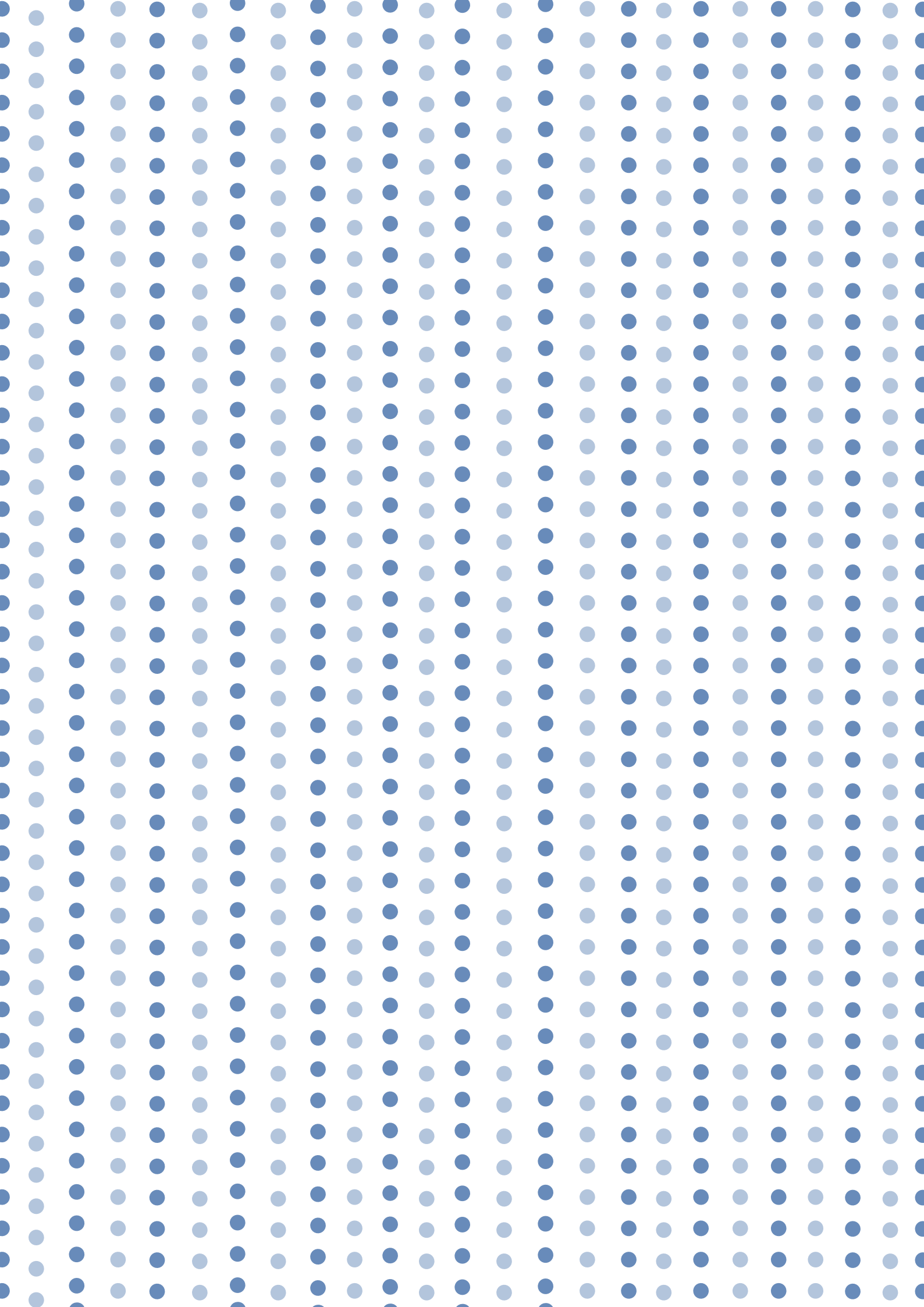


# 2018 PROGRESS REPORT

Lao PDR – United Nations  
Partnership Framework 2017-2021  
A Partnership for Sustainable Development

The United Nations in Lao PDR, 2019





# CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
1. Decent Livelihoods / 2. Social Protection.....	4
3. Climate Change, Disaster Management and Environment.....	11
4. Education.....	19
5. Health, Water and Sanitation.....	27
6. Food Security and Nutrition.....	37
7. Institution Building.....	45
8. Access to Justice.....	54
Joint Communications.....	59
Common Business Operations.....	63
Indicative Financial Overview.....	65

# ACRONYMS

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent
IMAM	Integrated Management of Acute Malnutrition
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
ISO	International Standards Organization
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NSEDP	National Socio-Economic Development Plan
PCB	Polychlorinated Biphenyl
PDNA	Post-Disaster Needs Assessment
REDD	United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries
RMNCH	Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn and Child Health
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNISDR	United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
UXO	Unexploded Ordnance
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

## UN System in Lao PDR

FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IFAD	International Fund for Agriculture Development
ILO	International Labor Organization
ITC	International Trade Center
IOM	International Organization for Migration
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNAIDS	United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNCITRAL	United Nations Commission on International Trade Law
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

Asian Development Bank (ADB), International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank also have a presence in Lao PDR.



# INTRODUCTION





Lao PDR reached a number of important development milestones in 2018. It passed the thresholds for Gross National Income (GNI) per capita and the Human Assets Index at the Committee for Development Policy's Review on 12-16 March, thus becoming eligible for Least Developed Country graduation for the first time. Lao PDR came close to passing the third criterion, the Economic Vulnerability Index. To graduate from Least Developed Country status, the graduation threshold must be met for two of the three criteria in two consecutive triennial reviews. If it sustains its current progress until the 2021 review, Lao PDR will be recommended to graduate in 2024, following a three-year transition period.

Having reached the mid-way point of the national planning cycle, the Government conducted a mid-term review of the 8<sup>th</sup> National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2016-2020) and of several sectors. As a trusted partner, the Government requested the UN to provide lead support and coordinate development partners in conducting the review. Based on inputs from the Sector Working Groups, the mid-term review took stock of progress achieved since 2016 and provided recommendations for the way forward. It thus served as the basis for the high-level policy dialogue between the Government and development partners at the Round Table Meeting on 4-5 December and as the starting point for the development of the 9<sup>th</sup> National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2021-2025), for which UN technical assistance has again been requested by the Government.

Given its high level of commitment, Lao PDR also continued to make significant progress on the localization of the global Sustainable Development Goals, presenting its first Voluntary National Review to the UN High-Level Political Forum in New York in July. A comprehensive list of sustainable development indicators is expected to be adopted by the Government in the coming year. 2019 will be particularly critical

to promote the mainstreaming of the Sustainable Development Goals. In addition to the development of the 9<sup>th</sup> National Socio-Economic Development Plan, the sectoral strategies for the next national planning cycle are being rolled out.

The Lao Social Indicator Survey II informed the analyses in the above documents. It showed that important progress has been made in several areas of wellbeing, such as child mortality, stunting, skilled birth attendance, water and sanitation coverage, primary education attendance, and to some extent in reducing violence against children. However, disparities persist between households from different geographical regions, rural and urban areas, households with different wealth and education level of mothers, and between ethnic groups.

With strengthening the rule of law one of the top national priorities, the National Assembly has played an increasingly important role in enhancing Government accountability, including that of state-owned enterprises. The Government remained committed to promoting transparency and combatting corruption.

The Government, together with UN, European Union and Australia, celebrated the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on 10 December. Throughout the year, Lao PDR had submitted reports on three core Human Rights Conventions, and thus interacted with three treaty bodies: the Committee on Civil and Political Rights in June; the Child Rights Committee in September; and the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against

Women, also in September.

The Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children has visited Lao PDR in 2017 and noticed that Laos has made good progress on child protection but must do more to tackle a range of problems including child trafficking, forced marriage, prostitution, online sexual abuse, and sexual exploitation by travelers. In March 2019, the Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights also visited Laos and presented recommendations towards alleviating extreme poverty.

The Lao PDR has been severely affected by floods. Between July and September, Lao PDR experienced widespread floods that significantly affected its people and economy across all provinces. On 23–24 July, a breach in the Xe Pien-Xe Nam Noy hydropower saddle dam caused an unprecedented flash flood in Attapeu Province, inundating an estimated 55,000 hectares of land, covering it with mud and sludge. Less than one month later, on 16–18 August, Tropical Storm Bebinca also affected the northern part of the Lao PDR. The Government-led Post-Disaster Needs Assessment - which took stock of damages and losses across productive, infrastructure, social and cross-cutting sectors - estimated damages at US\$ 147 million and losses at US\$ 225 million. Recovery needs across all sectors were estimated at over US\$ 520 million. The assessment also includes a Disaster Recovery Framework which outlines the way forward for policy, institutional, finance and implementation of the recovery efforts.

GDP growth is expected to reach 6.5 percent in 2018, vis-à-vis a target of 7 percent, and vis-à-vis growth of 6.9 percent in 2017 and 7 percent in 2016. Growth was driven mainly by the industry and service sectors, in particular wholesale trading and construction. Growth of agriculture, mining and tourism - despite the 'Visit Lao Year 2018' initiative - remained below expectations. Main challenges to the economy include low productivity, limited law enforcement and inadequate human resources that cannot meet the economy's demand. Despite overall growth, wealth is increasingly distributed unequally.

With revenue collection remaining a challenge, the flood emergency between July and September, and

most of the budget allocated to recurring costs such as staff salaries and pensions, fiscal space is further shrinking and the risk to debt sustainability has been reclassified as high by the IMF. Only a limited number of new Government-funded investment projects have therefore been approved through the Public Investment Programme as of early 2019, further increasing the importance of international development cooperation. Hydropower and mineral exports are expected to increase in 2019, which may contribute to a narrowing of the budget gap. The deficit is estimated at 5.7 percent of GDP in 2018.

Within this context and given the importance of improving the private sector environment, the Government endorsed the amended Law on Investment Promotion and established an Investment Management Committee chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister. A further initiative included the creation of a One-Stop-Service Office under the Investment Promotion Department of the Ministry of Planning and Investment. These are all steps to support SME development, especially through streamlining business start-up procedures. Despite these measures, Lao PDR has further dropped on the World Bank's 2018 Ease of Doing Business Index to #154 of 190 countries, down from #141 in 2017 and #134 in 2016.

Similar to previous years, in 2018 the UN System in Lao PDR - including agencies operating from regional offices and headquarters - commutatively delivered around US\$ 70 million in programming. The support of national agencies, as well as international partners such as Australia, Canada, China, the European Union, Ireland, France, Germany, Japan, Republic of Korea, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Switzerland, United States and many others, has been crucial for the partnership between Lao PDR and the UN, which remained first and foremost a provider of technical cooperation and a facilitator of policy dialogue.

This report covers key development trends and results achieved under the Lao PDR – UN Partnership Framework (2017 – 2021), as well as lessons learned and consideration of options for the way forward. It also reports on progress on communications and common business operations and includes an indicative financial overview.





**1. DECENT LIVELIHOODS /  
2. SOCIAL PROTECTION**

.....



All women and men  
have increased opportunities  
for decent livelihoods and jobs

More people have access  
to social protection benefits,  
in particular vulnerable  
groups and the poor



## Key Development Trends

Indicator	Baseline	Target	Status
<b>1. Decent Livelihoods</b>			
1.1. Percentage of total population living below the national poverty line	23.2% (2012-2013)	16.2% (2020)	Data to be updated by the Lao Expenditure and Consumption Survey 2017-2018
1.2. Gini coefficient	36.2% (2012-2013)	Gini coefficients improved for Lao PDR, urban and rural over coefficients estimated in 2013 (MoV: 8 <sup>th</sup> NSEDP) (2020)	Data to be updated by the Lao Expenditure and Consumption Survey 2017-2018
1.3. Percentage of labour force in formal sector as a share of total employment rate, female/male	15.6% (female: 15%; male: 75%) (2010)	30% (female: 30%; male: 70%) (2021)	<i>On track:</i> In total employment: 26.5% ( <i>Labour Force Survey, 2017</i> ); in total male employment: 30.9%; in total female employment: 21.4%
<b>2. Social Protection</b>			
2.1. Number of formally employed workers enrolled in Social Security Fund (excluding army officials)	230,000 (2015)	300,000 (2021)	<i>On track:</i> 299,998 (female: 140,036); Self-employed insured: 8,080 (female: 3,714) (2018)
2.2. Percentage of poor covered by social protection schemes	80% (2015)	95% (2021)	<i>On track:</i> 91% (2017)

2018 was another important year for Lao PDR. For the first time, the Committee for Development Policy declared Lao PDR eligible for the 6-year process to graduate from Least Developed Country status, having passed two of the three criteria. Lao PDR came close to passing the third criterion, the Economic Vulnerability Index. If it sustains progress until the 2021 review, it will be recommended to graduate following a three-year transition period, in 2024.

GDP growth remained robust but slightly decelerated from 6.9 percent in 2017 to an expected 6.5 percent in 2018. Despite improvement in economic management, macroeconomic vulnerabilities are still significant. Industrial sector growth surpassed the targets of the 8<sup>th</sup> National Socio-Economic Development Plan over the first two years, but there is likely to be a decrease in 2018 due to the impact of the recent floods. Challenges are also still to be faced in terms of employment, particularly job creation outside the agriculture sector.

With revenue collection remaining below expectations, major flooding occurring in July – September, and most of the national budget allocated to recurring costs such as staff salaries and pensions, fiscal space is further shrinking and the risk to debt sustainability has been reclassified as high by the IMF. Only a limited number of new Government-funded investment projects have been approved through the Public Investment Programme as of early 2019. Thus, the importance of international development cooperation will probably further increase. Hydropower and mineral exports are expected to increase in 2019, which may contribute to a narrowing of the budget gap – with the deficit currently at 5.7 percent of GDP.

Within this context, improving the private sector environment remains of utmost importance. The Government also endorsed the amended Law on Investment Promotion and established an Investment Management Committee chaired at Deputy Prime Minister’s level. An additional initiative included the creation of a One-Stop-Service Office under the Investment Promotion Department of the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI). These are all steps to support SME development, especially through streamlining business start-up procedures. Despite these measures, Lao PDR has further dropped on the World Bank’s 2018 Ease-of-Doing-Business Index to #154 out of 190 countries, down from #141 in 2017 and #134 in 2016.

In mid-2018, the first Voluntary National Review on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals was presented to the High-Level Political Forum in New York, highlighting the strong efforts to localize the Sustainable Development Goals. The Mid-Term Review of the 8<sup>th</sup> National Socio-Economic Development Plan



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(2016-2020) and several sectoral mid-term reviews were also conducted. Building on inputs from Sector Working Groups, the Mid-Term Review will serve as the starting point for the later development of the 9<sup>th</sup> National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2021-2025). It also provided the basis for the high-level policy dialogue at the Round Table Meeting in December, which was co-chaired by the UN (with support from UNDP) and brought together around 300 participants, including members of the National Assembly, high-ranking officials from Government and development partners, as well as private sector and civil society.

A number of new laws and policies were developed, amended or passed by the National Assembly. For example, the Law on Livelihoods Settlement and Job Creation, and the Law on Health Insurance Funds were developed; the Law on Social Security and the Law on Family Registration were amended and submitted to the National Assembly. A national Rural Employment Strategy was also drafted, with finalization and approval expected in 2019. The multi-sector strategy aims to reinforce and link a number of existing laws, decrees and ministerial decisions to promote decent and sustainable rural employment. Moreover, the National Population and Development Policy 2019-2030 has been revised and is expected to be approved in 2019. A Financial Inclusion Strategy has also been drafted for approval in 2019.

## **Results**

The UN/UNDP provided key support to the Mid-Term Review of the 8<sup>th</sup> National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2016-2020) and several sectoral mid-term reviews; and also supported the Government in developing its first Voluntary National Review on progress towards the SDGs, which was presented to the High-Level Political Forum in July.

### **Decent rural employment**

With UNDP's support, Lao PDR has become the first country to adopt an 18<sup>th</sup> national Sustainable Development Goal on UXO. Surveying and removing UXO remain crucial, as it continues to pose serious challenges, impacting lives and limiting agricultural productivity. As of December, non-technical surveys had been conducted in 309 villages. Following the non-technical survey, technical surveys were conducted and 1,205 Confirmed Hazardous Areas covering 20,315 ha were established. 26,670 items of UXO, of which 24,107 cluster munitions, were found. Overall, UXO clearance released 6,003 ha of land, destroying 91,468 UXO, of which 72,700 cluster munitions. UXO/Mine Risk Education took place in 514 villages and 287 schools, reaching more than 190,980 beneficiaries. 42 people received prosthetic support and essential medical care was provided to 39 survivors. In addition, economic inclusion and vocational training was also provided to 107 people.

UN Women supported women's employment in the UXO sector to ensure that gender equality and women's equal rights are fully considered in the management of UXO programs and victim assistance. As a result, UXO operators and staff are sensitized on the role of women in the management of the organizations. An assessment on the current status of women's participation in policy-making, planning and organizational structures was conducted. The Lao Women's Union is also supporting the National Regulatory Authority in mainstreaming gender in its programming. Moreover, a UXO sector modular gender mainstreaming guide is available in English and Lao language.

With support from UNICEF and other partners, the Lao Statistics Bureau successfully launched the Lao Social Indicator Survey II Report. Based on the survey's data several equity-focused secondary analyses have been carried out, including the Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis, and analyses on nutrition and stunting, education and provincial deprivation. The National Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis was conducted by the Ministry of Planning and Investment with support from UNICEF. It reflected the current situation of unmet needs and rights of children under age 18 years by looking at multi-dimensional poverty. The findings from the surveys have been included in the Voluntary National Review on Sustainable Development Goals, the mid-term review of the 8<sup>th</sup> National Social Economic Development Plan, the review of several sectoral plans and strategies, and the discussions at the Round Table Meeting. According to the Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis report, entitled "SDGs and Children – Measuring Progress on Child Wellbeing in Lao PDR", about half the children under 18 suffer from three simultaneous deprivations. This multidimensional poverty rate is being proposed as a baseline indicator for tracking

progress of Sustainable Development Goals.

ILO supported the development of Lao PDR's first National Rural Employment Strategy, with pilot interventions implemented in Sekong and Savannakhet provinces. The strategy provides a multi-sector framework to 2030, the overall implementation of which is overseen by a National Steering Committee chaired at the Deputy Prime Minister's level. The strategy links to and supports the Constitution of Lao PDR and the national plans and strategies, including the 8<sup>th</sup> National Socio-Economic Development Plan. It further links to and supports the implementation of a number of national laws, regulations, policies, strategies and plans which target areas critical for the creation of decent, sustainable and productive rural employment. Piloting this strategy, ILO promoted employment and poverty reduction on agriculture, improvement of value chains, and occupational safety and health in Sekong province.



