



MEDIA RELEASE

Luang Prabang, Lao PDR

Luang Prabang's first Ethnic Cultural Festival will be held on 29 – 31 October, 2010. The landmark community event will be a colourful celebration of ethnic diversity in Luang Prabang, featuring song, dance, games, activities, food and handicrafts. **Seven different ethnic minority communities** from ten districts in the province will travel to the festival to share their traditional culture, including Hmong, Tai Dam, Kassak, Yao Mien and Kmhmu.

The Luang Prabang Ethnic Cultural Festival is being co-organized by the Traditional Arts and Ethnology Centre (www.taeclaos.org) and the Luang Prabang Provincial Department of Information and Culture.

Laos is host to a **rich diversity of cultures, lifestyles and arts**. Its 6.8 million people are distributed among four major ethnolinguistic groups, which represent **49 officially recognized ethnic groups**. The north of Laos is the most ethnically diverse part of the country, with numerous highland dwelling groups such as the Hmong, Mien, Akha and Kmhmu. However, many visitors to Laos as well as locals are not aware of the number of ethnic cultures in the country, nor the rich traditions in these communities. This festival will help to showcase the ethnic heritage of Laos and **promote more understanding and pride in the country's cultural diversity**.

The main stage will feature performances of **music and dance**. Some highlights include traditional Tai Dam bamboo flutes - the *pi pup* and *pi nyao*, a Tai Lue dance with swords, Hmong leaf-blowing music and a Kmhmu courtship song sung by a man and a woman, accompanied by a *khaen* player.

In ten booths, village artisans will be demonstrating a variety of **traditional arts and crafts** still practiced today throughout Luang Prabang province, including Kmhmu vine weaving, Lao silversmithing, Tai Dam cotton weaving, Tai Lue natural textile dyeing, Lao silk production and mulberry paper-making, Yao embroidery, Kmhmu bamboo basketry and more. **Visitors will have the opportunity to purchase authentic village handicrafts directly from the makers.**

Traditional sports and games will also be played throughout the weekend, and visitors to the festival are welcome to join in! Try out your skills on the *mai yok yek* – traditional Kmhmu stilts made from bamboo, or take part in a game of tug-of-war. There will also be fun craft activities for children.

Opening celebrations will take place in the afternoon of Friday 29th October, and performances, booths, activities and demonstrations will continue all day Saturday 30th and Sunday 31st. The festival will be held on the grounds of the Department of Information and Culture in Khamyong village, opposite Pasatipathai Primary School and Phosy Hotel. A final schedule of events will be released soon.

Entrance to the festival is free for everyone! This special community event has been made possible by our major sponsor, the U.S. Embassy to Lao PDR, and with support from the Lao National Tourism Administration's Sustainable Tourism Development Project, Joma Bakery Café, and other local businesses.

For more information about the Luang Prabang Cultural Festival, or to request high resolution images, contact Lola Ellis at the Traditional Arts and Ethnology Centre: lauren@taeclaos.org or +856.71.253.364.

