethnic minority language programs and including news, current affairs, music, and other relevant content. Broadcasting up to six hours was discussed. Lao National Radio employees indicated their role would be to actively choose and develop targeted content.

Villagers shared their ideas which included the need to develop dynamic content that captured the attention of young people in their communities and that expanded the subjects covered to include rural development issues, more health programming and education. Villagers also brought up the need to improve public address systems and their interest in participating in the development of new projects from the beginning stages.

NGO/civil society groups meanwhile discussed their role as one of assisting Lao PDR government agencies to maximize effectiveness as well as helping to identify related local resources and knowledge for further content/program development.

One specific project continuation possibility is to expand to more rural areas of Laos using the UNESCO/LNR content currently in production (and being funded by ADB) in Khmu and Lao languages. This could be combined with programs from other Lao government ministries (interest has been expressed by the Ministry of Education, for example) to include additional content of relevance to rural villages such as agricultural, health and education related programs. The outreach to other ministry programs and the aggregation of content would allow for increased cost effectiveness and assist ministries in distributing information further into rural communities.

A benefit of project continuation and expansion would be the ability to more directly impact and assess behavior change around health and other issues. Regardless of the design of the next stages of the project, the interest, cooperation and ownership of the project by Lao PDR government ministries is essential. The integration of communities at the design process and of NGO community assistance in the content collection and community mobilization phase would be of additional benefit and increase the sustainability and impact of a larger project.

At this time, the Lao National Radio and Ministry of Information and Culture have agreed to develop a committee to review the final report of the project, assess the various continuation design options and make a decision on what type of further project will be proposed. FVI will present a report recommending various levels of project expansion and the associated costs for the government's consideration.

To conclude, the Asian Development Bank's **TA No. 6316-REG: Asian Development Community Broadcasting Initiative** was a successful pilot project that clearly demonstrated the contribution ICTs and specifically satellite radio, can make in maximizing rural communication efforts, thereby improving the reach and impact of health and other related economic development information.

## V. APPENDIXES

### APPENDIX I – PER EPISODE LISTENING GROUP QUESTIONNAIRES

#### 1. QUESTIONS FOR UNESCO HMONG DRAMA “KINDNESS AND TEARS”

This story features young Hmong characters that have chosen to make a living as sex workers in order to help their families. All of the characters and two of their regular customers contract HIV/AIDS. The author explores the family and village reactions.

##### Episode 1

- Why did Ngao Ndjai (Kodai)'s discontinue his play to study?
- What do Kheng Tcher's parents dream about concerning Ngao Ndjai?

##### Episode 2

- What job is Nengty really doing?
- Who is taking the girls to work in the city?

##### Episode 3

- Why does Miss Ndjai stop working at the garment factory?
- What makes Pa Ndjua Shia being to change her mind?
- Can Ngao Ndjai control her feelings? Why or why not?

##### Episode 4

- Why does Pa Ndjua Shia want to leave school?
- Does Pa Ndjua Shia's mother like her child?

##### Episode 5

- Why is Tser Mblia able to hold Miss Ndjai's hand?
- Miss Ndjai yields to which speech?

##### Episode 6

- Do all men think like Tser Nji and Tser Mblia when they meet a beautiful woman?
- What kind of misery is Pa Ndjua Shia's family in? Who knows it?

##### Episode 7

- How do Tser Nji and Tser Mblia behave? Do you know people who behave like them?
- If you had a daughter acting like Ndjai and Neng Ti how damaging would you find that for your Hmong community?

##### Episode 8

- Why did Mother Pu Shao let Pa Ndjua Shia go to the city?
- Why did the customer give money to Pa Ndjua Shia for nothing?

##### Episode 9

- Why didn't Pa Ndjua Shia run away from the bar?
- What does Pa Ndhua Shia think of the bar?

##### Episode 10

- How does Pa Ndjua Shia's drinking contribute to her damaging herself?

#### Episode 11

- Why is Pa Ndjua Shia so angry and heart broken after losing her virginity to Tser Mbli?
- What does Tong Nji teach Hmong girls that they should know?