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In support of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SME) access to finance, ILO is helping set up business development service programs targeting business planning, financial planning, cash-based accounting, marketing, retailer operations, tourism and agribusiness. Stakeholder consultations, including with commercial banks, ensure the programs meet the requirements for Lao SMEs' access to finance. In 2018, 63 local trainers representing 12 business development service companies benefited from related capacity building. Around 42 SMEs also benefited from the training. In addition, ILO's tool on women's entrepreneurship development ("GET Ahead") was adapted and translated into Lao. The training benefited 17 national and 26 provincial trainers.

UNCDF supported the expansion of banking services to

rural areas, stimulating economic activity by providing assistance to a network of 401 BCEL Community Money Express banking agents that UNCDF had previously initiated. For example, since September, 54 banking agents offering interbank transfers, cash withdrawals and basic bank accounts with ATM card have opened. BCEL Community Money Express has become a critical channel for many rural shopkeepers to pay their suppliers, with LAK 43.6 billion (around US\$ 5 million) of payments and transfers processed since phase 2 of the project started. The volume of transactions doubles approximately every 10 months.

In July, a workshop on the importance of ethical recruitment and business practices for improved market opportunities was organized by IOM for the Government and private sector, enhancing the knowledge of 34 participants.

### **Strengthened safe migration mechanisms**

With support from ILO and UN Women, priority areas for safe and fair migration for women were identified and presented to Government and civil society stakeholders during a national consultation in May. One additional migrant resource center was established in Luangprabang province to provide free services to Lao migrant workers, their families and communities in Luangprabang and neighboring provinces. Continued support was provided to develop the capacity of the migrant resource centers in four provinces. Safe migration trainings supported by IOM attracted 81 participants in Luangnamtha province and 31 participants in Xayaboury province, including district and provincial governments' staff and teachers. Participants subsequently conducted trainings in their own communities, reaching a total of over 3,700 migrants, as well as children and adults at risk. Additional outreach activities on safe migration were conducted in schools and village community offices. With support from IOM and UNDP, three community radio programs around safe migration were developed and broadcasted in four languages (Lao, Hmong, Khmou and Katang) across eight stations, covering all 18 provinces. A non-representative survey showed that 58 percent of people interviewed in Champasack province had listened to one of the three community radio programs and now had a better understanding on safe migration. 80 percent of Lao PDR's population have access to the FM community radio stations, providing a low-cost opportunity to disseminate information to remote communities.

### **Social protection**

The UN has initiated support to the definition of a comprehensive social protection policy in 2014, with the launch of an Assessment Based National Report on Social Protection. This report informed the development of the first National Social Protection

Strategy, which was completed by a drafting committee in late 2018, with support from ILO-supported technical consultations. The strategy seeks to strengthen and complement previous Government commitments. It therefore builds on the objectives of the Lao Constitution, the 8<sup>th</sup> National Socio-Economic Development Plan and other sectoral strategies and plans.

The Government acknowledged the role of social protection in reducing poverty, inequality, and vulnerabilities and in promoting socio-economic development and social cohesion. Working to improve the conditions of the poor is as essential for this strategy as ensuring that those who have already achieved adequate income security will not fall back into poverty again. The National Social Protection Strategy intends to help the redistribution of economic growth benefits, to alleviate material and non-material deprivation, and to protect vulnerable households from falling into - or back into - poverty.



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ILO has also been involved in the national efforts to merge the different components of the social health insurance system. Together with other national partners, recommendations were provided on design options and potential operational modalities for a unified national health insurance scheme. This was guided by the principles of equity and good governance, to ensure universal access to affordable quality health care without creating financial hardship.

UNFPA, in collaboration with the World Bank, provided technical support to the Ministry of Health to develop an

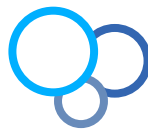
“Essential Services Package”, including family planning, which was approved in October. The National Health Insurance Bureau finalized a road map for costing, which will cover 121 interventions. Data collection for 47 health facilities started in December and a report is expected to be issued by June 2019.

### **Lessons Learned and Way Forward**

2019 will be critical to promote the mainstreaming of the Sustainable Development Goals, in addition to the launch of the preparation of the 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan, the sectoral strategies for the next national planning cycle (2021-2025) are being rolled out. The first half of 2019 will also see the Government preparing for the 11<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Lao People’s Revolutionary Party, expected to take place in 2020.

Collaboration between UN Agencies is enhancing, as evidenced by the joint work on SDG localization, the common UN contributions to the mid-term review of the 8<sup>th</sup> National Socio-Economic Development Plan and the Round Table policy dialogue, and a number of joint initiatives such as the UN Women/ILO initiative on gender-based violence for women migrant workers and the UNDP/IOM collaboration to promote awareness on safe migration.

Despite the strong economic growth, the structure of employment has not been fully adapted to enable job creation outside agricultural sector and will therefore require further attention.

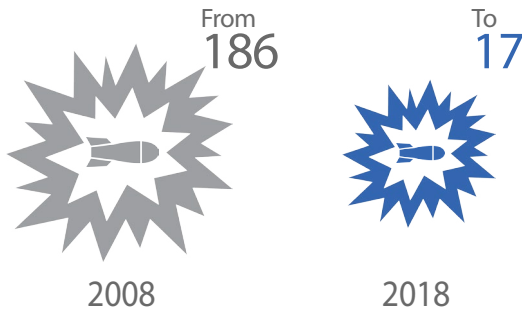


# UNEXPLODED ORDNANCE

Lao National Regulatory Authority for the UXO /Mine Action Sector (NRA) Report 2018

## ACCIDENTS

The number of UXO accidents in 2018 have **decreased to 9%** of what it was in 2008:

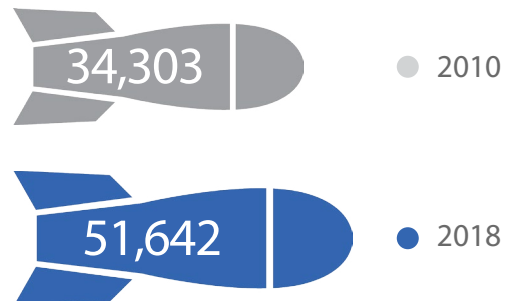
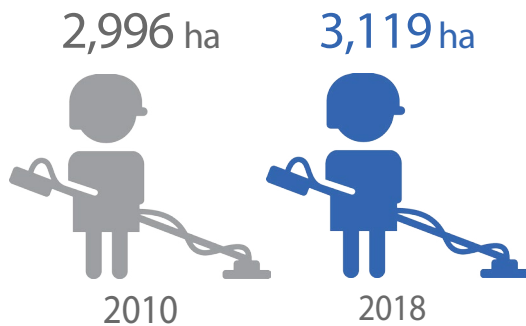


The number of reported casualties in 2018 is **the lowest number** of casualties recorded since 2008:



## HUMANITARIAN CLEARANCE

The number of cluster munitions found per hectare cleared has **greatly increased** due to better targeting:

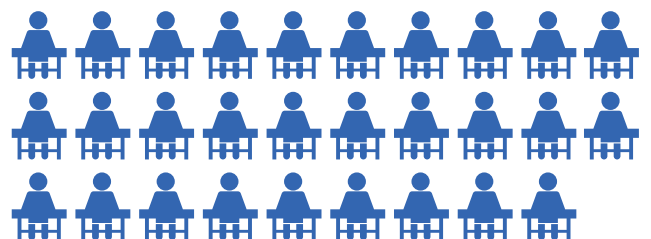


## MINE RISK EDUCATION

In 2018 radio programs broadcasted UXO information and mine risk education messages **8 times per month from 5 radio stations.**



In 2018 **29** UXO Youth Village **volunteers** were trained on Mine Risk Education.





### **3. CLIMATE CHANGE, DISASTER MANAGEMENT AND ENVIRONMENT**



**Forests and other ecosystems are protected and enhanced and people are less vulnerable to climate-related events and disasters**



## Key Development Trends

Indicator	Baseline	Target	Status
3.1. Proportion of land area covered by forest	46% (2015)	70% (2020)	Next survey 2019
3.2. Number of persons per 100,000 directly affected by natural disasters	Being established by Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment	Being established by Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment	616,000 total = around 9,500 / 100,000 persons affected by natural disasters
3.3. Agricultural value affected by natural disasters and climate change	Being established by Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	Being established by Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	–
3.4. (a) Level of hydrochlorofluorocarbon consumption; and (b) signature and ratification of the Minamata Convention on Mercury	(a) Hydrochlorofluorocarbon consumption of 2.3 Ozone Depleting Potential Tonnes (2010);  (b) Minamata Convention on Mercury not signed (2010)	(a) Hydrochlorofluorocarbon consumption of 1.5 Ozone Depleting Potential Tonnes (2020);  (b) Minamata Convention on Mercury signed and ratified (2021)	(a) –  (b) ratified since 2017



Lao PDR became the first ASEAN country to ratify the Paris Agreement within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) by passing a national law on its Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDC). Lao PDR has lost significant forest cover over the past decade, which has impacted negatively on greenhouse gas emissions. While Lao PDR's contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions is still negligible, the government is determined to contribute to the reversal of global trends and have included the country's work plan on climate change in existing national plans and strategies.<sup>1</sup>

Reversing deforestation, forest degradation, and the loss of biodiversity are national priorities and the government of Lao PDR has committed to substantially increase the country's forest cover to 70 percent by 2020, enhance the resilience of agriculture, and conserve and restore valuable terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems.

Assistance to the Government's effort to revise the Forestry Law is underway. Various aspects of the law are being reviewed including with reference to the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) process for defining forest legality. While much of the forests are currently under a logging ban, the Government has strong interest to open up scope for increased productivity in forest plantations. The revision of the Forest Law is striving to strike a balance between productivity and conservation goals.

Implementation of order No. 15 (2016) issued by the Prime Minister on Strengthening Strictness of Timber Harvest Management and Inspection, Timber Transport and Business, which imposed a ban on logging from production forests, has been highly effective. The forest governance reform aimed to introduced more participatory models of forest management including on certification and timber legality assurance systems. The Government estimates that forest cover is currently close to 60 percent, however this will have to be confirmed by survey data. Lao PDR has advanced significantly in developing a REDD+ strategy and portfolio for the country, and projects are also being formulated and submitted to the Green Climate Fund.

At the beginning of 2018, the Government announced Prime Minister Decree No. 5 on the management and inspection of prohibited wild fauna and flora was a significant step forward in combating illegal wildlife trafficking. The revised Penal Code was also passed

<sup>1</sup> Including into the 7th and 8th National Socio Economic Development Plans (2011-2015 and 2016-2020); Vision 2030; the National Climate Change Strategy (2010); the Forestry Strategy of the Lao PDR to the Year 2020 (2005); the Renewable Energy Development Strategy (2011); the Sustainable Transport Development Strategy (2010), the Climate Change Action Plan of the Lao PDR for 2013-2020 (2013), the National Adaptation Programme of Action (2009), the Second National Communication to the UNFCCC (2013), and the Investment and Financial Flows to Address Climate Change in Energy, Agriculture and Water Sector (2015).



***As a result of the flooding in July – September – the largest emergency in Lao PDR's recent history – the Humanitarian Country Team launched a US\$ 43 million Disaster Response Plan. The plan complemented the Government's response across the country to provide lifesaving assistance to people affected by the floods and reestablish basic services, to support the restoration of livelihoods and self-reliance, and to provide safety and protection for vulnerable people.***



by the National Assembly, which recognized illegal wildlife trade as a criminal offence with robust fines and penalties. The issue of illegal wildlife trade continued to be raised in the media with some success on arrests of members of known trafficking rings.

Lao PDR is exposed to a range of climate-, hydro- and geological phenomena, including typhoons, floods, landslides, droughts, strong winds, as well as small scale earthquakes in the Northern part of the country. During recent years the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, such as droughts and floods has increased with the majority of floods occurring in the central and southern part of the country along the Mekong plain.

Between July and September, Lao PDR experienced widespread floods that significantly affected people and the economy. On 18–19 July 2018, Tropical Storm Son-Tinh caused heavy rains and flooding in 55 districts of 13 provinces across the country. On the night of 23 July a breach in the Xe Pien-Xe Nam Noy hydropower saddle dam caused an unprecedented flash flood in six villages of Sanamxay District, Attapeu Province, inundating an estimated 55,000 hectares of land, covering it with mud and sludge and leaving over 6,000 people homeless. Less than one month later, on 16–18 August, Tropical Storm Bebinca caused flooding and related secondary impacts in all provinces of the country, affecting 116 districts and 2,400 villages. Impacts included landslides that resulted in damage to housing and infrastructure and losses to agricultural

lands and livelihoods. By mid-October, floods had affected an estimated total of 2,382 villages and 126,736 households, with an estimated total of 616,145 people affected across all 18 provinces. Water supply and sanitation facilities are among the most heavily affected by the typhoons and flooding during June-September 2018. A total of 1,620 houses were assessed as destroyed, while 680 were damaged.

The Government requested the World Bank, the European Union and the United Nations to support a government-led Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA), which assessed economic losses and damages across productive, infrastructure, social and cross-cutting sectors. The results of the PDNA estimated damages at US\$ 147 million and losses at US\$ 225 million, adding up to total disaster effects of US\$ 371 million. Short-, medium- and long-term recovery needs across all sectors were estimated at over US\$ 520 million. The PDNA also includes a Disaster Recovery Framework which outlines the way forward for policy, institutional, finance and implementation of the recovery efforts.

## Results

### Capacities in disasters preparedness, response and recovery strengthened

As a result of the flooding in July – September – the largest emergency in Lao PDR's recent history - the Humanitarian Country Team launched a US\$ 43 million Disaster Response Plan. The plan complemented the Government's response across the country to provide lifesaving assistance to people affected by the floods and reestablish basic services, to support the restoration of livelihoods and self-reliance, and to provide safety and protection for vulnerable people. By October, approximately US\$ 8 million had been mobilized, including US\$ 3.5 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund for implementation by FAO, UNDP, WFP and WHO in Khammuane province, as well as contributions from bilateral sources.

In the immediate aftermath of the flash flood in Attapeu province, WFP and FAO supported the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry in undertaking joint rapid food security and agriculture assessments in several districts. These assessments provided critical information for responding quickly to the needs of the affected population and robust data for the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment, which was conducted under the leadership of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare with support from the UN Development Group, World Bank, EU and INGO partners.

WFP support included 249 tons of rice, 6 tons of oil and 7 tons of nutributter for Attapeu province and US\$ 1.7 million for unconditional cash transfers to Khammuane province under the Central Emergency Relief Fund. WFP also worked closely with the Ministry of Labour and

Social Welfare and the Lao Red Cross to develop their capacities in emergency food and cash distributions, and emergency logistics including warehousing and transportation systems. WFP is continuing to provide logistics support for the 1,000 tons of ASEAN Plus Three Emergency Rice Reserve rice to be distributed to target districts in Attapeu. As WASH cluster lead, UNICEF responded to the emergency by working with the Government to provide life-saving items to the affected population. This included water buckets, jerry cans, tarpaulins, water purification tablets and soap, benefiting over 7,000 people in temporary shelters. UNICEF also supported the Government to provide the affected population with access to improved water sources, latrines, and bathing cubicles in six established shelters.



***In the immediate aftermath of the flash flood in Attapeu province, WFP and FAO supported the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry in undertaking joint rapid food security and agriculture assessments in several districts.***



Together with the Provincial Labour and Social Welfare Offices, IOM provided 943 blankets, 360 shelter repair kits and 5,000 zinc sheets for communal kitchen space in temporary shelter sites. Furthermore, IOM developed the capacities of government officials and camp managers on displacement tracking, camp coordination and camp management and worked with village volunteers to disseminate 'Build Back Safer' messages to all households who had received shelter repair kits. IOM also produced three site assessment reports using the displacement tracking matrix.

Support has been provided to build the capacity of the national Emergency Operations Centre. While agriculture and transport infrastructure sectors were the hardest hit according to the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment, housing and settlements was also heavily affected with severe damage in 11 provinces. Although the events and magnitude of the damage differed from province to province, the damage was highly concentrated in the southern province of Attapeu and the northern provinces of Oudomxay, Luangprabang, and Xiengkhuang. In the framework of the Emergency Agriculture Support to Flood Affected Communities in

Khammuane Province, FAO is targeting two groups of households: those with access to irrigation during the dry season who will receive rice seed and fertilizer, and those households with small land holding or landless households who will receive corn and vegetable seeds. Briefing and training sessions for producer groups and traders on voucher schemes and seed voucher distributions have also been carried out.

Beyond the emergency response, WFP, FAO, UNICEF, ILO and UNISDR are implementing a joint UN programme to strengthen the capacity of ASEAN Member States to design and implement risk-informed and shock-responsive social protection systems to enhance resilience. As part of this regional project, WFP supported the development of a Lao PDR country case study that takes stock of existing social protection platforms in the country highlighting specific needs for enhancing national response mechanisms and building capacities.

#### **Capacities in climate resilience strengthened**

The Government has focused on multiple aspects of climate change. A Law on Meteorology and Hydrology was approved in December 2017 to set up rules and regulations for the use of existing data. UNDP in partnership with ADB and IFRC continues to support the Government in drafting a Law on Disaster Management which is expected to be promulgated in mid-2019. Additionally, these three agencies continue to support the Government on drafting a Climate Change Decree, expected to be promulgated in late 2019.

As part of a broader master plan of the Department of Meteorology and Hydrology at the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, FAO is assisting in the design of a single system for agro-meteorology early warning that spans between the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment and Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. FAO in collaboration with World Bank and the International Center for Tropical Agriculture also strengthened agro-climatic monitoring and information systems to improve adaptation to climate change and food security. The agro-meteorological station network is being improved and rehabilitated, with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment aiming to have 101 functional automatic stations by 2021. The laboratory for agro-meteorological analysis, instrument calibration and geospatial climate data access, monitoring and processing opened in November 2018 and will start producing regular agro-meteorological forecasts in the 2019 cropping season.

In addition, the Department of Agricultural Land Management is preparing a long-term climate and crop scenario to support government planning. The system, called 'Land Resources Information Management

System', will allow the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry to make informed and science-based decisions on the planning of land distribution, land use and crop production targets based on realistic climate change scenarios. Impact scenarios of water availability, crop yield and socio-economics for all major agro-ecological zones will be assessed and adaptation strategies will be developed in the context of the agricultural national planning. The last activity will be key in establishing a system to measure agricultural value affected by climate change.

