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United Nations Development Programme

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## UNDP Launches Project to Help Communities in Mae Hong Son

**Bangkok, 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2008** – A project was launched aimed at improving the lives of the population of Mae Hong Son province by supporting and enhancing the livelihood of the local communities. The launch event was held in Mae Hong Son City Hall and attended by Mr. Tongchai Wongrienthong, Governor of Mae Hong Son Province, and Ms Gwi-Yeop Son, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative in Thailand, and representatives from their respective offices, as well as from the Thailand International Development Cooperation Agency (TICA) and the Ministry of Interior.

Mae Hong Son is the poorest province in Thailand and home to a diverse population, including a large number of displaced people from Myanmar and other areas. Due to scarce resources, economic opportunities are few for these vulnerable people, and basic services including housing, transportation and communication as well as education and health are often inadequate. The situation in the province can therefore give rise to possible tensions over unequal and poor access to services as well as finite natural resources. Furthermore, the unsustainable use of existing natural resources may lead to the region becoming increasingly vulnerable to natural disaster.

UNDP, in partnership with Mae Hong Son government offices and other local beneficiaries, is aiming to improve this situation by promoting fair and equal treatment and access to resources and services among the different communities residing in the province, as well as promoting the sustainable use of existing resources -- with special attention given to women and children, who make up the majority of the population in the province.

The project has three interrelated components focusing respectively on enhancing food security and increasing agricultural and non-agricultural income generation opportunities; developing an inclusive and responsive public service to improve service delivery; and developing management and technical skills for natural disaster risk management and environmental activities, including environmentally friendly enterprises. To achieve these objectives the project strategy is to focus on livelihoods generation, capacity development of local government, and natural resource management. The project will run over a period of two years.

The project launch event at Mae Hong Son City Hall was held in conjunction with the first meeting of the Project Executive Group, a body composed of representatives from UNDP, the local government and the local community, who are responsible for directing, advising and endorsing the project's activities at different stages of its implementation.

“UNDP is very proud to be associated with this project.” said Ms Gwi Yeop Son. “We hope that it will help to address the many needs of the local population and bring them the necessary skills to be productive members of their community, while making the best use of their natural resources in a sustainable manner and without compromise to the needs of future generations”.

For more information, please contact:

Dominique Larsimont: [dominique.larsimont@undp.org](mailto:dominique.larsimont@undp.org) , 02 288 1814  
Punnipa Ruangtorsak : [punnipa.ruangtorsak@undp.org](mailto:punnipa.ruangtorsak@undp.org), 02 288 2130