#### Episode 12

- Does everyone who has had their heart broken like Ngao Ndjai and Pa Ndjua Shia behave like they did?
- Why doesn't Pa Ndjua Shia protect herself from being infected by a disease?

#### Episode 13

- After hearing the stories of Ngao Ndjai, Pa Ndjua Shia, Tser Mbli and Tser Nji, what would you say are the consequences and damage of promiscuity?

#### Episode 14

- How did the characters risk being infected by disease? Who is the guiltiest?
- How does Pa Ndjua Shia's way of loving Tong Njai end?

#### Episode 15

- Who is the one who wants to stop and see if the man has been infected by AIDS?
- If people in your village are infected by AIDS, what will you do? Why?

## 2. QUESTIONS FOR UNICEF KMHU DRAMA

This story features a Khmu character, Nang Sroi who is trafficked to Thailand but who then returns to her village with her brother. The story includes a discussion of the dangers and risks Nang Sroi faces once she's left her village, an exploration of her recovery and her integration back into village life. The drama also provides lessons learned by the villagers through her experience, a warning for young people and a discussion of how to improve situations in the villages so young people do not need to leave to find work.

#### Episode 1

- What is Nang Sroi's family like?
- Does Nang Sroi still have her real mother?

#### Episode 2

- What is Nang Sroi's relationship with her stepmother like? Does her step-mother love her?
- How has her stepmother suggested that Nang Sroi's father treat Nang Sroi?

#### Episode 3

- Why has Nang Sroi left her village?
- Who has taken Nang Sroi to Vientiane?

#### Episode 4

- Where do Nang Sroi and Nang Ka live in Vientiane?
- What happened between Nang Sroi and Nang Ka?

#### Episode 5

- What happened to the characters while they were abroad?
- Who helped them to return to their village and country when they were abroad?

#### Episode 6

- What happened to the characters back in their village?
- How were they treated by people back in their village upon their return?

#### Episode 7

- What is Nang Sroi's feeling in this episode?
- What kind of love is there between Nang Sroi and Thao Thong?

#### Episode 8

- What is the origin of the village's understanding of Nang Sroi's problem?
- Did Thao Thong's mother agree to give her son to her?

#### Episode 9

- After Nang Sroi's and Thao Tong's expressed love for each other, what did they do?
- What kind of family is Nang Sroi's?

#### Episode 10

- Do those who were deceived into selling their children consult each other in order to protect their children and grandchildren in the future?
- Who calls them to a discussion?

## APPENDIX II – EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRES

### 1. TECHNOLOGY USE SURVEY

- In general, how would you describe your experience using the FVI receiver/equipment?
- How did you find the quality of the audio reception of the radio dramas? Please explain.
- What is the most difficult aspect of using the FVI receiver/equipment? What is the easiest?
- How well did the listening group leader/relay station training prepare you for using the FVI receiver/equipment? Please explain.
- Other than the FVI satellite signal, what quality and type of radio signal do you receive in your village/relay station area?
- How would you compare the satellite signal reception to the other radio signals you receive?
- How would you compare the FVI receiver/equipment to other radio equipment you have used and that you currently use in your village/relay station?
- Do you have any additional comments or questions about the FVI satellite radio service or equipment?

### 2. INITIAL/BASELINE SUBJECT KNOWLEDGE SURVEY

#### HMONG SURVEY QUESTIONS

- When you go to Nam Tha city, how do you protect yourself against AIDS?
- How can a person who has contracted AIDS be cured?
- If we think we have contracted AIDS who do we visit to confirm?
- When a young woman goes to work in the city or to a foreign country what kind of risk does she face?

## **KMHU SURVEY QUESTIONS**

- When a young woman goes to work abroad what risks does she face?
- Do you believe or not that nowadays there are people trafficking human beings in your village?
- Do you believe or not that there are human traffickers close to you?

## **VI. SUPPLEMENTARY APPENDIX – AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST**

### **SUPPLEMENTARY APPENDIX I – HMONG DRAMA BROADCASTING SCRIPT**

Hardcopy version only.

### **SUPPLEMENTARY APPENDIX II – SAMPLE FVI TECHNOLOGY TRAINING HANDBOOK**

Draft version only currently. Available upon request.