FAO is also supporting climate change adaptation in wetlands areas to reduce climate change vulnerability of local communities. The local communities depend on the fragile wetland ecosystems in Champhone in Savannakhet province, and Beung Kiat Ngong in Champasack province. Climate change vulnerability assessments at both sites contributed to enhancing the understanding of climate change impacts and risks. The results are used to identify and prioritize strategies for climate change adaptation, to enhance joint planning of local government and communities, and to inform future wetland site management. The vulnerability assessment tool is validated and will be disseminated to concerned government agencies for replication throughout the country. In addition, studies on climate change-related issues ranging from landscape restoration for improved watershed management to biodiversity conservation have been conducted to serve as a basis for sound decision-making. The implementation of efficient and cost-effective adaptation measures in target villages has begun through capacity development of local natural resources governance groups, which has led to the establishment of 10 fish conservation zones. Moreover, direct investments were made in climate change adaptation strategies, for the physical reopening of wetlands, and management of invasive plants, and development of resilience of agricultural livelihood elements using the Farmer Field School approach.



***FAO provided technical support on the development of both the Land Law and the Forestry Law, contributing to ensuring consistency in these two revision processes.***



UNDP, UN-Habitat, the Ministry of Public Works and Transport and the Ministry of Natural Resources and

Environment are collaborating to enhance climate and disaster resilience of the most vulnerable rural and emerging urban settlements. Increasing sustainable access to basic infrastructure systems and services will enhance the climate and disaster resilience of the most vulnerable human settlements in Southern Laos. Local resilience was further strengthened through a strong mix of hard and soft interventions, including community capacity development.

As part of the continued partnership with the National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute, WFP supported capacity development of vulnerable communities in seven key lowland paddy areas. This involved the improvement of climate risk management practices through better access to climate information and services and enhanced agricultural techniques that increase resilience to climate change impacts. Together with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, WFP and IFAD supported the creation of productive assets in least resilient communities in Sekong, Saravane and Attapeu provinces. These productive assets aim to diversify livelihoods, improve food security and enhance the climate resilience of vulnerable communities.

#### **Capacities in protection and management of forests and ecosystems strengthened**

FAO provided technical support on the development of both the Land Law and the Forestry Law, contributing to ensuring consistency in these two revision processes. Support was provided to the Standing Office for Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade (FLEGT), which is now better able to link program support to the national Lao-EU FLEGT Roadmap and work plan. FAO also supported the Lao FLEGT CSO Network in engaging in the FLEGT process.

The process was advanced through: pilot testing of timber legality standards for smallholders and village use forests; support to small and medium timber processing enterprises in engaging in legal timber supply chains; and to the National University of Laos for timber species identification. FAO also commissioned Forest Trends to develop actionable recommendations to advance national policy and implementation of REDD+ and forest governance processes.

In early 2018, Lao PDR submitted its REDD+ Forest Reference Level to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and underwent a technical assessment. In May, Lao PDR's Emission Reduction Program covering the six Northern provinces was successfully accepted into the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility's Carbon Fund. This means that Lao PDR has secured access to results-based payments for greenhouse gas emissions reduction or enhancement of removals achieved through REDD+ in these provinces over the next five years. The submission of the national forest reference level to the UNFCCC also paves the way

for accessing results-based payments from the Green Climate Fund's pilot scheme. The REDD+ developments of the country are being supported by bilateral and multilateral initiatives, including support from the UN-REDD Program.

UNDP supported replanting of trees in degraded watersheds in Savannakhet province, which will contribute to the national target of 70 percent forest coverage by 2020. Village Conservation Teams have been established in the endangered Eld's Deer Sanctuary to improve monitoring within this protected area and reduce habitat degradation of the globally important dry dipterocarp forest ecosystem. In 'Visit Laos Year 2018', UNDP launched the Eld's Deer Eco-Centre and Visitor Lodge to support eco-tourism in the heart of the dry dipterocarp forest in Savannakhet.

The UN contributed to the development of Prime Minister Decree No. 5 on combatting wildlife trafficking and the revision of the penal code. While these instruments are still new, they are expected to have significant impacts on wildlife trafficking if implemented and enforced.



***UNIDO supported the Ministry of Natural Resource and Environment in reducing persistent organic pollutants. Two demonstration landfill sites in Vientiane capital and Khammuane province were targeted for Best Application Technology Best Environment Practice plans.***



UNIDO supported the Ministry of Natural Resource and Environment in reducing persistent organic pollutants. Two demonstration landfill sites in Vientiane capital and Khammuane province were targeted for Best Application Technology Best Environment Practice plans. The Regulation on Controlling of Polychlorinated Biphenyl (PCB) Contamination in Products was revised and improved and is expected to be signed by the Minister of Natural Resource and Environment in 2019. The PCB database was updated, and the website for PCB management went online at the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment. Of 573 samples from 9 districts in Vientiane Capital, 127 were found to have a high concentration of PCBs, and those contaminated were labeled.

In cooperation with the Ministry of Science and Technology and the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, a Biomass Technology, Information and Learning Center has been established and launched in early December and staff capacities have been developed. The learning center will provide information, networking and technical know-how on biomass and other renewable energy technology applications to the public. The National Plan of Action for the Elimination of Asbestos Related Diseases was finalized by a multi-sectoral task force. WHO is supporting the Ministry of Health in joining the Global Campaign on Lead Free Paint and increasing awareness and leadership role of health sector to formulate a legal environment for lead free paint.

### Lessons Learned and Way Forward

The floods of 2018 had nation-wide impact, and the UN system was well-placed to respond to the requests of the Government and the needs of the affected populations. The strength of the UN system was shown in the multi-sectoral mandates across the agencies. A strong inter-agency coordination mechanism ensured successful inter-agency collaboration and resource mobilization.

Improving emergency preparedness, particularly the strengthening of the national early warning system, remains a major priority. In this regard, it is essential that knowledge and skills in disaster risk reduction provided to provincial and district government staff through the institutional support and training. The Post-Disaster Needs Assessment in response to the

2018 floods showed that existing early warning systems still need to be strengthened. Therefore, the sub-national capacity in terms of emergency preparedness needs to improve. This can be achieved through raising awareness in the communities and carrying out other disaster risk reduction activities. Medium term needs for high-risk disaster areas include a detailed risk mapping exercise; and a careful mapping of future land allocations for housing vis-à-vis the risks of natural disasters in the area.

Linked to this, there is a need for the development of Government and community capacities on disaster-resilient housing construction. This includes drafting guidelines on early warning, safe houses and other disaster risk reduction activities. The recommended approach to housing reconstruction is a combination of financial and in-kind grants, with the latter consisting of the provision of materials available locally at no or low cost, such as wood, sand and gravel, as well as land provisions.

Chemical safety and protection of human health should be addressed and controlled by multi-sectoral policy and strategy, as the industry sector alone cannot address this priority appropriately. The 'Health in all Policy Approach' - an approach to public policies across sectors that systematically takes into account the health implications of decisions, seeks synergies, and avoids harmful health impacts - will be critical. A Hygiene and Health Promotion Law may address chemical safety issues by protecting public and worker's health and promoting clean living and working environment.



## Joint UN Support to Emergency Response and Recovery

Following extreme weather, a severe dam breach in Attapeu province, and flooding across the country between July and September, the Government requested the UN to provide lead support to the national emergency response.

The humanitarian clusters – including water, sanitation and hygiene; health; food security and nutrition; shelter; protection; education; logistics; and early recovery - were immediately activated to support early interventions and provide technical assistance. Given the scale of the emergency, the Government endorsed a Disaster Response Plan of the Humanitarian Country Team - consisting of UN Agencies and INGOs - which received over US\$ 8 million in pledges from development partners and private sector.

Inter alia, the Humanitarian Country Team supported local authorities in supplying emergency non-food items such as tool kits, tarpaulins, hygiene kits, water pumps, filters, water purification tablets, safe delivery kits, and tents; providing specific nutrition support and screening for malnutrition; delivering rice, canned fish and other food rations; and providing emergency first aid and health services.

Joint Rapid Assessments on the status of the affected population - conducted with technical and financial input from UN Agencies and INGOs - supported evidence-based prioritization and decision-making. The Humanitarian Country Team also supported coordination and information sharing between Government and development partners through weekly development partner briefings, which were complemented

by regular Situation Reports, Information Bulletins and 3W mapping.

To help the Government-led recovery planning, the UN team worked closely together with the World Bank, the European Union and other partners to support a comprehensive Post-Disaster Needs Assessment across all provinces and sectors. Total damages arising from the floods were estimated US\$ 147 million. Total losses – which take account of the changes in economic flows, including higher costs

in production and lower revenue – were estimated at US\$ 225 million. The needs assessment found that agriculture and transport were the most affected sectors overall, contributing to 90 percent of damages and losses, and that Vientiane Capital, Khammuane, Huaphanh and Attapeu were the most affected provinces.

Recovery planning based on the findings of the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment is

ongoing, with recovery needs estimated at over US\$ 500 million. A new Disaster Risk Management Law, guided by the ADB and the UN, is expected to be approved in mid-2019. The next rainy season is rapidly approaching, highlighting the need to further invest in disaster preparedness, mitigation and management.





## 4. EDUCATION

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**Children and youth enjoy better access to inclusive and equitable quality basic education and vocational skills**



**Key Development Trends**

Indicator	Baseline	Target	Status
4.1. Percentage of new entrants in Grade 1 of primary education with pre-school experience	51% (girls: 52%; boys: 50%) (2015)	75% (girls: 75%; boys: 75%) (2021)	64.6% (girls: 65.5%; boys: 63.7%) <i>(Ministry of Education and Sports Education Management Information System, 2018)</i>
4.2. Survival rate in primary education (girls/boys)	78% (girls: 80%; boys: 77%) (2015)	93% (girls: 93%; boys: 93%) (2021)	82.2% (girls: 83.5%; boys: 81%) <i>(Ministry of Education and Sports Education Management Information System, 2018)</i>
4.3. Proportion of youth (female/male) employed as a result of participation in vocational training programmes	30% (2015)	70% (2021)	17% (women: 18.6%; men: 15.5%) <i>(Labor Force Survey, 2017)</i>  34% of male youth, and 43% female youth who report that their highest education completed is TVET are in employment



Despite good progress made in 2018, the large-scale floods negatively impacted the country's investment in the social sector, particularly education and skills development of children and youth, as the overall national budget envelope was revised downward. As a result, the education sector did not receive as much as planned in the 8<sup>th</sup> Education and Sports Sector Development Plan (2016-2020) in nominal terms, despite getting around 17 percent of the domestic primary budget in 2015/16 and 2018.

According to the Mid-Term Review of the 8<sup>th</sup> National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDP, 2016-2020), more people have benefited from an increased number of schools in rural areas at all levels including early childhood education, primary, secondary, tertiary and vocational studies. However, education quality and efficiency remain critical concerns, leading to poor learning outcomes and low skills acquisition of learners, especially among the most vulnerable groups. Lao PDR remained highly dependent on international public resources when compared with other ASEAN countries, particularly in the social sector, including education.



***According to the Mid-Term Review of the 8<sup>th</sup> National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDP, 2016-2020), more people have benefited from an increased number of schools in rural areas at all levels including early childhood education, primary, secondary, tertiary and vocational studies.***



The Ministry of Education and Sports carried out a Mid-Term Review of the 8<sup>th</sup> Education and Sports Sector Development Plan, which fed into the overarching review of the 8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP. Coordinated support to the review was provided by the Education Sector Working Group, demonstrating a good example of sector governance. Based on evidence-based policy decision making and prioritization, different updated data sources were used, including the Lao Social Indicators Survey II and Labour Force Survey. The Mid-Term Review concluded that good overall progress had been made against the national sector targets, including the increased early childhood education coverage, survival rate in primary education, as well as youth employment

thanks to improved vocational training and education. Nevertheless, significant disparities remained at all education levels and training, including across access, participation, learning and skills acquisition indicators. Tight fiscal space limited the required capacity development, and allocative efficiency and equity in the sector budget was found needing further improvement to enable a more result-based, equity-focused sector financing and interventions. Better linkage between planning and budgeting, as well as the needs for strengthening sub-national level capacity building was also highlighted. The sector will continue working for the implementation of key recommendations in 2019. The education sector also contributed to the Voluntary National Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This was another good opportunity for the sector to review progress and contribute to further mainstreaming SDG 4 into the national context.

Following the flooding in July–September, coordinated support was provided through the humanitarian Education Cluster. The “Back to School” initiative helped ensure all flood affected children and youth enrolled and continued their learning. This emergency experience revealed pressing needs for increased resilience in the sector at all levels, including risk-informed sector planning and integration of Disaster Risk Reduction into sector strategies and plans, as well as related capacity building among key stakeholders. Based on the results of the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment, continued efforts will be made in 2019 for effective transition from emergency response to recovery, and more long-term development support.

## Results

During the second year of implementation of the Lao PDR – UN Partnership Framework, good progress was made towards children and youth enjoying better access to inclusive and equitable quality basic education and skills development opportunities. The outputs jointly achieved by UN agencies were aligned with the sector plans and complementary to each other to accomplish the overall Outcome goals.

### Enhanced health, water, sanitation and hygiene, and nutrition in formal and non-formal education

In 2018, UN agencies continued to collectively promote school health, water, sanitation and hygiene, and nutrition through a comprehensive approach. The strategy involved engagement at both school and community level, as well as policy and system level support, strengthening the linkage between the two. Together with the related capacity-building support, this bottom-up approach has helped bring about more sustainable results.

At the school and community level, with UNICEF's

support, a total of 2,093 school children (1,321 primary and 772 pre-primary) had access to water, sanitation and hygiene services in Phongsaly, Savannakhet and Saravane provinces, creating an enabling learning environment. The facilities, which were supported by improved water sources, were made gender segregated and accessible for children with disabilities. To effectively support hygiene promotion in pre-primary schools, UNICEF worked with the Ministry of Education and Sports to adapt the hygiene package for primary school called “Hygiene Action Led by Pupils” or “HAPiS”. A Trainer’s Manual and Teacher’s Guide for pre-primary schools were developed and Trainings of Trainers were conducted. UNICEF will continue to promote key hygiene behaviours in schools, including group handwashing with soap, cleaning of school compound, toilet use and maintenance, and securing safe drinking water in classrooms.



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Under the School Meals Program, WFP in partnership with different partners and local communities installed 100 handwashing stations in schools to ensure children have proper personal hygiene. With the aim of improving access to water in schools for cooking, hygiene, school gardening and hand washing, through a partnership with Namsaat, water surveys and system designing were conducted in 220 school communities in nine districts in the Northern provinces.

At the policy and system level, UNICEF supported the development of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in School Standards. These assist the Government in establishing limits and minimum conditions to implement interventions at school level and help promote a more standardized approach. UNICEF and GIZ supported data collection of pre-primary and primary schools using 3-Star criteria and self-assessment forms in three provinces. The findings will provide a snapshot of the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in School status in the selected districts, including the number of schools

meeting the 3-Star criteria.

With WFP’s support, the School Agriculture guideline of the Ministry of Education and Sports was revised, strengthening nutrition and gender aspects. The guideline will be distributed to schools supported by WFP, Catholic Relief Services and the Government for school lunch. WFP also supported the development of a Minister’s Directive on promoting school agriculture for all levels from kindergarten to university.

To promote comprehensive sexuality education in primary education, with UNFPA’s support, two Noi booklets were developed as teaching and learning materials.

#### **Strengthened teacher education and other capacity building for government officials, teachers and communities**

The UN’s support on capacity development of government officials at different levels, school administrators, teachers and communities has collectively enabled enhanced knowledge and skills of key stakeholders in delivering quality services for targeted learners.

UNESCO supported capacity development of teacher educators, teachers and government officials. To address the challenge of low quality in-service teacher training, 72 education officials from the Provincial Teacher Development Centre and the Provincial Education and Sports Services were trained on necessary skills, such as strategic planning, project management, and training facilitation skills. This enabled them to plan and deliver effective in-service training that meets the learning needs of the teachers they serve. In addition, work is underway to create a cohort of 16 key national trainers on gender-responsive pedagogy in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education to promote girls’ participation and achievements in these subjects.

With UNICEF’s support, 70 provincial and district staff, including Pedagogical Advisors, were trained on effective pedagogical supervision and outreach planning. As a result, Pedagogical Advisors outreach operational plans for the academic year 2018-19 were developed and implemented in three provinces. Consequently, all 578 primary schools in six districts of the three provinces received pedagogical support visits at least once a semester, supporting 1,689 teachers, of which 979 were females. The improved teaching-learning practices have benefited 45,791 primary students, including 21,356 girls.

UNICEF also supported the Ministry of Education and Sports to provide continuous professional development opportunities for 84 pre-primary teachers and school

principals through in-service training and experience exchange workshops in three provinces. 1,213 pre-primary students benefited from their improved teaching-learning skills. Capacity building of the target three Provincial Education and Sports Services and six District Education and Sports Bureaus was undertaken through workshops and on-the-job training, include training on use of monitoring tools. Consequently, monitoring and mentoring support was provided by the trained and officials (including Pedagogical Advisors), covering 117 pre-primary schools and benefiting 2,563 students.

Improved school and teacher education curricula, that are inclusive, gender-sensitive, relevant and consistent

During 2018, UN-supported revisions of school and training curricula, as well as their associated materials, have led to improved quality and relevance of the education and training contents and delivery models.

UNESCO provided technical and financial support in the revision of the Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood Education to be better aligned with the 2012 national kindergarten curriculum and the Early Childhood Care and Education Teachers Competency Framework for Southeast Asia, with a view to improving the quality of the program and the prospective preschool teachers. The revised curriculum was adopted by Dongkhamxang and Salavan Teacher Training Colleges in October 2018 and will expand to other Teacher Training Colleges in the following years.

In late 2018, UNESCO supported the Ministry of Education and Sports and the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization in initiating the development of a comprehensive teacher policy to improve the recruitment, management, training, remuneration, continuous professional development and working conditions of teachers. The existing policy and strategic documents are being reviewed, analyzed and used as a basis for the development of the comprehensive teacher policy to ensure the synergies and integration of existing documents in the teacher policy.

With UNICEF's support, pre-primary teachers' guidebooks unit 1-3 were aligned with the revised School Readiness Competencies and the curriculum content framework. The revised guidebooks were piloted in 138 pre-primary schools in five provinces. The results of this pilot are currently under review for finalization. This revision will help enhanced quality, relevance, age-appropriateness and continuum to the primary level. In order to ensure the quality of early childhood education services, UNICEF also supported the development of early childhood education quality standards, which were piloted in 78 centers in 2018.



