Closing Statement
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As we come to a close today, I hope you had a productive two-day training workshop discussing issues related to education and developing story ideas.

I would like to reiterate that the media plays a key role in influencing government policies and shaping public opinion. As media practitioners, you too are responsible for upholding the right to education by maintaining and strengthening public awareness of issues and realities related to education in Lao.

**Time is running out.** The 2015 target for the EFA goals and the Millennium Development Goals is getting close. All of us must work together with a sense of urgency to ensure that all children, youth and adults have access to good quality education.

As Mr. Khamhoung Sacklokham mentioned in his presentation, Lao is currently undertaking a review of the implementation of national EFA programmes, including the goals set in the Lao EFA National Action Plan for 2003 to 2015. The review is called the **EFA Mid-Decade Assessment** and is also being carried out in countries across Asia and the Pacific.

The results of this assessment will be used to better formulate policies within the Ministry of Education and beyond in order to come closer to attaining the EFA goals and the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.
I encourage you to follow up on this assessment with the Ministry of Education and the development partners involved in this assessment, and strengthen public awareness of on-going activities toward the betterment of education in Lao.

After this training, I hope you will be able to put the things you learned here to use. Your work can provide a catalyst for enlightened public debate on key issues and challenges in education that would hopefully pave the way for reforms towards the realization of Education for All.

In closing, I would like to thank our partners in organizing this workshop - the Lao Journalists Association and Lao Press in Foreign Languages, in particular Khun Thonglor Duangsavanh and the staff of Vientiane Times for their superb efforts in making this workshop possible.

Our deepest appreciation as well to the Ministry of Information and Culture, and the Ministry of Education, and most especially the Lao National Commission for UNESCO, in particular Secretary General Heng Daovannaly for their support to this workshop.

I would also like to thank the team from UNESCO Bangkok who worked tirelessly to make this workshop possible: Anuje “Pina” Sirikit from the IKM Unit; and my staff at the AIMS-UIS Unit Diah Yulianti, who is not here, and Ann Apiradee and Leotes Lugo who all worked tirelessly to make get this workshop underway.

Lastly, my appreciation to all of you for your active participation during this workshop. It is a great pleasure to interact with journalists like you. Your questions were very thought-provoking.

We at UNESCO would be happy to assist you in anyway as you write education stories. I hope this is the beginning of a closer working relationship with all of you. *Khob Chai lai lai*. Thank you very much!