



**Poverty-Environment Initiative Workshop Speech
Mr. Yuxue Xue, Deputy Resident Representative
United Nations Development Programme**

16 July 2010
Siam City Hotel, Bangkok

Mr. Kajonsak Singtokul, Inspector General of the Ministry of Interior,
Mr. Kiatisak Moolasartarn, Deputy Governor of Samut Songkram
Mr. Tanawat Ploysophol, Deputy Governor of Khon Kaen
Mr. Narin Lao-Araya, Chairman of Nan Provincial Administration Organization
Members of Project Steering Committee
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

For those who are new, please allow me to introduce myself to you. My name is Yuxue Xue, and I am the Deputy Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme. On behalf of UNDP Thailand, it is my privilege to address all of you today at this very important inception workshop of the Poverty-Environment Initiative (PEI).

For more than three decades, the Royal Thai Government has made poverty reduction a high priority. Thailand's pro-growth economic policies have not only boosted wages, but have slashed poverty. Between 1990 and 2007, poverty fell dramatically from 34 per cent to just 8 percent. But in Thailand's meteoric rise to becoming a middle income country, there have been consequences. Because people have more to spend, they also consume more. Rapid expansion has put a tremendous strain on Thailand's natural resources. Many private investments have brought benefits, but they have also negatively impacted the livelihoods of many. While much has been done to combat poverty, I am sure everyone would agree with me that there is quite a way to go.

The Poverty Environment Initiative is a joint programme of UNDP and UNEP that spans nearly every continent across the globe. PEI highlights the links between the pro-poor development and environmental sustainability. Quite simply, The initiative works with key stakeholders like all of you to integrate progressive environmental policies that take into consideration the needs of the poor into national and provincial planning and budgeting. In other words, we give them a voice.

In Thailand, PEI is focusing on how the planning process can give local communities the opportunity express their concerns on how the government might improve public and private investments that could have a negative effect on their environment. Local administrations play a critical role in people's lives by making choices about how a province will grow and prosper.

But these choices are complex. How can provinces balance investments in tourism and the pressure for industries as in Samut Songkharm? How can Nan Province fulfill its vision to bring back the pristine condition of the forest, when there is such pressure to produce maize and other cash-crops? Likewise in Khon Kaen, can the province achieve its strategy for farmers to grow sugar and factories to produce pulp and paper - while preserving the capacity of the Nam Pong River to serve the Province?

These questions are important not only for local people, but also for the country as a whole. The Nan River provides 40% of the watershed for the Chao Praya River. The greenery of Samut Songkram provides a welcome escape for Bangkok residents and a rich fishery with many economic benefits. Khon Kaen is key to Thailand's push into ethanol-based fuels. These three provinces represent many of the challenges facing Thailand as it tackles the global economic crisis.

The PEI aims to improve decision-making in order to address these complex trade-offs. The Sub Global Assessment or SGA will provide evidence on how the

province's plan will impact on ecosystems - which in turn would affect people's livelihoods. The SGA will also recommend ways to improve policies and investments to achieve the vision set out by the Province. It will take a look at the benefits of coastal ecosystems for tourism in Samut Songkram, the impacts of ethanol and food expansion on the Pong River in Khon Kaen, and the pressures on the pristine forest in Nan Province.

The PEI will support the involvement of local stakeholders in these choices that affect them most of all. This will help the Ministry of Interior to take forward its implementation of the Integrated Planning Decree. And equally as important, we must continue to lift up and empower the poor, who often aren't offered a seat at the decision-making table.

We hope these local experiments will generate "pro-poor" environmental principles and policies that can be upscaled into national plans. The National Economic and Social Development Board have begun drafting the eleventh (11) National Economic and Social Development Plan. We hope that the work we do here today will become a "green" template for NESDB's Plan for tomorrow.

The inception workshop today is organized to mark the commencement of PEI's implementation phase. Our purpose today is to review and approve the work plans in each province – and the Ministry of Interior's national level activities. We expect that by the end of today, you will have a greater understanding about PEI approach and how its activities will be implemented in Thailand over the course of the next two years.

The Poverty-Environment Initiative is a leap forward in the process of human development. Thailand, just like many other countries in Southeast Asia, has been affected by rapid economic growth, poverty and ecosystem decline. The working poor in Thailand are most dependent upon the environment for their livelihoods.



On behalf of UNDP I would like to thank each and every one of you for your partnership and commitment to this initiative. With your firm support of PEI, you recognize that environmental policies that take into account the needs of the poor are critical to reducing Thailand's social and economic inequalities.

Thank you.

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