*In late 2018, UNESCO supported the Ministry of Education and Sports and the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization in initiating the development of a comprehensive teacher policy to improve the recruitment, management, training, remuneration, continuous professional development and working conditions of teachers.*



The pilot results will be finalized in early 2019.

UNICEF's assistance, in partnership with EU, also extended to system enhancement of continuous professional development for Pedagogical Advisors. Development of course outlines and upgrading training materials was initiated and is currently in a pilot phase. The Pedagogical Advisors upgrading program will be ready for national roll out by the beginning of the academic year 2019-20 covering all the existing 600 Pedagogical Advisors. With UNICEF's support, a national framework on student learning assessment was also developed and approved. Implementation of the framework will follow in 2019, which will contribute to continued improvement of teacher education and training.

Based on the assessment of the implementation of the Comprehensive Sexuality Education Teacher's Guidebook conducted in 2016, the lesson plans and the teacher guides on Comprehensive Sexuality Education for lower and upper secondary education were developed by UNFPA in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Sports and validated through a series of consultation meetings with relevant sectors at national level. The Comprehensive Sexuality Education lesson plans for lower secondary education were finalized and will be delivered in 49 secondary schools in Bokeo province in 2019. In addition, a one-week module on Comprehensive Sexuality Education for TVET students as a standalone module was also developed and validated. The one-week module will be introduced for the first-year TVET students in Bokeo province on pilot basis.

WFP in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Sports has initiated discussion on developing a

“Green Box” which will consist of teaching and learning materials related to nutrition education, school agriculture and climate change. The teaching tools and learning materials will be aligned with the primary education and teacher training curricula.

#### Increased access, participation and learning outcomes of students in rural and remote areas

The focused efforts by UN agencies in supporting the Government in enhancing more equitable access to quality education and skills development opportunities, directly contributed to addressing the Ministry of Education and Sports’ priorities for narrowing the disparities in education and training.

To respond to the lack of database on in-service teacher training and the limited access to such training for teachers in rural and remote areas, UNESCO supported the development of a database system. Consultations and an initial mapping study on existing teacher-related database systems were conducted in 2018. In the coming year, relevant officials will be trained on the collection, dissemination and analysis of comprehensive and sex-disaggregated data on in-service teacher training. This database system, to be launched in 2019, will help ensure equitable opportunities for teachers, and thus, contribute to improving learning outcomes of students in rural and remote areas.



***WFP in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Sports has initiated discussion on developing a “Green Box” which will consist of teaching and learning materials related to nutrition education, school agriculture and climate change.***



Furthermore, UNESCO continued to work with the Ministry of Education and Sports to expand implementation of the Primary Education Equivalency Program and scale up Non-Formal Primary Education in five additional provinces for the 2018 academic year. Based on the program’s success, the Ministry decided to allocate funds from their regular budget to the scale up this program in other districts and provinces. UNESCO also supported the identification of children who dropped out in three provinces and capacity strengthening of teachers on multi-grade teaching and approaches to reintegrating them into school. In total, 2,046 disadvantaged children were supported in 2018

through these activities.

Supported by UNICEF, 32 new Community-Based School Readiness centers were established and started operations in remote communities in three provinces. This has enabled 1,156 children to participate in quality early childhood education programmes who otherwise did not have access to learning opportunities.

WFP supported school lunch activities in 1,450 schools in seven provinces of Phongsaly, Oudomxay, Luangnamtha, Luangprabang, Saravane, Sekong and Attapeu. This has benefited about 140,000 7 kindergarten, pre-school and primary school children, including 63,693 girls. Moreover, WFP established a partnership with the Non-Profit Association Education for Development Lao to support 15 primary schools in Nakai district, Khammuane province to provide community grown school lunch activities.

With UNFPA’s support, the Girls’ Group initiative “Nang Noi” was implemented in nine villages in Savannakhet province. As a result, 40 sessions on “Nang Noi” Girls’ Group contents were developed in collaboration with the Non-Formal Education Department and validated through a series of consultation meetings with relevant sectors at national and provincial level. The final manual was published and formally released by the Department of Non-Formal Education in December. The 20 mentors who received training on the manual subsequently conducted 40 sessions with 200 girls aged 10-14 on a weekly basis. The Girls’ Group initiative will be scaled up in new villages in Savannakhet and new districts in Bokeo province in 2019.

With support from IOM, a total of 81 participants (of which 23 were women) from eight villages, including district and provincial government staff, and teachers from four local secondary schools attended a training of trainers on promoting safe migration and the rights of victims of trafficking in the Northern provinces. These participants provided rollout trainings in their communities in Long and Sing districts, Luangnamtha province, reaching a total of 2,220 migrants and at-risk populations - of which 910 were women. Outreach activities on safe migration were conducted in schools and within village community offices. An additional training of trainers on safe migration practices was conducted in Xayaboury province with a total of 31 participants trained.

#### Strengthened evidence-based advocacy and actions

Continued efforts for evidence-based advocacy have enabled government partners to take informed policy decisions. This has contributed to further strengthening result-based sector planning and development.

With UNICEF’s support in partnership with other

UN agencies and development partners, the latest Lao Social Indicator Survey (LSIS-II) data was made available, which enabled disparity analyses to inform the MTR. In-depth analysis of LSIS-II for the education sector was initiated, and a draft analytical report is under development based on a national workshop held in July 2018, which will be finalized in early 2019.

With ILO's support, a labour market survey was conducted in Savannakhet province, including TVET suppliers in both the private and public sectors, to identify gaps between demand and supply of skilled labour and thereby contribute to the strengthening of a demand-driven vocational educational training. The result provided important information on the situation and status of TVET and skills development of the province specifically, but also generally of the country. Based on the findings, key recommendations were presented, which the relevant government institutions and other key stakeholders will take up for actions in 2019 onwards.

Through support from Mastercard Foundation, WFP together with Catholic Relief Services supported a cost-benefit analysis of school meals. The cost-benefit analysis showed that the return on investment of US\$ 1 towards school meals is US\$ 6 within five years. Moreover, by comparing data from schools providing meals and schools not serving meals, it was noted that children receiving schools meals on average stay in school one year longer.

The International Day of the Girl Child was observed on 11 October. The celebration was around the anniversary of Noi by reviewing the progress related to adolescent girls in Laos within the Voluntary National Review. In addition, the event provided an opportunity to showcase the multi-sectoral efforts and highlight the partnerships and call for strengthened collaborative efforts necessary to bring changes for adolescent girls' well-being and to build new partnerships for Noi. More than 200 people from the Government, international organizations and young people attended the event.

## Lessons Learned and Way Forward

Key bottlenecks remain related to the limited institutional and human capacities of Government at all levels. Capacity strengthening, especially at sub-national level, is critical for a system-based approach for ensuring sustainability, ownership and accountability of the Government for programme interventions. There is a critical need for continuous capacity building of the Provincial Education and Sports Services and District Education and Sports Bureaus for effective programme planning, implementation and monitoring.

Weak coordination, including inter-departmental coordination within the Ministry of Education and Sports as well as coordination across the national, sub-national, schools and community levels, need to be further addressed. Improved coordination has great implications on the quality, alignment and effective use of limited human and financial resources in the circumstance of competing priorities and timelines of the sector.

In 2019, the UN-supported program for education will continue to further enhance joint evidence-based advocacy and promote a harmonized approach for national capacity building towards the sector targets. Coordination among the UN agencies and its linkage with the existing sector coordination mechanism will be further strengthened to enhance collective impact and sustainability of the UN's support.

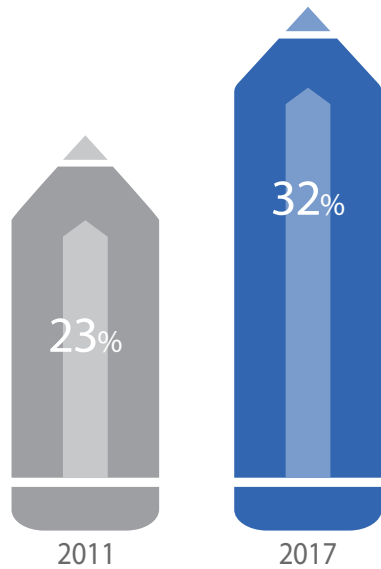


# EDUCATION

Lao Social Indicator Survey II 2017

## EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (ECE) ATTENDANCE

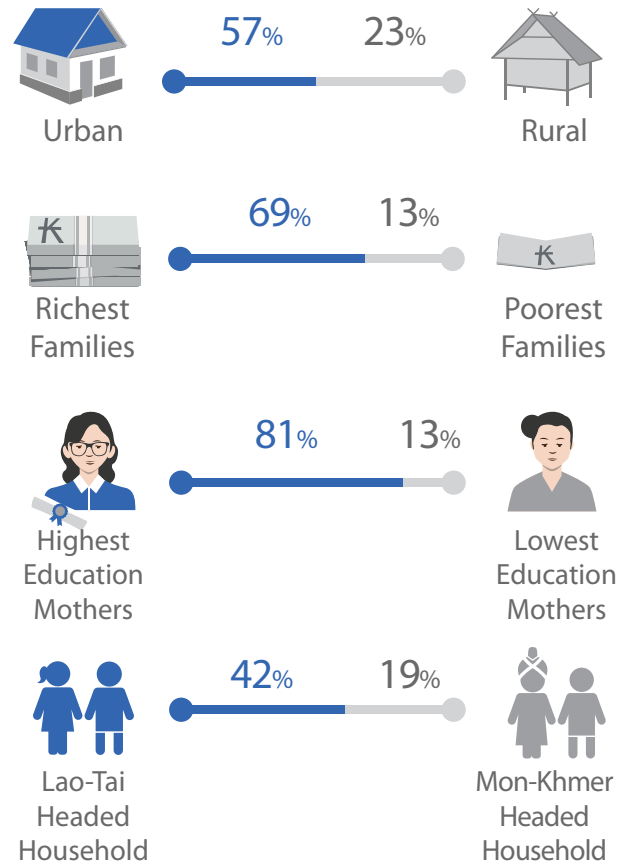
Children under 5 years of age who have access to ECE:



But **2 in 3** children still do not have access to ECE.

## DISPARITIES IN CHILDREN'S ACCESS TO EDUCATION

ECE ATTENDANCE RATE (%):



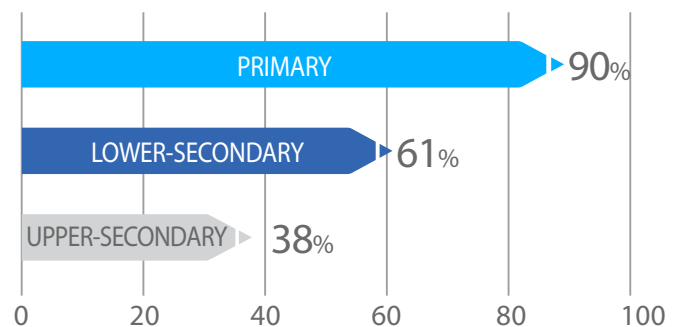
## NET ATTENDANCE RATIO



**1 in 10** primary-age children remains out of school.

REASONS FOR NOT ATTENDING SCHOOL:

- Due to absence of teacher or school closure;
- Weak engagement of parents in school management.





## **5. HEALTH, WATER AND SANITATION**



People enjoy improved access to quality health services, and water, sanitation and hygiene



## Key Development Trends

Indicator	Baseline	Target	Status
5.1. Maternal mortality ratio	197 per 100,000 (2015)	160 per 100,000 (2020)	197 per 100,000 (Population Census, 2015)
5.2. Under-five mortality rate, girls/boys	64 per 1,000 (2016) (girls: 83 per 1,000; boys: 95 per 1,000)	40 per 1,000 (2021) (girls and boys)	79 per 1,000 (Lao Social Indicator Survey II, 2018)
5.3. Percentage of population using improved drinking water source and sanitation facility	Water supply coverage: 76%; sanitation coverage: 71% (2015)	Water supply coverage: 90% (2020); sanitation coverage: 80% (2020) (female: 30%; male: 70%) (2021)	Proportion of population using an improved source of drinking water: 83.9%  Proportion of population having an improved but not shared sanitation facility is 73.8% (Lao Social Indicator Survey II, 2018)



As reported in the Voluntary National Review on SDGs, the MDG target of reducing maternal mortality has been achieved and significant progress has been made towards reducing under-five and infant mortality. However, health outcomes continue to vary greatly based on factors such as geographic location, ethno-linguistic group and socio-economic status. Moreover, disparities in health service coverage remain pronounced. Malaria resurgence, non-communicable diseases and road traffic injuries have become major challenges. In the coming years it will be important to focus on young people to reduce the adolescent birth rate and take advantage of the demographic dividend.

It is estimated that 12,000 people were living with HIV in Lao PDR in 2018 - a concentrated epidemic, with pockets of increased prevalence among key populations, and with unsafe sex as main mode of transmission. Projections indicate an increasing trend in infections among men having sex with men, clients of sex workers and former sex workers. Preliminary findings of the Integrated Biological and Behavioral Surveillance Survey revealed knowledge of HIV among female sex workers and men having sex with men is declining. The survey also reported an increase in high-risk behaviors.

Immunization programs have made good progress, although immunization remains below the levels required to induce herd immunity and reduce the threat of outbreaks. An Immunization Law to achieve universal coverage against vaccine-preventable diseases was passed by National Assembly in June. Lao PDR remains highly dependent on the Global Fund and Gavi – the Vaccine Alliance for financing its immunization, malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS programmes. Lao PDR will have to transition to domestic financing as external support is expected to phase out in the coming years.



***With technical support from UNFPA, the Reproductive Health Policy was revised, evolving into a Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health Policy in alignment with the current Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (RMNCH) Strategy (2015-2025), and national and global priorities.***



In the area of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, according to the 2018 Lao Social Indicator Survey, the share of the population with access to an improved source of drinking water has reached 83.9 percent and the share of the population with improved (but not shared) sanitation facility 73.8 percent.

The widespread flooding in several provinces between July and September led to the postponement of routine work, including health activities. Trainings were deferred and monitoring visits postponed until the immediate emergency was contained. Continued restructuring of the health sector also impeded implementation.

## Results

### Policy level

With technical support from UNFPA, the Reproductive Health Policy was revised, evolving into a Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health Policy in alignment with the current Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (RMNCH) Strategy (2015-2025), and national and global priorities. UNFPA together with UNESCO also provided technical and financial support to the Lao Youth Union for the consultative development of the first National Youth and Adolescent Policy. Both policies are expected to be endorsed and formally released by the Government in 2019.

With technical support from WHO, the national Essential Health Services Package was developed and endorsed. The package sets out which services should be provided and which infrastructure, human resources, medicines and equipment should be in place at each level of the health system. The national Essential Medicine List and national micro-planning guideline for integrated outreach services were updated to align with the Essential Health Services Package. The updated micro-planning guideline aims to strengthen the provision of integrated reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health and nutrition services for remote communities through outreach. The Government is currently preparing the establishment of a committee to lead the implementation of the services package.

Moreover, the Integrated Management of Newborn and Child Illness guideline has been revised and introduced at primary health care level for treatment of diarrhea, pneumonia and acute malnutrition. A Community Health Systems Strengthening Strategic Action Plan has been developed in line with the Declaration of Astana. The health system has been strengthened at district level through bottleneck analysis and intensified planning and monitoring.

With technical support from UNAIDS, the Centre for HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections at the

Ministry of Health completed a HIV epidemic review and gap assessment of the national and subnational AIDS responses. The review and assessment, which were broadly disseminated to national and provincial partners, provided evidence to better support the implementation of National HIV/AIDS Strategic Action Plan 2016-2020, including the Global Fund grant 2018-2020.

UNICEF supported the development of the National Strategy for Rural Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), national standards for WASH in schools, and Standard Operating Procedures for Community WASH Committees, which are expected to be endorsed by the Government in 2019. UN-Habitat supported the Ministry of Public Works and Transport to improve governance in the water sector. Key performance indicators measuring effectiveness and efficiency standards of water utilities were streamlined and piloted for 10 water utilities. Quality Management Systems were introduced at the national and provincial levels, and NPSE Attapeu became the first ISO 9001 certified water utility in Laos.

IOM together with the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Public Works and Transport conducted an impact assessment on the railway construction to assist the Government in strengthening communicable disease control and managing the health risks and impacts for both migrant workers and host communities in line with international guidelines and legal principles.

### **Capacity development**

The Maternal and Child Health Center, with technical support from WHO and others, has worked with its partners in planning, implementing and monitoring the implementation of the national RMNCH Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2025. To strengthen provincial and district health management capacity for planning and monitoring integrated RMNCH services, with technical support from WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA and other partners, a module for strengthening sub-national annual planning and monitoring was piloted in selected provinces and districts. District health system strengthening contributes to a better utilization of data for planning of health services for underserved communities and helps to address inequities.

The Joint UN Program supported the rollout of Adolescents and Youth Friendly Services in three provinces, with nearly 200 health providers trained. A Job Aid for Adolescents and Youth Friendly Services was developed to support health providers, which will be distributed in 2019. The Joint Program also supported the roll out of the Intra-Partum Care/ Emergency Obstetric Care program consisting of five modules, including Planning, Coaching, Rotation, Review and Training of Trainers. Health workers in 11



***With technical support from UNAIDS, the Centre for HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections at the Ministry of Health completed a HIV epidemic review and gap assessment of the national and subnational AIDS responses.***



provinces are now trained. A new teaching method for supervision and clinical training in Integrated Management of Neonatal and Childhood Illnesses was introduced to improve the skills of frontline health workers and the quality of care in three provinces. With technical support from WHO, together with UNFPA, UNICEF and other partners, all RMNCH sub-national programs, including family planning, antenatal care, and intrapartum and emergency obstetric care, have introduced quality assessment and improvement tools.

UNAIDS actively engaged with the Association for People Living with HIV/AIDS to strengthen the capacity of people living with HIV in seven northern provinces to address stigma and discrimination. UNAIDS has also worked closely with Non-Profit Associations to organize national and provincial discussions on the inclusion of Antiretroviral Therapy service packages into national health financing. As a result, senior officials have agreed to elaborate a roadmap for integrating Antiretroviral Therapy service packages into health financing.

Lao PDR has integrated efforts to reduce neglected tropical diseases with its water, sanitation and hygiene programme. In this context, WHO has supported the successful implementation of community-led initiatives to eliminate schistosomiasis by combining deworming with WASH interventions in 24 villages in Champasack province. The initiative will be expanded to all 202 villages in the sentinel area. UNICEF together with its partners supported the revision of the community-led total sanitation guideline, which includes the current lessons learned in implementation of a district-wide approach to eliminate open defecation. The lessons learned built on the success of Borikhamxay province in achieving district open defecation free status. In total, 103 villages were declared open defecation free, benefitting approximately 82,000 people, including 41,000 women.

