



**British Embassy
Vientiane**

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Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Lao Rugby Junior Nagas receive inspiring send-off at the British Embassy

On Monday the British Ambassador to Laos Hugh Evans received the U13 Junior Nagas team of the Lao Rugby Federation for a reception marking their upcoming trip to the United Kingdom. The team will take part in the TourAid Festival of Rugby held in England at the same time as the Rugby World Cup 2015.

On this sunny afternoon ten little dragons (“naga” being Lao for dragon) were welcomed into the British Ambassador’s residence in Vientiane. This special visit added to the Nagas’ already mile-high excitement about their upcoming visit to the United Kingdom, taking them to the roots of the rugby sport. The team leaves on September 29 for ten exciting days at the TourAid Festival of Rugby in England.

At the reception, Ambassador Hugh Evans highlighted how rugby has brought the UK and Laos closer. “Both Laos and the UK have a long history of rugby and both certainly benefitted in their development from it,” he explained. “This link complements the long-standing positive relationship between our two people. And such intense cultural exchange feeds into the creative partnership that is currently developing between Laos and the UK.” The rugby team will have great experiences in the UK and come into contact with both the history and the modernity of Great Britain. But at the same time the Ambassador advised the children to not only see themselves as observers of the foreign culture, but to indeed act as little Ambassadors of Lao culture in England: “British people will be interested in your stories. They will be keen to learn about your Lao culture and the Lao way of life. So don’t hesitate to show what beautiful Laos has to offer to all the people that you meet in the UK.”

Ambassador Evans also acknowledged the Lao Rugby Federation's work with children and rural communities and emphasized the important role of sports for children's development. In addition to gaining physical fitness, strength and coordination, sports such as rugby also enhance children's concentration, evaluation, and analytical skills. It gives children the chance to test themselves and to establish core values and skills including a competitive spirit, social skills, appreciation for others and self-respect. In this context, the Ambassador cited from the recent opening speech at the Rugby World Cup 2015 by Prince Henry of Wales: "I can think of no other sport where the success of the team is shouldered so equally by everyone."

For most Junior Nagas this is the first trip outside their province. At the festival, they will experience British hospitality and culture. The ten Nagas will be staying with families of students from Shrewsbury House School in Surrey just southwest of London. During the festival the Lao players together with their English hosts will challenge nine other teams from India, Kenya, Uganda, South Africa, Swaziland, Botswana, Hong Kong and Colombia. They will also take part in several activities and trips to explore the roots of rugby, connect to the British way of life and experience the third biggest sports event in the world – the Rugby World Cup 2015.

The Junior Nagas will be in England from October 1-10. If you are interested in the Junior Nagas' experiences in the UK you can follow their trip on www.facebook.com/laorugby.

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Notes For Editors / Background Information

Lao Rugby Federation (LRF) – In response to increasing interest in the sport, in 2001 the Lao Rugby Federation was founded to provide a formal framework for all rugby union activities taking place in the Lao PDR, whether in the context of school, community or domestic and elite international rugby development. In



the 15 years of its existence the LRF has seen tremendous growth, not only in programming and capital, but also in the local capacity to administer the sport to a high international level. The LRF is a full member of the Asian Rugby Football Union (ARFU) and an associate member of the International Rugby Board (IRB). The LRF has achieved full recognition from the Government of Laos and the National Sports Committee. The LRF will hold the 8th Vientiane International Rugby Championship on 20/21 February 2015. For more information visit www.laorugby.com.

TourAid Festival of Rugby – The primary aim of TourAid is to create long term social and economic benefits for children and young adults from disadvantaged communities throughout the world by creating links between these communities and schools or clubs in the UK. These changes are achieved through a tour to the UK, during which the group participate in joint activities with host schools/clubs and families. Having children living in their homes creates special bonds between the overseas and UK communities which result in the hosts wishing to provide continued support to the tourists, so the tour lives on. For more information visit www.touraid.org.



Rugby World Cup 2015 – The 2015 Rugby World Cup is the 8th Rugby World Cup. The tournament is currently being hosted by England from 18 September to 31 October. Twickenham Stadium in London hosted the opening ceremony and opening match England-Fiji and will also host the final. In the world cup 20 teams are competing for the so called Webb Ellis Cup, namely: Australia, England, Wales, Fiji, Uruguay, South Africa, Samoa, Scotland, Japan, United States, New Zealand, Argentina, Tonga, Georgia, Namibia, France, Ireland, Italy, Canada, Romania. For more information visit www.rugbyworldcup.com.



Support Material

The following photo material is attached or available on request:

- British Ambassador delivering address
- President of the Lao Rugby Federation delivering address
- Hand-over of T-Shirts
- Rugby photo
- Great Britain rugby visual

Contact

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