To ensure the safety of drinking water from catchment

to consumer, WHO and UNICEF continued to support Government partners in promoting Water Safety Plans through integration into WASH supported interventions. A WASH Facility Improvement Tool was introduced to improve water, sanitation and medical waste management at health facilities. The tool will be implemented in selected health facilities in Savannakhet and Sekong in 2019.

IOM provided technical assistance for malaria and communicable diseases control in mobile and migrant populations, increasing migrants' access to malaria testing, treatment and prevention. The programme aims to strengthen regional coordination on malaria and communicable disease control in the Greater Mekong Sub-region. Inter alia, around 11,000 people benefitted from community outreach events, and 14,750 units of mosquito protection commodities were distributed.

UN-Habitat and partners strengthened the capacities of a number of key water utilities on performance indicators, water integrity and quality management systems, including technical staff and officials from 10 provinces at the central and provincial levels.

With technical support from WHO, the Ministry of Health in collaboration with Ministry of Finance were able to increase tobacco specific tax. The regulation was approved by the Prime Minister in mid-2018 to be effective in January 2019. Most of cigarette packs sold at the markets include health warning pictures.

#### Data and knowledge management

With support from UN and other partners and led by UNICEF, Lao Social Indicator Survey II data was published, which inter alia enabled the tracking of progress on the 10 key national health indicators. Several in-depth analyses of the data are underway, including on child stunting and on multi-dimensional deprivation. An adolescent girls' situation analysis conducted in Bokeo province was finalized and disseminated at provincial and national levels. The report provides findings and recommendations on the current situation and needs of adolescent girls in remote and ethnic communities in areas such as education, health, economic empowerment. Data for such an analysis was also collected in five districts of Savannakhet province, with a report expected to be finalized in the course of 2019.

UNAIDS continued to work with national and provincial partners to promote "Know Your HIV Status and Get Treatment", and together with WHO, other partners and the key affected population successfully campaigned to promote HIV testing. More than 100 Facebook accounts have disseminated key messages, resulting in more than 500,000 views.

UNICEF continued to support the WASH technical working group, which brings together Government and development partners. UNICEF together with GIZ supported the Ministry of Education and Sports to collect data of pre-primary and primary schools using 3-Star criteria and self-assessment forms in Vientiane Capital, Oudomxay and Saravane provinces. It also supported the construction of water sources in 26 villages, benefitting 9,800 people (4,900 women) in Phongsaly, Savannakhet and Saravane provinces. Water safety planning is ongoing in the target villages to ensure water quality at source and point of use. UN-Habitat is working closely with partners in setting up a database to monitor the water supply and sanitation coverage in the urban areas.

#### Health sector emergency response (July – September floods)

UN Agencies assisted the Ministry of Health, including the Provincial Health Department in Attapeu and the District Health Office in Sanamxay on disease outbreak control and disease prevention. IOM provided transportation for health staff, medical equipment, food and drugs, vaccines and other donated materials. Support included 1,200 mosquito nets and essential medical equipment for the rehabilitation of three community health centers. IOM also provided basic medical supplies to the affected population and trained Village Health Workers on communicable disease control and health promotion. Health outreach services were organized to vaccinate children and the general population.



***IOM provided technical assistance for malaria and communicable diseases control in mobile and migrant populations, increasing migrants' access to malaria testing, treatment and prevention. The programme aims to strengthen regional coordination on malaria and communicable disease control in the Greater Mekong Sub-region.***



Between July and December, the Sanamxay District Health Office reported the safe delivery of 109 babies. Eight complication cases were referred to province hospital. 400 individual clean delivery packs and ten

clean delivery kits for birth attendants were provided. Until the end of the year, a total of 2,550 dignity kits were distributed for women of reproductive age. UNFPA also trained volunteers on gender-based violence, to support women-friendly spaces in Sanamxay district.

The WASH programme ensured the quality of water in all temporary shelters and provided support to the provincial health department in managing health care waste at temporary health posts and at the Sanamxay district hospital.

## Lessons Learned and Way Forward

Closer collaboration across sectors such as WASH, health and nutrition, and between national and subnational levels would increase the efficiency of interventions at the local level by avoiding duplication and strengthening sustainability. Community participation in planning, implementation and monitoring could be improved, including through the introduction of more communication tools in ethnic languages.

The UN will continue to support sub-national coordination on health, including capacity development for the delivery of integrated services, especially for underserved communities in hard to reach areas. Access to remote communities remains limited, as does the capacity of staff recruited at the local level, and of implementing partners, resulting in poor outcomes in remote areas.

Peer educators and mobile vendors have been instrumental in reaching out to migrants and mobile populations as they tend to reach more remote settings compared to village health volunteers. Future interventions should also consider recruiting more diverse demographics of volunteers such as non-Lao peer educators depending on the nationality of the migrant workers. Future interventions should also identify potential partners in non-health settings such as military at border areas, community leaders and schools. Information, education and communication materials should be multi-lingual and innovative.

A focus beyond coverage (quantity) of drinking water is required to improve the water situation. The Lao Social Indicator Survey II revealed that more than 80 percent of water samples tested at households and at sources were contaminated with E-coli. Thus, there is need to focus on water safety planning as well as household level water treatment and safe storage. In addition, some interventions supported by different agencies/ WASH partners overlap. Disaggregated data at district level limited, with no information on the functionality of WASH facilities.

Road Traffic Accidents in another key area of concern, which could be addressed more broadly in 2019 by the UN Results Group on Health and in the UN Results Group on Institution Building, given the multi-sectoral, whole of government approach such work will require.



# HEALTH

Lao Social Indicator Survey II 2017

## UNDER-FIVE MORTALITY RATE HAS BEEN REDUCED

Under five mortality rate has been reduced to:

**46** DEATHS PER  
**1000** LIVE BIRTHS

87% of under 5 mortality happens in the first year of life.

## DISPARITY IN CHILDBIRTH AT HEALTH FACILITY



Urban

88%



Rural without road

38%

## FERTILITY RATE

Average number of children per woman in Lao PDR has **fallen**:

From 3.2



2011

To 2.7



2017

## ADOLESCENT BIRTH RATE

Average adolescent birth rate has **decreased**:

From 94



2011

To 83



2017

Per 1,000

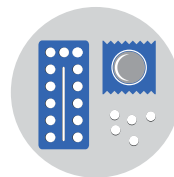
Still, there are clear disparities between (42) urban and (136) rural without road areas.

## FAMILY PLANNING

75%  
unmarried  
women



14%  
married  
women



From 42



2011

To 54



2017

The current unmet need for family planning is higher for unmarried women.

The use of modern method contraceptives for married women aged 15-49 **increased**.

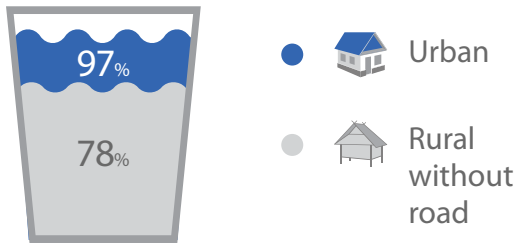
ADOLESCENTS:



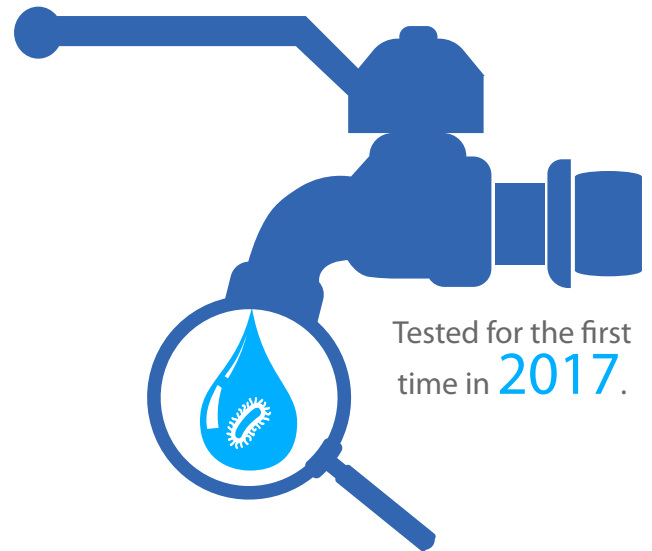
**18%** of married adolescents aged 15-19 have an unmet need for family planning.

# WATER AND SANITATION

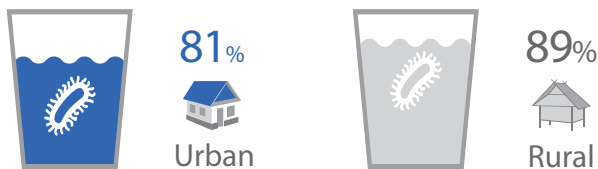
Lao Social Indicator Survey II 2017



Good progress has been made in terms of water supply coverage. The percentage of people using improved water sources of drinking water reached to **84%**.

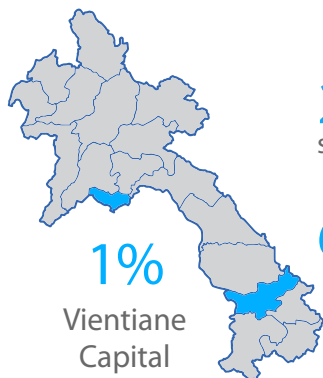
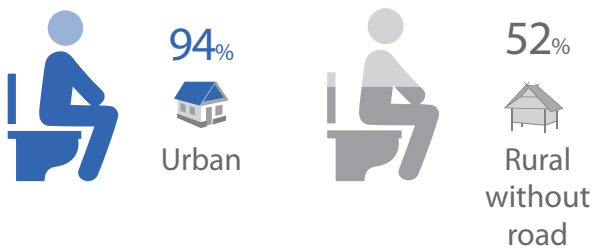


Nationwide, **86%** of water samples tested at household level were found positive for E-Coli, which can cause severe diarrhoea outbreaks and other serious infections.



## USE OF IMPROVED SANITATION

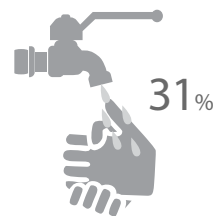
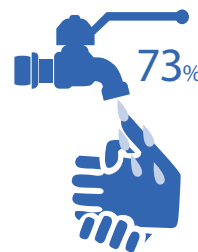
**74%** of people use improved sanitation across the country.



**24%** of the population still practice open defecation.

**65%** Saravane has the highest rate of open defecation.

## HANDWASHING



# Reproductive, Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health in Lao PDR

The Lao Social Indicator Survey (2017) demonstrates that considerable progress has been made in reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health since 2011. Under-five mortality at present is estimated to be 46 per 1,000 live births, approaching the target of 40 in 2020. Maternal mortality is estimated at 190, against the target of 160 in 2020. The number of women giving birth in clinics assisted by skilled health staff has increased and more mothers are breastfeeding their newborns. The use of modern contraceptives among married women has increased and the average birth rate among adolescent girls has fallen. The full immunization rate among children has increased and there has been an overall decrease in children suffering from stunting and acute malnutrition.

However, inequities persist, with health outcomes varying by geographic location, ethno-linguistic group, mother's education and socioeconomic status. Lao Social Indicator Survey data indicates that whereas 9 in 10 women in urban areas give birth in a health facility, only 4 women in rural areas do so. One in five women aged 20-24 has given birth before the age of 18 and early childbearing is at least nine times more likely amongst the poorest 20 percent of the population.

The unmet need for family planning is still high, especially among unmarried women. Even with some progress in breastfeeding practices, only 44 percent of babies are exclusively breastfed for six months. With the vaccination coverage below the national target, young children are still vulnerable to common communicable infections. Significant disparities persist across the 18 provinces, with eight provinces showing very high levels of stunting.

Six provinces even showed an increase in the percentage of children under 5 who suffer from acute malnutrition.

## The UN Joint Program and its contribution to improving Reproductive, Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health

The Ministry of Health, the Government of Luxembourg and UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO are working together to advance reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health (RMNCH) through a UN Joint Program. This program contributes to the National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2016-2020), the national Health Sector Development Plan (2016-2020), the Health Sector Reform strategy (2013-2025)

and the national strategies on RMNCH and Nutrition. The program also directly contributes to pillar 2 on Human Development of the Lao PDR - UN Partnership Framework (2017-2021).



The objective of the UN Joint Program is to improve the health of women, newborns, children and adolescents through supporting the implementation of the National Strategy and Action Plan for Integrated Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Services (2016-2025). The Program provides policy advice and technical assistance at national level, combined with sub-national support to generate evidence from implementation on the ground to further improve the coverage and quality of RMNCH services. “Modelling” is a key element of the implementation strategy. It refers to developing, testing and refining RMNCH service delivery packages and implementation approaches. Selected provinces/districts serve as learning sites that generate evidence to inform the scale up of RMNCH service coverage nationwide. With Bokeo, Borikhamxay and Savannakhet serving as focus provinces where modelling takes place, the program delivers results that have an impact beyond these three provinces.

Program implementation is well on track. In 2017 and 2018, concrete results have been achieved in terms of the availability of standardized guidelines, protocols, training curricula and other

technical implementation tools that improve the coverage and quality of RMNCH services for women, newborns, children and adolescents in Lao PDR. Furthermore, a central-level mechanism for planning and monitoring RMNCH service coverage is in place and gaining strength. Modelling of approaches for strengthening the capacity of provinces, districts and communities to plan, implement and monitor equitable RMNCH service delivery is underway and will be accelerated in the second half of program implementation (2019-2020).

Implementation to date demonstrates the relevance and added value of the UN Joint Program, which lies in its coherent support for strengthening the national RMNCH policy and strategy framework, improving the quality of RMNCH services and strengthening delivery platforms for integrated RMNCH services at all levels of the health system, from community level to hospital care. The UN Joint Program anticipates the results of the ongoing UN reform process, as it provides a model for delivering integrated and tailored support to national priorities based on UN agencies’ diversity of expertise.





## 6. FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

.....

The most vulnerable people benefit from improved food security and nutrition



## Key Development Trends

Indicator	Baseline	Target	Status
6.1. Prevalence of moderate and severe food insecurity	FIES within the Lao Expenditure and Consumption Survey 2017-2018	TBC	The FIES survey is ongoing, with results expected in 2019
6.2. Percentage of children 6-23 months with improved dietary diversity	TBD from Lao Social Indicator Survey II	TBC	45.3 % of children 6-23months received minimum dietary diversity ( <i>Lao Social Indicator Survey II, 2018</i> )
6.3. Wasting prevalence among children under 5 years	9.6 % ( <i>LCAAS 2015</i> )	< 5%	9% of children under age 5 with weight for height below -2SD (wasted)
6.4. Annual data on nutrition generated by national nutrition surveillance system	Nil	Annual reports	National Nutrition System designed and approved by NNC Secretariat  Data collection will only start in 2019

The Mid-Term Review of the 8<sup>th</sup> National Socio-Economic Development Plan combined with the Voluntary National Review process created an opportunity for the UN and the Government to discuss progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, as well as the progress towards graduating from Least Developed Country status in a more structured manner. The Lao Social Indicator Survey II facilitated reporting and confirmed progress on a number of key indicators, especially in the area of food and nutrition security. Stunting rates had decreased from 44 percent to 33 percent over a five-year time frame, and while regional disparities continue to be an issue, the reduction in stunting has occurred across the board. Nonetheless 8 out of 18 provinces continue to show stunting rates above 40 percent.

As confirmed by the Mid-Term Review of the National Action Plan on Nutrition (2016-2020), wasting and obesity rates have increased during the reporting period and are off track, confirming the trend of increasing double burden across Southeast Asia. The review of the action plan's 22 priority interventions across health, agriculture and education showed that while stunting rates have decreased many other indicators such as access micronutrient supplementation, deworming and management of malnutrition at community levels have not progressed significantly. From an agricultural lens, the mid-term review paved the way to discuss more sustainable production of nutrient rich foods and investments in nutrition-sensitive value chains. Another recommendation was to support participatory nutrition-sensitive agricultural analysis and planning. From the education lens, progress is noted in school feeding - which also include pre-primary children - and in setting up school agriculture. Underlying as a theme and a priority for all sectors is the investment in Social Behavior Change Communication for nutrition and nutrition education as part of Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture, the health support systems and through primary education.

On the basis of the findings of the Lao Social Indicator Survey, UNICEF released the preliminary report on 'SDGs and Children: Measuring Progress on Child Wellbeing in Lao PDR', which analyses the unmet needs of children below 18. The analysis identifies children as multidimensionally poor if they are deprived on at least three dimensions of their wellbeing. These dimensions include education, health, water and sanitation, nutrition and housing. The 2018 baseline showed that 50.4 percent of children can be considered as multidimensionally poor, and significantly deprived regarding their access to basic services. Overall, only 12 percent of Lao children do not suffer any deprivations and more than 77 percent are deprived on two or more dimensions. The study confirms regional disparities, with deprivations significant in particular in the South.

The largest challenge of 2018 was the sudden and unforeseen dam break in Attapeu province and a rainy season characterized by extreme rains and numerous storms, which destroyed over 100,000 hectares of agriculture fields, along with roads and bridges. The harsh weather affected almost 10 percent of the Lao population in four provinces. A joint national Post-Disaster Needs Assessment estimated the cost of damages and losses up to US\$ 371 million. While support was provided swiftly and continued beyond 2018, the destroyed agricultural fields and livelihoods will impact food and nutrition security levels in affected areas in 2019.

While the Government budget experienced cuts, Government and development partners remained committed to invest in the food and nutrition security agenda. The level of nutrition investment compared to the needs is still low, and investments are mainly directed towards nutrition sensitive activities and to a lesser degree nutrition specific ones.



***Only 12 percent of Lao children do not suffer any deprivations and more than 77 percent are deprived on two or more dimensions. The study confirms regional disparities, with deprivations significant in particular in the South.***



## Results

### Capacity development

Support was provided to strengthen the Government's capacities and systems for the 1,000 days window focus around breastfeeding, and Infant and Young Child Feeding practices. For instance, a Lao reference book on breastfeeding for health workers was finalized, signed by the Minister and printed for all government health facilities of the country. This tool for health providers will support women to breastfeed along the continuum of care and during challenging situations. The development of antenatal and postnatal guidelines and training enabled providers to develop essential counselling skills needed for effective nutrition behavior change during pregnancy and post-partum.

UNICEF along with other UN agencies and the development partners' group, consolidated the institutional arrangements of the National and

Provincial Nutrition Committees. Support has resulted in improved capacity of the committees and the National Nutrition Committee's Secretariat to monitor progress against National Nutrition Strategy targets. Government and development partners convened for policy dialogue at the fourth National Nutrition Forum on 7 December. Key achievements included the dissemination of the latest nutrition data from the Lao Social Indicator Survey and of the recommendations made by the Mid-Term Review of the National Plan of Action for Nutrition. The Vice-Chair of the National Nutrition Committee delivered an Outcome Statement reaffirming commitments by Government and development partners to support capacities and processes to scale up nutrition actions at provincial and district level. The annual Nutrition Forum provides space for information-sharing and strengthens the commitments of sub-national stakeholders to follow-up actions at the provincial level. The EU and UNICEF, as co-conveners of the development partners' group for food and nutrition security, convened quarterly meetings, promoting information-sharing and multi-sectoral coordination throughout the year. This resulted in improved harmonization of technical and financial support to the national nutrition strategy and action plan.



***IFAD assisted the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry in supporting home gardening to improve household food diversification and nutrition to smallholder farmers, especially women groups in 175 villages in three target provinces.***



Under the Agriculture for Nutrition Programme, WFP and IFAD jointly supported the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry in implementing Farmer Nutrition Schools, which aim to change the nutrition and food security behavior at household level. The completed activities include capacity development of village facilitators in leading nutrition learning sessions and cooking practices. Pregnant and nursing mothers, and mothers with children under two years old taking part in the nutrition education become eligible to access a garden/ livestock grant to enable and facilitate access to household diet diversity. The Farmer Nutrition Schools include technical support for improving diversity food from plantations, small

animal protein base production, food preservation and processing. The community-based sessions contribute to the National Social Behavior Change Communication strategy. Activities will be expanded from 61 to 142 new villages in 12 districts of four target provinces - Xiengkhuang, Huaphanh, Oudomxay and Phongsaly. In total, 400 villages will receive support. Under the same program, FAO completed the Strategic Investment Plans for seven potential commodities specifically for those target provinces. The plans provide guidance for the Department of Technical Extension and Agriculture Processing, provincial and district agriculture and forestry offices, and farmer groups to develop business plans to increase family incomes. The Strategic Investment Plans are used as inputs for village development planning and to support investment schemes between smallholder farmers and enterprises to stimulate rural investment. The same program, through IFAD, also supported the construction of 54 water supply schemes benefiting 9,044 households.

Furthermore, IFAD supported the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry in supporting home gardening to improve household food diversification and nutrition to smallholder farmers, especially women groups in 175 villages in three target provinces. The village women groups were trained on good nutrition practices and cooking with technical support on improved agricultural techniques. This program also promotes gender mainstreaming as women's participation in business partnerships and value chain development, assisting them to gain equal access to agricultural support and financial services, as well as to play an active role in farmers' groups. School gardens were promoted in 64 selected target villages. The school garden program includes small scale vegetable production, and breeding of fish, chicken and frogs to enhance nutrition outcomes in schools. Parent school nutrition committees were set up in all pilot schools. Under the same program, IFAD supported local provincial and district agencies to construct 147 portable clean water supply schemes.

WFP also supported the Ministry of Education and Sports to revise the School Agriculture Guidelines, strengthening nutrition and gender aspects, and in developing a Minister's Directive on promoting school agriculture for all levels, from kindergarten to university. The guideline will be redistributed to schools supported by the school lunch program. WFP partnership with different stakeholders and local communities resulted in the installation of 100 hand washing stations to ensure primary school children have proper personal hygiene. With the aim of improving access to water in schools for cooking, hygiene, school gardening, hand washing and through a partnership with Namsaat, water surveys and system design were conducted in 220 school communities in the nine handover districts

in the Northern provinces.

FAO supported the National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute to develop the capacity on Agriculture Innovation System focused on five main niches: rice farming, rice-fish farming, organic vegetables, cattle, and pig production. Fifteen facilitators from different departments under the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry were trained to be the trainers and 160 producers were trained on application and adaptation of the innovations.

FAO also supported the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry on the creation of the new Department of Policy and Legal Affairs with full support on capacity development at central, provincial and district levels, including on the preparation of research and policy documents. The new department will act as the main department to synthesize research and develop briefs to inform policy makers.

Moreover, FAO supported the Ministry to promote pesticide-free agriculture by capacity development on farmer-field-schools in six provinces as part of integrated pest management, and to support Save & Grow where agricultural input is saved and the productivity is increased, maintaining the variety of crops to ensure people have access to nutritious foods.

To promote food safety, FAO supported the Department of Livestock and Fisheries to form a pilot chicken value chain production group in Luangprabang province, providing capacity development on biosecurity for chicken farming, setting up farmer groups for chick production and raising, and safe processing.

UNICEF and WHO provided technical and financial assistance to the Ministry of Health to improve capacity of health providers and managers to implement and monitor implementation of nutrition specific interventions. National Guidelines for Integrated Management of Acute Malnutrition (IMAM) for children under 5 were developed to improve the capacity of health providers to treat severe acute malnutrition. The IMAM guideline formulation process took 15 months and the guidelines were developed by technical staff, including nursing college teachers, hospital pediatrics staff and nutrition center and department of health staff. Along with the new guidelines a set of job aids and communication materials were developed, which will support health providers to apply the Severe Acute Malnutrition treatment protocol, which is part of the IMAM Guidelines. While the IMAM guidelines were endorsed by the Minister of Health in 2018 and 25 master trainers identified, the in-service training will be tested in a selected number of provinces, prior to developing a national costed roll out plan for 2019. The Ministry of Health will advocate for increased

Government funding for treatment of Severe Acute Malnutrition.

WFP provided Supplementary Nutritious Foods to children between 6-23 months in 1,100 villages in Oudomxay, Luangnamtha and Sekong provinces. The Supplementary Nutritious Foods, which include essential micronutrients, are distributed to prevent stunting among children. They are accompanied by nutrition campaigns for pregnant and nursing mothers and care-givers.

Provision of iron and folic acid supplements to pregnant and lactating women is part of a package of interventions provided during integrated health outreach. Iron and folic acid is also distributed to women during antenatal care at health centres and hospitals. One of the bottlenecks to achieving high coverage of iron and folic acid supplementation is linked to how health services are delivered. Due to the inaccessibility of villages during the rainy season, health outreach teams are not able to visit all remote villages thereby limiting the access to essential maternal health services. According to the District Health Information System, all of the pregnant women who attended antenatal care services also received iron and folic acid supplements. However, as noted above, due to lack of access, not all eligible pregnant women received supplements. The supplementation indicator is yet to be included in future household surveys such as the Lao Social Indicator Survey.



**UNICEF and WHO provided technical and financial assistance to the Ministry of Health to improve capacity of health providers and managers to implement and monitor implementation of nutrition specific interventions.**



To improve implementation and monitoring of micronutrient supplementation programs, including iron and folic acid for pregnant and lactating women, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Health to develop its first set of Micronutrient Supplementation Guidelines. These were endorsed by the Minister of Health in July. A dissemination plan is being developed to support roll out in 2019.

## Evidence generation for advocacy, decision making and coordination for food and nutrition security

UN Agencies jointly supported the National Nutrition Committee Secretariat to set up a process to develop an operational nutrition surveillance system, with implementation planned for 2019. Once operational, the nutrition surveillance system will generate twice a year data that covers a range of multisectoral indicators related to food security and nutrition. The data will be used to inform decision-making and program course corrections, and provide evidence for food security and nutrition advocacy.

A National Information Platform for Nutrition (NIPN) was also launched. This platform is designed to draw on existing data sources such as household surveys, sectoral routine data and surveillance data to generate information for food security and nutrition policy dialogue. The development of the multisectoral nutrition surveillance system, mentioned above, will become an important data source.

WHO supported the design of an [external dashboard](#)<sup>1</sup> to highlight key area indicators including those on universal health care, the Sustainable Development Goals, and the ten National Assembly Indicators, which include stunting and wasting. The dashboard provides managers and leaders with an overview of the current situation and trends, complementing the National Health Statistics Report. A refresher training on data analysis and use was conducted at national, provincial and district levels.

FAO provided policy advice to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and supported the multi-sectoral dialogue on nutrition. In addition, FAO as the co-chair of the Sector Working Group on Agriculture and Rural Development acted as the main coordinator to facilitate policy dialogue around agriculture, food security and nutrition.

## **Lessons Learned and Way Forward**

In 2019, the antenatal care package will be launched nationwide and a policy revision on postnatal care is planned to address the gaps in follow up after discharge, especially in terms of support for exclusive breastfeeding.

While there have been some improvements in the skills and competencies of health care providers and health care managers to plan, implement and monitor nutrition specific interventions, significant human resource capacity gaps remain and health system weaknesses impede the provision of quality health and nutrition services. Coordination between line departments within the Ministry of Health is at the heart of the health system issues. Departmental mandates



***WHO supported the design of an external dashboard to highlight key area indicators including those on universal health care, the Sustainable Development Goals, and the ten National Assembly Indicators, which include stunting and wasting.***



contribute to fragmented delivery of quality health and nutrition services at all levels of the health system. UN agencies working in Food Security and Nutrition have under the come together under the Lao PDR – UN Partnership Framework (2017-2021) to collectively identify and address health system bottlenecks. The development of the Integrated Management of Acute Malnutrition Guidelines and the Micronutrient Supplementation Guidelines are examples of how the Partnership Framework is facilitating the pooling of UN technical and financial resources to achieve results.

In 2019, UNICEF and WHO will specifically focus on identifying key health system bottlenecks by conducting a Child Health Services Assessment. The findings of this assessment will be used by Provincial and District Health Departments to create action plans that will be monitored and used as accountability tools by health managers. The Child Health Assessment will also identify key areas along the continuum of care that need to be improved.

In order to enhance access to nutrition, WFP will through the SUN Business network and development partners, support efforts for local solutions and access to nutrient dense foods in rural and remote areas. WFP will also continue to support the National Nutrition Center in realizing the fortification action plan, with the aim of enhancing micro-nutrient intake for all households.

As data is crucial for the decision making, in 2019-20, FAO will support the Lao Statistics Bureau and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry to conduct the 3rd Agricultural Census, which will provide the baseline data for national planning in the agricultural sector.

Progress cannot be measured if it is not tracked. The Multisectoral Nutrition Surveillance System was designed in response to an identified need by the National Nutrition Committee Secretariat and

<sup>1</sup> [www.hmms.gov.la/lao](http://www.hmms.gov.la/lao)

development partners. Household surveys such as Lao Social Indicator Survey and the Lao Expenditure and Consumption Survey generate high quality data infrequently, every 5 years. Sectoral routine information systems such as the District Health Information System and Education Management Information System capture service related data that is frequent, but not representative and often flawed due to errors along the data chain. The joint UN efforts to support the Government to improve the generation and interpretation of data for policy dialogue and better programming for food security and nutrition is an important contribution to the overarching goal of reducing all forms of malnutrition. The next step is to operationalize the multisectoral nutrition surveillance system and to begin generating policy related outputs from the National Information Platform for Nutrition for consideration by the National Nutrition Committee.

Use of data is best understood at the central level while understanding remains limited in the provinces and districts. There are also gaps in computer literacy, infrastructure and internet coverage. Moreover, the support mechanism from central to provincial and provincial to district remains challenging. To overcome these issues, an eHealth strategy is being drafted which will be used as a tool for improving and strengthening these gaps over the next five years.

In line with the Government's nutrition convergence approach, in 2019, IFAD will continue to support the development of a program on climate smart agriculture and to improve homestead food production, quality of diet for nutritional vulnerable groups and dietary intake for pre-schoolers and pupils in four target provinces.

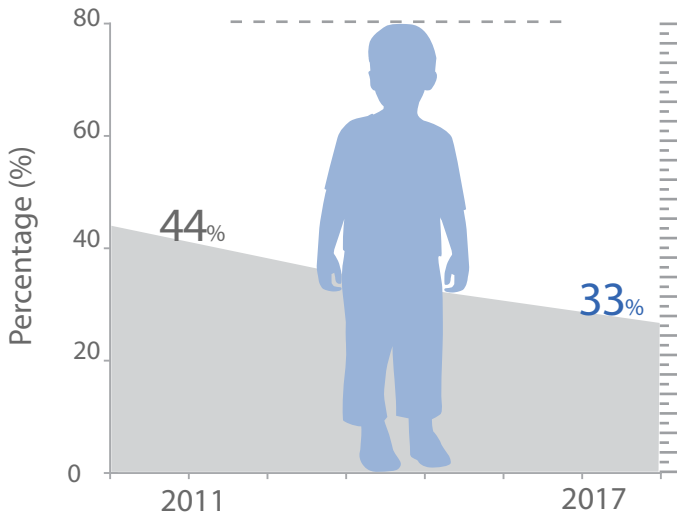


# NUTRITION

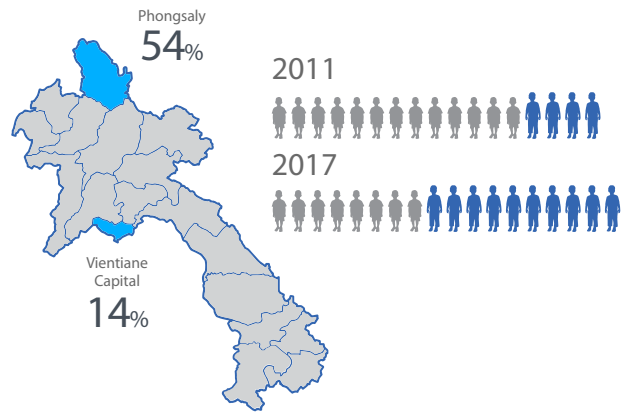
Lao Social Indicator Survey II 2017

## STUNTING (LOW HEIGHT FOR AGE)

Prevalence of children under five with stunted growth has decreased:

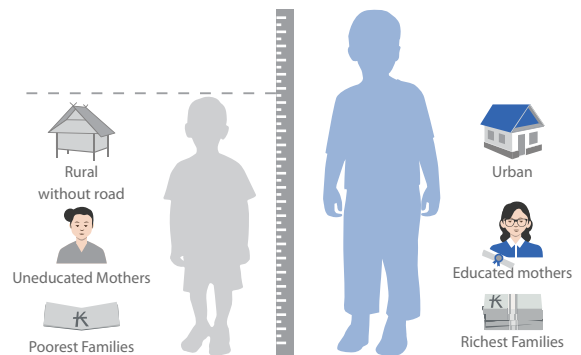


According to the World Health Organisation, prevalence of stunting above or equal to **40%** is classified as a critical public health problem.



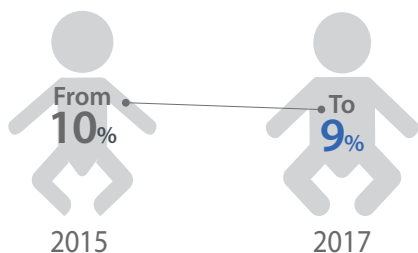
**8 provinces out of 18** have very high levels of stunting in 2017 compared to 13 provinces in 2011 (total of 17 provinces).

Children in rural areas without road, whose mothers have no education and from the poorest quintile are **approximately 3 times** more likely to be stunted than children in urban settings, whose mothers have higher education and are from the richest quintile.



## WASTING (LOW WEIGHT FOR HEIGHT)

There has been a slight decrease between 2015 (Lao Child Anthropometric Assessment Survey) and 2017 in the prevalence of children under 5 years of age who suffer from wasting or acute malnutrition (low weight for height):



**6 out of 18 provinces** show an increase in the percentage of children under 5 years of age who suffer from acute malnutrition (low weight for height).





# 7. INSTITUTION BUILDING



**Institutions  
and policies at  
national and local  
level support the delivery  
of quality services that  
better respond  
to people's  
needs**



## Key Development Trends

Indicator	Baseline	Target	Status
7.1. Number of new households receiving 2 or more basic services from their districts	373,948 (2015)	600,000 (2021)	386,115 (expected in 2018)
7.2. Percentile rank on the aggregate Government effectiveness	39.4% (2014)	45% (2021)	38.46% (2016)
7.3. Extent to which National Socio-Economic Development Plan monitoring informs evidence-based policy making	Limited extent (2015)	Large extent (2021)	While LSB is implementing its Action Plan, Laoinfo has been discontinued and ministries have provided limited data against the indicators of the 8 <sup>th</sup> NSED

Following the guidance provided by the 10th Party Congress in January 2016, Governance and Public Administration Reform was accelerated. The Sam Sang policy continued to serve as an important platform to promote decentralisation and to improve the structures of government, administrative and legal frameworks at central and local level to enhance service delivery and poverty reduction. In 2018, the Government established an Inter-Ministerial Committee, led by Ministry of Planning and Investment, Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Home Affairs, which will further facilitate the decentralization process and strengthen planning, financing and sub-national administration for public service delivery.

Based on an assessment of the Government's organizational structure conducted by the Ministry of Home Affairs, similar functions across ministries were merged and certain functions previously attached to the Prime Minister's Office reassigned to line ministries. According to the Prime Ministerial Decree No. 3, ministries and governmental organizations have been encouraged to further improve their organizational structure and to update job descriptions.

Laoinfo, previously the primary vehicle for statistics dissemination, has gone offline following the discontinuation of support to the global DevInfo platform. The Lao Statistics Bureau is currently looking into ways to replace Laoinfo and migrate the data into a new system.

## Results

### Improved access to basic services that better respond to people's needs

UNDP and UNCDF continued to support the Sam Sang decentralization process for improvement of access to basic services that better respond to people's needs. The District Development Fund system was better aligned with the Sam Sang national devolution policy and the fund was integrated into national planning and finance systems at the sub-national level. Moreover, new processes and practices were introduced to enhance transparency and accountability when channeling local finance to districts via the national treasury system. An Inter-Ministerial Committee now provides oversight on the District Development Fund's integration into the national systems and its implementation. Twelve local public service projects were selected by the Inter-Ministerial Committee for implementation in 2019.

UNDP also supported public administration reform by enhancing the accountability framework that channels citizens' feedback on basic services into local decision-making structures. A new One Door Service framework has been developed, based on which model service centers were selected in two provinces. Also, the District Service Delivery Monitoring System and the Service

User Feedback Survey, which were piloted in 2015, have been upgraded through stakeholder consultations and lessons learned. The upgraded District Service Delivery Monitoring System will be used to assess the institutional performance of districts on a regular basis, and the Service User Feedback Survey will directly capture, synthesize and record citizens' perceptions on the status of services delivered through costed district level plans.

Moreover, also with UNDP support, Public Service Improvement Facilities were established to promote a more inclusive approach to local service delivery. The facilities aim to enhance cooperation with local authorities across sectors, including civil society and the private sector. The Ministries of Home Affairs, Planning and Investment and Finance, as well as development partners appointed members to a newly established Public Service Improvement Facilities Committee.



***UNDP and UNCDF continued to support the Sam Sang decentralization process for improvement of access to basic services that better respond to people's needs. The District Development Fund system was better aligned with the Sam Sang national devolution policy and the fund was integrated into national planning and finance systems at the sub-national level.***



### Capacities of data collection and management strengthened for evidence-based policymaking

The national planning and reporting process has been substantially improved. The Mid-Term Review of the 8<sup>th</sup> National Socio-Economic Development Plan, supported by UNDP, highlighted key results and provided recommendations for the remaining period of the plan and the formulation of the 9<sup>th</sup> National Socio-Economic Development Plan. The review was conducted through more extensive consultations and participation of both national and international stakeholders. Process and methodology of the review and the preparation of the national plan have been more structured within the concept of results-based management.

UN Agencies continued to support the strengthening of national capacities for data collection and management for evidence-based policy making. UN-supported national surveys, such as the 2nd National Labour Force Survey (with lead support from ILO) and the Lao Social Indicator Survey (with lead support from UNICEF), resulted in updates of key development data, which in turn informed the Voluntary National Review on Sustainable Development Goals, the Mid-Term Review of the 8<sup>th</sup> National Socio-Economic Development Plan and other development milestones. The results of the two surveys were released in 2018.

The 2017 Labour Force Survey results identified the challenges faced by workers, particularly rural workers, including a large proportion of workers undertake own-use production activities. The survey applied the new concept of work, employment and labor underutilization that was adopted by the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians in 2013, providing a new perspective on the labor market in the country. The key difference from the previous survey in 2010 is that those who live on a subsistence basis (i.e. working solely or mainly for own final use during the reference period) are no longer considered to be in employment but are categorized as outside the labor force.

The Lao Social Indicator Survey II was a nation-wide household-based survey with a sample size of 23,400 households, covering all 18 provinces. It followed the 6<sup>th</sup> global round of the Multiple Cluster Indicator Survey program, which endeavors to generate data to measure progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. The survey included data on: households; women 15-49 years of age; men 15-49 years of age; children 5-17 years of age; children under 5 (administered to their mothers or care takers) including anthropometry; and water quality testing of source and household drinking water. In addition, the survey specifically covered data on abortion, as well as anemia testing for children 6-59 months and women 15-49 years. It demonstrated that important progress has been made in several areas of wellbeing, such as child mortality, stunting, skilled birth attendance, water and sanitation coverage, primary education attendance, and to some extent in reducing violence against children. However, disparities persist between households from different geographical regions, rural and urban areas, households with different wealth and education level of mothers, and between ethnic groups.

UNFPA supported the Lao Statistics Bureau in conducting in-depth analysis on the selected topics and monographs using the Lao Social Indicator Survey and census data. Further in-depth analysis is planned for 2019. This is the first time that data on abortion was collected, providing evidence for policy, strategy

and program development to reduce risks related to unsafe abortion, illness and mortality among women and girls. With support from UNFPA, reports on the population projection 2015-2045 at the national and provincial levels are available in both Lao and English. Currently, the Lao Statistics Bureau in coordination with the provincial statistics offices is carrying out the population projections at the district level in all 18 provinces. The district level population projection is planned to be continued to 2019. With population projection at the district level completed in over ten provinces, a report covering all districts is expected to be launched in 2019. UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP will continue working with the Lao Statistics Bureau on further analysis based on data from the Lao Social indicator Survey, including on adolescents and youth, family planning, early pregnancy in young women and anemia in women in reproductive ages. Work will also continue on proxy food security indicators, namely the Food Consumption Score and the Dietary Diversity Score to inform about food dietary diversity, food consumption frequency and food source.



***ILO supported the government's efforts to improve occupational safety and healthy working conditions through intervention in two selected supply chain sectors: the garment and the agro-food sector.***



UNIDO provided technical assistance on the Manufacturing Survey. The capacities of 300 participants, two thirds of which were government staff and policy makers, were trained enabling them to administer the survey efficiently. Moreover, the 2017 Policy Recommendations and Industrial Statistics Report was prepared and disseminated for use by policy makers and an Industry Statistics Database System was set up and is operational. Lao PDR's industry statistical information has been posted in the Global Statistic Year Book and the Ministry of Industry and Commerce is carrying out quarterly surveys to ensure the database remains updated.

ILO supported the government's efforts to improve occupational safety and healthy working conditions through intervention in two selected supply chain sectors: the garment and the agro-food sector. The value chain assessment methodology was used to identify occupational safety and health dynamics in

these value chains, including risks, constraints and market-based incentives.

IOM supported the coordination of migration data collection and management, including an exchange workshop to review migration data collected by various government departments and identify data gaps. It was agreed that there are significant gaps in the collection of data related to irregular movement of people, such as unregistered international labour migration, trafficking and smuggling. This may be due to the lack of a modernized, comprehensive civil registration system.

UNODC worked closely with the Government to improve responses to transnational organized crime. In this regard, a high-level conference organized jointly with the Ministry of Public Security in November, brought together officials from Lao PDR and neighbouring countries to discuss responses to organized crime challenges facing the region. A number of recommendations were agreed upon both for specific crime types and general border management. UNODC will continue to work with the government on implementing these recommendations in 2019. Moreover, UNODC continued work with the Customs Department and other relevant agencies to improve the capacities of the Container Control Unit that was established on the Lao-Thai border near Vientiane in 2017. The unit is designed to assist with the profiling of containers for inspection. UNODC has provided relevant equipment, trainings and mentorship to their staff. UNODC also continued to support a network of 15 Border Liaison Offices with trainings and equipment. The offices are designed to improve border responses to Transnational Organized Crime, through enhanced cooperation and intelligence sharing. Furthermore, UNODC has throughout the year worked closely with the Environmental Police Department, the Customs Department, and the Department of Forest Inspection to improve capacities for addressing wildlife crime through a mentorship program.

Many types of organized crimes are facilitated by corruption. UNODC provided support to the State Inspection and Anti-Corruption Authority on the peer-review process under the United Nations Convention Against Corruption. UNODC has also arranged trainings, including on corruption complaint mechanisms.

### **Lessons Learned and Way Forward**

Enhanced coordination, harmonization and prioritization among UN Agencies and government partners will result in stronger development impact and sustainable partnerships.

There have been challenges in balancing between a consultative process with government partners



***UNODC continued work with the Customs Department and other relevant agencies to improve the capacities of the Container Control Unit that was established on the Lao-Thai border near Vientiane in 2017.***



and time efficiencies in the development and implementation of project activities due to different interests and lack of common understanding.

Despite progress observed, challenges remain in terms of financial resource allocation and capacity development at the local level in order for local administrations to fully carry out their responsibilities. Therefore, these two critical factors should be further addressed to better support the implementation of the Sam Sang policy.

Moreover, it has been observed that the decision-making authority is more deconcentrated rather than decentralised between different levels of the administration. The service provisions can be further improved if an individual civil servant or team is empowered with more authority, working space and responsibility to fulfil their service delivery functions and be accountable for their own decisions.

The main challenges on the implementation of the newly upgraded District Development Fund include: the level of understanding, ownership and commitment of the upgraded fund by policy and decision-making bodies, including district administrations; insufficient budget to cover all 148 districts; and high level of staff turnover among district authorities. The way forward will include continued training, full adoption of District Development Fund mechanism by the Government at all levels through institutionalization and legalization; and a change in approach from Government co-financing of the Fund to Fund co-financing of the Government.

According to the Lao Social Indicator Survey II, disparities persist between households from different geographical regions, rural and urban areas, households with different wealth and education level of mothers, and between ethnic groups. To address the disparities, it is essential to strengthen provincial planning, program coordination and monitoring mechanisms

among key social sectors in delivering results for children in integrated manners and using evidence for decision making. A better allocation, expenditure and distribution of the budget among priority sectors such as health and education are encouraged, as is the redistribution among the provinces linking to outcomes

of 8<sup>th</sup> National Socio-Economic Development Plan, as the outcome indicators are key to reflect on both the adequacy as well as the efficient utilization of financial resources.



# UN Joint Support to National Planning, Policy Dialogue and Localization of the Global Agenda 2030

## National Planning

A Mid-Term Review of the 8th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2016-2020) took stock of progress achieved since 2016 and provided recommendations for the second half of the national planning cycle and the development of the 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2021-2025). The UN Team, led by UNDP, worked closely with national counterparts and international development partners, including through the Sector Working Groups, to support this review. UN Agencies also supported sectoral mid-term reviews, including UNICEF-led support on the education sector's review and WHO-led support on the health sector's review. As a trusted partner, the UN/UNDP have also been requested to provide lead support on the development of the 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan.

## Localization of the Sustainable Development Goals

The Government presented a high-quality Voluntary National Review, developed with joint UN support, at the High-Level Political Forum in New York in July. The review contains two annexes, providing a preliminary list of national SDG indicators and a 'wish list' of potential indicators, including on national SDG 18 on Lives Safe from Unexploded Ordnance. It is expected that the national SDG Steering Committee, chaired by the Prime Minister, will endorse the national SDG indicators in 2019, with

metadata available for all indicators. Targeted training and consultations across line ministries supported the development of ownership, inter-sectoral linkages and understanding of SDGs. The ground has thus been paved for further integration into the 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan and the next cycle of sectoral strategies.

## Round Table Development Coordination Process

The UN/UNDP also continued to support national policy dialogue through the Round Table Process, which it co-chairs. Throughout the year, 10 Sector and 30 Subsector Working Groups, many of them co-chaired by UN Agencies, worked together to implement the recommendations of the 2017 Round Table Meeting and achieve progress towards the 8th National Socio-Economic Development Plan. The process brought together 300 high-level participants from Government and development partners in an inclusive Round Table Implementation Meeting on 4-5

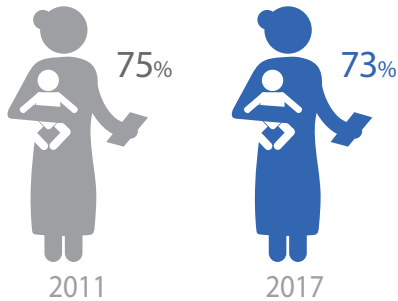
December. The Prime Minister subsequently issued an instruction to line ministries to follow up on the policy recommendations provided. While there is scope for improvement, the Round Table Process strengthens coordination and ongoing dialogue between Government and development partners, ensures exposure of participants to innovative ideas and good practices, and promotes sectoral and inter-sectoral collaboration.



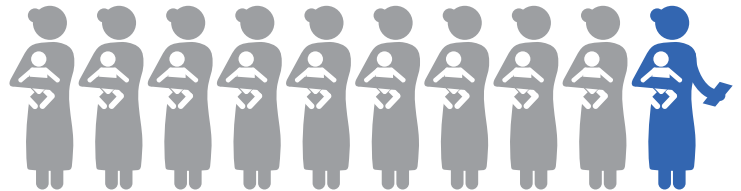
# BIRTH REGISTRATION

Lao Social Indicator Survey II 2017

In the last five years, there has been **no progress** in the birth registration of children under 5:

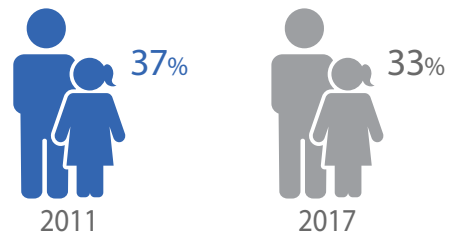
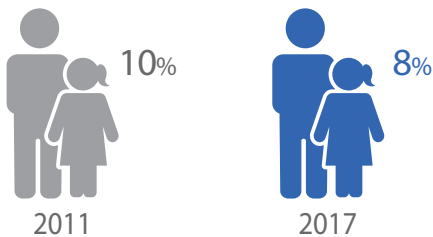


Only **1 in 10 mothers** / caretakers knows how to register births with civil authorities:



# CHILD MARRIAGE

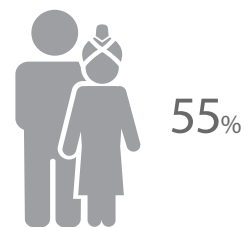
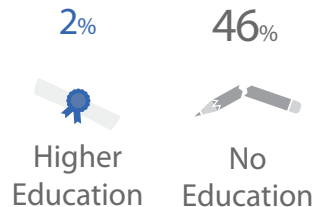
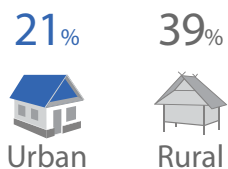
Lao Social Indicator Survey II 2017



The proportion of women aged 20-49 married before the age of 15 has **dropped**.

The proportion of women aged 20-49 married before the age of 18 has **dropped**.

## DISPARITIES



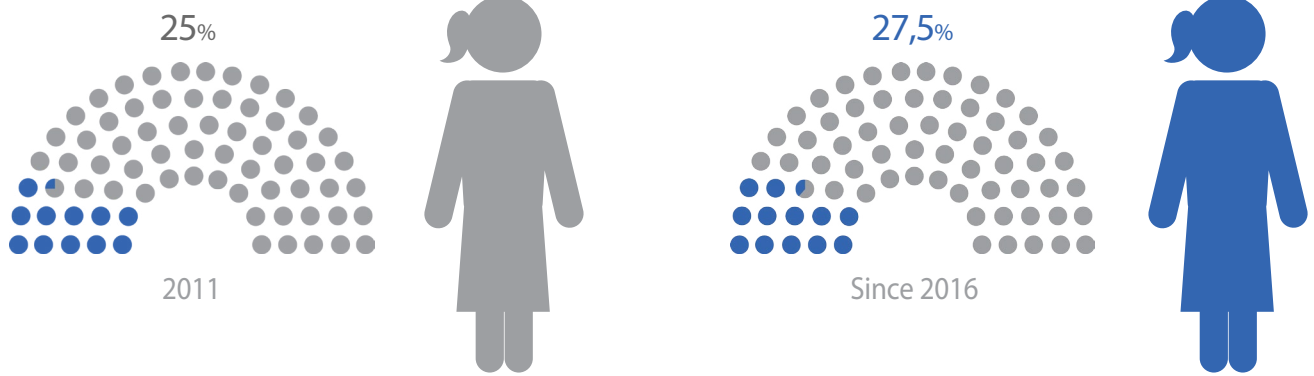
The highest rate of women aged 20-49 who got married before the age of 18 is among those from Hmong-Mien headed households.



# WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING

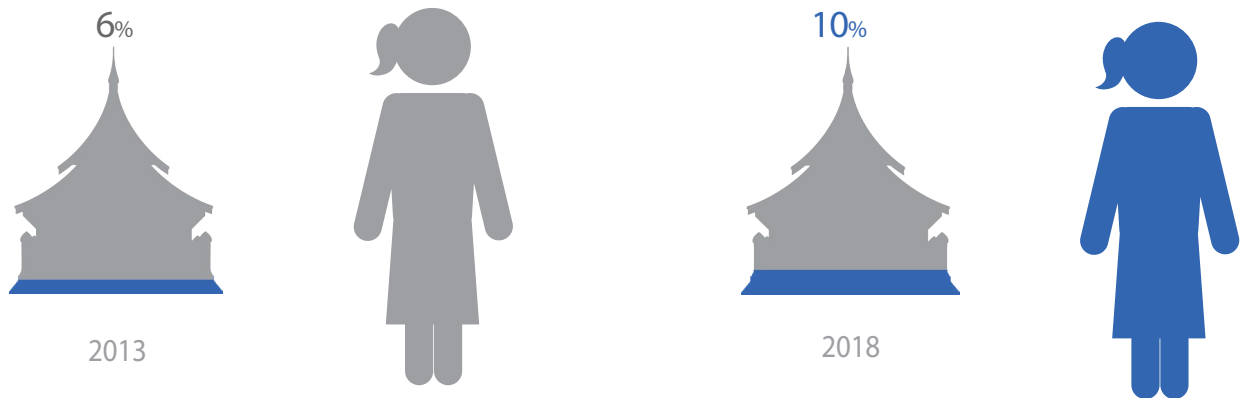
Lao Women's Union Gender Profile 2018

## WOMEN IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY



Lao PDR has one of the **highest proportions of women** in national parliaments in the region.

## WOMEN IN GOVERNMENT



Women are **still under-represented** in senior government positions.



## 8. ACCESS TO JUSTICE



People enjoy improved access to justice and fulfillment of their human rights



## Key Development Trends

Indicator	Baseline	Target	Status
8.1. Number of people's grievances redressed through courts and village mediation units using legal aid services	Formal Courts: 4,000; Village Mediation Units: 4,746 (2015)	Formal Courts: 7,000; Village Mediation Units: 8,000 (2021)	Formal Courts: 4,644; Village Mediation Units: 5,320  Updated data will be collected through the Public Justice Survey planned for 2020
8.2. Number of Laws certified by the Ministry of Justice that are compliant with requirements of drafting / amending and public consultations	0 (2014)	8 (2021)	<i>On track:</i> 7 (2018) Penal code, Law on Lawyers, Law on Judgement Enforcement, Law on Treaties and International Agreement, Law on Supreme People's Prosecutor, and Law on Disaster on Climate Change, Civil Code
8.3. Percentage of accepted recommendations of the second Universal Periodic Review cycle implemented	0 (2015)	60% / 70 of 116 (2021)	<i>On track:</i> The development of a National Action Plan on the Universal Periodic Review is in progress

“

***In 2018, Lao PDR participated in constructive dialogue with treaty bodies on the basis of its initial report on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the combined third to the sixth Child Rights Convention reports, and the combined eighth and ninth reports on the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women.***

”

Under the Legal Sector Master Plan, steady progress has been made towards strengthening the rule of law. The declaration by the Prime Minister regarding the Government’s objective to establish a Rule of Law State by 2020 has been encouraging. The promulgation of the Penal Code and the adoption of the Civil Code are remarkable achievements in 2018 that mark a critical juncture in the legal sector evolution, as the codes are expected to introduce new legal provisions in both spheres giving rise to significant changes in the legal landscape. Particularly, it is vital that the international obligations are incorporated into domestic laws.

Increased engagement by the Government with UN human rights mechanisms has produced valuable guidance, in the form of Concluding Observations and recommendations on the implementation of human rights treaties. In 2018, Lao PDR participated in constructive dialogue with treaty bodies on the basis of its initial report on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the combined third to the sixth Child Rights Convention reports, and the combined eighth and ninth reports on the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women.

The revision of the Land Law is underway, and in November the National Assembly addressed how land is to be divided between the private and public sectors. The draft was discussed at the National Assembly during the Ordinary Session in late December. This is a critical area of reform in the country at a time when the volume of foreign-assisted development projects is burgeoning.

Despite progress achieved, some challenges remain.

The expansion of legal services is constrained by human and financial factors, such as costs of running legal aid facilities, an insufficient number of qualified lawyers and judges, and limited understanding about access to justice among men and women. Strengthening governance and further addressing corruption is also required for the economy to become more competitive.

## Results

### Improved access to justice and justice service delivery

Access to justice and justice service delivery have been improved through UNDP support to the Legal Aid Centers on the dissemination of laws, and the provision of legal aid services at the village level. The legal aid decree was further disseminated, and guidance for its implementation provided in Xiengkhuang, Savannakhet and Sekong provinces. A peer-to-peer review was supported to exchange knowledge and lessons learned among these three legal aid centers.

UNICEF supported the Secretariat for the Juvenile Justice Coordination Committee under the Office of the Supreme People’s Prosecutor in expanding legal and social assistance to children in contact with the law to 10 villages in Xiengkhuang province and 10 villages in Savannakhet province. The project brought together the justice sector, the social welfare sector and development partners to exchange information and discuss the provision of assistance to children in contact with the law. This can be considered as best practice in terms of cooperation and coordination between the justice sector and other sectors.

Technical assistance was provided by UNCITRAL to strengthen legal frameworks that enable private sector development and access to rule-based cross-border trade. In addition to ongoing support to help the Government in its accession to the United Nations Convention on Contracts for the International Sale of Goods, this year UNCITRAL provided technical assistance to reform of the Lao PDR Arbitration Act.

UN Women in collaboration with UNDP disseminated information on violence against women and the Law on Combating and Preventing Violence Against Women and Children through UNDP’s Community Radio, reaching around 89,600 people in Saravane, Oudomxay and Xayaboury provinces.

### Capacities of legal professionals and entities strengthened

Capacity development of legal professionals and entities has achieved meaningful results. Capacity development of judges, including from the People’s Supreme Court, People’s Vientiane Capital Court and People’s Regional Courts, resulted in enhanced understanding of judiciary access and administration, and on mobile courts. In addition, the manual

for evidence in a criminal case has been further disseminated. UNDP also supported awareness raising on SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions among Ministry of Justice officials.

Following the submission of its initial report on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Government was supported by the UN in its engagement with the Human Right Council in Geneva, Switzerland. The Human Rights Committee expressed its appreciation for the constructive dialogue with Lao PDR's high-level delegation on the measures taken to implement the provisions of the covenant since its entry into force. Lao PDR's achievements included legislative, institutional and policy measures and the ratification of the international instruments.

With support from UNICEF, the Ministry of Justice expanded the project on community-based diversion for Children in Conflict with the Law to Xiengkhuang and Savannakhet provinces. This has built the capacity of the village authorities, especially members of the village mediation units, to collect data and information on children especially vulnerable children, conduct risk assessments and provide early intervention to prevent vulnerable children from committing an offense.



***Technical assistance was provided by UNCITRAL to strengthen legal frameworks that enable private sector development and access to rule-based cross-border trade.***



In addition, UNICEF continued to support capacity building of officials from the justice sector and other concerned sectors at the central and local levels through orientation on the Child Rights Convention and the implementation of the law on Juvenile Criminal Procedure; training, legal and social assistance and community based diversion for lawyers, police officials at the village, zone, district and provincial levels; and development of a training manual on child rights and child justice for Police Academy, Research and Training Institute for Prosecutor, Research and Training Institute for Judges and Judicial Training Institute.

UNFPA and UN Women in collaboration with Lao Women's Union and the National Commission on the Advancement of Women, Mother and Child established two Women Friendly Spaces in the flood-affected areas



***With support from UNICEF, the Ministry of Justice expanded the project on community-based diversion for Children in Conflict with the Law to Xiengkhuang and Savannakhet provinces.***



in Attapeu province to prevent and respond to Gender-Based Violence in the context of the emergency and to ensure women victims of violence receive support and are referred to the services available. An Initial referral pathway has been set up among the participants to refer cases related to gender-based violence to each other within the province and beyond.

With UN Women support, training of Village Disaster Risk Committees and Village Mediation Units was conducted; a training manual to understand causes, mediation process and consequences of violence against women was launched; and a vulnerability capacity assessment for handling violence against women cases was produced. Manuals on mediation processes have been developed and used to train Justice Officials, Court Officials, Lao Women's Union Officials, and Police Officials from five districts in Luangnamtha province and eight districts in Saravane province, enhancing their knowledge, skills and confidence on gender relations, violence against women and girls, and victim's rights in mediation.

According to the 2018 Trafficking in Persons Report, 86 people were identified as victims of trafficking. The victims were referred to the appropriate service providers and government agencies for direct assistance, psychosocial and medical support, legal counseling, vocational training, and reintegration. During the reporting period, IOM supported a total of 201 victims of trafficking and vulnerable migrants through direct assistance. The direct assistance included health checks, food and clothing, psychosocial assistance materials, accommodation at the Lao Women's Union's shelter, and pocket money upon return to their villages of origin. Out of these cases, 122 vulnerable migrants were returned from Thailand, five victims of trafficking from China and 32 victims of trafficking from Thailand. The types of exploitation ranged from prostitution and labour exploitation to forced or concealed marriage. In this context, IOM supported the Office of Supreme People Prosecutor

to develop a manual on the Prosecution of Trafficking in Persons and its trainer's guide. These will be the significant tools to enhance the capacity of prosecutors to investigate and prosecute perpetrators of trafficking.

### **Lessons Learned and Way Forward**

While Lao PDR has made meaningful progress in its treaty body reporting, but recommendations provided in response to its reporting will need to be closely followed up. This will require further support to the government, as well as among judicial, legislative and administrative authorities, Non-Profit Associations and the general public.

Capacities across the legal sector, and on issues such as gender equality and human rights continue to require strengthening. The number of qualified trainers remains limited.

The National Referral Mechanism to assist and protect victims of trafficking remains to be finalized. IOM together with other organizations engaged in anti-human trafficking continue to provide support in this regard.





# JOINT COMMUNICATIONS



## Looking Back

In 2018, the United Nations Communications Group (UNCG) continued its work to raise the profile of the United Nations in Lao PDR. The UNCG based its work on the UN in Lao PDR's joint Communications Strategy 2017-2021, the UN's Guide to Communicating as One, the Lao PDR-United Nations Partnership Framework 2017-2021 and the Vientiane Declaration for Effective Development.



**2018 was branded by #IamDevelopment on- and offline messaging, conveying a sense of everyone's stake in the achievement of the SDGs and national development goals.**



2018 saw major development milestones in Lao PDR. Lao PDR's [eligibility for graduation from Least Developed Country status was confirmed](#)<sup>1</sup> by the UN Committee for Development Policy in March 2018. The UNCG engaged in communicating this news on national and online media. Lao PDR's first [Voluntary National Review on the 2030 Agenda](#)<sup>2</sup> was designed with UNCG support and when the [Review was launched at the UN High Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development in July](#)<sup>3</sup>, the UNCG ran a [dedicated campaign](#)<sup>4</sup> to raise awareness online. The Mid-Term Review of the 8<sup>th</sup> National Socio-economic Development Plan was supported in both design and awareness raising via the Round Table Meeting coverage. Given the increased number of mobile and high-speed internet users, communications content reached a wider audience. The Government's commitments towards telecommunication reform and development will provide a foundation for the UNCG to introduce innovative media contents to various groups of audience.

Further to the national floods between July and September, the UNCG was actively involved in the Emergency Communications Cluster, ensuring up-to-date information on the UN in Lao PDR website, via a dedicated [flood tracker page](#)<sup>5</sup> and updates on

1 [goo.gl/r8roMv](http://goo.gl/r8roMv)

2 [goo.gl/3pjDkh](http://goo.gl/3pjDkh)

3 [goo.gl/TSEhcq](http://goo.gl/TSEhcq)

4 [goo.gl/WLhPkj](http://goo.gl/WLhPkj)

5 [www.la.one.un.org/flood-tracker](http://www.la.one.un.org/flood-tracker)

social media. The Post-Disaster Needs Assessment, conducted as a joint effort between the Government, the World Bank, the European Union and the UN, was supported by [dedicated communications](#)<sup>6</sup>, including an [infographic on the findings](#)<sup>7</sup>. When [Lao PDR obtained funding from the Central Emergency Response Fund](#)<sup>8</sup> (CERF), implemented by four in-country agencies, the UNCG worked on supporting resource mobilization via a dedicated Communications Action Plan. It was however found that the humanitarian window closed before any related communications could reach the outside world, due to a convoluted clearance mechanism at UN level.

2018 was branded by #IamDevelopment on- and offline messaging, conveying a sense of everyone's stake in the achievement of the SDGs and national development goals. The campaign started with introducing the UNFPA-designed awareness raising figure, [Nang Noi](#)<sup>9</sup>, on the UN in Lao PDR Facebook page. This year's UN Day event, entitled [My Choice – Our Future](#)<sup>10</sup>, delivered with the Lao Youth Union, was marked by this very same message, sharing information to 150 young people from Vientiane about sustainable and responsible lifestyles. The event was accompanied by online challenges on [Plastic reduction](#)<sup>11</sup>, [Healthy habits](#)<sup>12</sup> and [Climate Action](#)<sup>13</sup>, reaching over 400,000 people and engaging over 28,000 people on Facebook. These social media challenges were produced in cooperation with the Global Shapers Vientiane and Green Vientiane, both community groups working on waste reduction in Lao PDR.

The message of plastic reduction was further pushed by supporting a team at the Vientiane Boat racing Festival in 2018, and the [related film](#)<sup>14</sup> reached over 7,600 people on social media organically and was shared 50 times. The message was taken up by the Government, which resulted in the [Round Table Meeting 2018](#)<sup>15</sup> becoming a plastic and paper-reduced green event. An [event dedicated to Human Rights Day 2018 and the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)<sup>16</sup>, organized with the Government, the European Union and the Australian Embassy was also delivered as a plastic-less event.

6 [goo.gl/nsNMHP](http://goo.gl/nsNMHP)

7 [goo.gl/sJQ8qq](http://goo.gl/sJQ8qq)

8 [goo.gl/kv5Xo6](http://goo.gl/kv5Xo6)

9 [goo.gl/R39f3U](http://goo.gl/R39f3U)

10 [goo.gl/wxkCYs](http://goo.gl/wxkCYs)

11 [goo.gl/bD9pvn](http://goo.gl/bD9pvn)

12 [goo.gl/sqYa4k](http://goo.gl/sqYa4k)

13 [goo.gl/xFYFWh](http://goo.gl/xFYFWh)

14 [goo.gl/n9acu9](http://goo.gl/n9acu9)

15 [goo.gl/XTQx7p](http://goo.gl/XTQx7p)

16 [goo.gl/rtrAoV](http://goo.gl/rtrAoV)



A traditional set of events saw UNCG involvement, most notably the [Round Table Meeting 2018](#)<sup>17</sup> in Vientiane (including a [live webcast of the opening session](#)<sup>18</sup>) and ensuring UN visibility at the development exhibition for the duration of the meeting. This included a dedicated campaign for International Volunteer Day with the topic of “[volunteers build resilient communities](#)<sup>19</sup>”.

[International Women’s Day](#)<sup>20</sup>, [World Food Day](#)<sup>21</sup> and [World AIDS Day](#)<sup>22</sup> were organized and covered with the help of the UNCG.

During 2018, approximately 100 articles published in seven different national outlets reached an estimated 70,000 people in Lao PDR, with many more stories in various outlets originating from different agencies. National television channels broadcasted from approximately seven events and meetings that the UNCG had involvement in. Regional media published at least three of the UNCG’s stories, including Xinhua and Vietnam News.

The UN in Lao PDR’s digital platforms experienced a substantial audience increase in 2018:

**Website**<sup>23</sup>: 106,852 pageviews (total number of visitors), (Dec 2017: 63,093 pageviews; 2016: 53,992). Average time spent on page: 3:10 min (2017: 3:26 min; 2016: 1:44 min – over 1:00 considered good average for content publishing sites). Bounce rate (single-page visits, the higher the better, since people find what they need quickly): 61,65% (2017: 60,15%; 2016: 51%). Top pages: Vacancies, Home page, SDGs.

**Facebook page**<sup>24</sup>: 10,643 page likes, up from 7,384 in Dec 2017 and 4,791 in Dec 2016. Highest reach: 168,248 by [boosted Climate Action video post](#)<sup>25</sup>, with approx. 7,000 organic reach (in 2017: 491,100, out of which 4,227 organic reach, sharing the SDG film in a boosted post; in 2016: 51,900 announcing UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s visit to Laos). Most likes: 7,707 from Laos (5,021 in 2017; 3,220 in 2016), highest percentage (22%) of them females between age 18-24, highest percentage of males: 21%, between age 25-34. Overall slightly more males (51%) engage with the page.

**Twitter account**<sup>26</sup>: 1,013 followers, up from 696

17 [goo.gl/xVC8VL](#)

18 [goo.gl/vCHBnR](#)

19 [goo.gl/jMDpKG](#)

20 [goo.gl/M268YK](#)

21 [goo.gl/i1RhZ6](#)

22 [goo.gl/TefQhv](#)

23 [www.la.one.un.org](#)

24 [www.facebook.com/UNLaos](#)

25 [goo.gl/8jVvRQ](#)

26 [www.twitter.com/UNinLaoPDR](#)



*The UNCG, starting 2017, has successfully positioned the United Nations in Lao PDR as an open, approachable organization that engages youth and encourages contribution to national goals by people across the country.*



followers in Dec 2017 and 352 in December 2016.

Top tweet: 2,678 impressions for [CERF funding announcement for Khammuane province](#)<sup>27</sup> (in 2017: Women’s invisible burden report launch tweet, generating 7,478 impressions).

**Exposure page**<sup>28</sup>: 5 new stories in 2018, [A day in my life as UN Volunteer](#)<sup>29</sup> viewed 4,655 times (No new story in 2017. 2016: [Story on Ban Ki-moon’s visit](#)<sup>30</sup> viewed 1,083 times).

## Future Strategies

The UNCG, starting 2017, has successfully positioned the United Nations in Lao PDR as an open, approachable organization that engages youth and encourages contribution to national goals by people across the country. Strengthening the interface between the UN’s work and public interest will be at the core of the UNCG’s efforts again in 2019 with on- and offline campaigns.

The message of responsible lifestyles, most particularly via reducing single-use plastics, will continue to be a main focus in 2019, with the UNCG spearheading related campaigns and events.

27 [goo.gl/2SUciC](#)

28 [www.uninlaopdr.exposure.co](#)

29 [goo.gl/eRgg1e](#)

30 [goo.gl/ZjccJ8](#)

## Strengthening the Eco-System for Noi: Progress in 2018

With support from the UN Team, led by UNFPA, the **Noi 2030 Framework** was developed to monitor the progress on sustainable development indicators relevant for the 700,000 adolescent girls living in Lao PDR. The Noi initiative, which was integrated into the 2018 Voluntary National Review on the Sustainable Development Goals, achieved the following results to date:

### EVIDENCE & DATA

**Bokeo Adolescent Girls' Situation Analysis** results were disseminated; data collected from five districts of Savannakhet province; and results of **LSIS II** disseminated and snapshots published. The 3rd **Adolescent Research Day** brought together partners in support of Noi.

### ADVOCACY

**International Day of the Girl Child** observed in October. Around 1,000 people participated in a high-level forum chaired by the Minister of Education and Sports. Bilateral and multilateral conversations held for increased investments in Noi.

### POLICY ADVICE

First National Youth and Adolescent Policy finalized; National Reproductive Health Policy revised; National Population and Development Policy finalized. Ministries sensitized on SDG indicators for their integration into the next planning cycle.

### OUT-OF-SCHOOL/ COMMUNITY

200 adolescent girls from 9 villages of Sepon district in Savannakhet province enhanced their health, social, economic and cognitive skills through 20 mentors in **Nang-Noi Girls Groups**. Parents and communities were sensitized in these villages.



### REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

188 service providers were trained on **Adolescent & Youth Friendly Services** in three provinces. 62 providers from 7 district hospitals were trained on counselling skills and outreach. Over 3,246 young people benefited from outreach activities.

### IN-SCHOOL

The teachers' guidebook for **comprehensive sexuality education** in secondary schools was revised based on new international technical guidance. A manual for CSE in technical and vocational education and training was developed.

### EXPANDING PARTNERSHIPS

New partnership started with UNESCO and co-financing for Noi agreed with KOICA. Adolescent Girls Working Group was also established with 24 members from UN Agencies, INGOs, NGOs and CSOs.

### ENDING VIOLENCE

32 persons from protection cluster, LWU, provincial authorities and healthcare providers were trained on gender-based violence and reproductive health. Two women-friendly spaces were established following the floods in Attapeu province.



# COMMON BUSINESS OPERATIONS



To strengthen strategic focus, efficiency and cost-effectiveness of business operations, the UN Agencies went beyond the traditional UN operations model and worked closely together to jointly identify and implement impactful and innovative common business operations solutions. Led by UNICEF, the Operations Management Team enhanced inter-agency cooperation on operations and reduced operational costs in five main areas of business operations: procurement; human resources; information and communication technologies; finance; and logistics and facility services, including common premises. In 2018, the Operations Management Team and its sub-working groups achieved estimated cost savings of US\$ 196,500 in these five key areas. This brings the cumulative savings for 2017 and 2018 to US\$ 426,500.

The procurement sub-working group, led by UNDP, saved US\$ 95,000 in 2018 by adopting common Long-Term Arrangements in procurement operations, including stationary and office supply, interpretation and translation, customs clearance of goods, travel agent and fuel exemption. The largest cost savings on procurement came from travel agent and fuel exemption arrangements, reducing the costs by US\$ 34,000 and US\$ 49,000, respectively.

The common logistics and facility services sub-working group, also under UNDP, saved US\$ 3,200 in total. The group consolidated a common roster of vetted suppliers for services, including printing, transportation of goods, cleaning, translation and interpretation, car rentals and hotels. As the cost-reduction from a common roster of vetted suppliers could not be calculated, the savings in this area are from cost-effective contingency transportation arrangements through a long-term agreement for car rentals, amounting to US\$ 3,200 in 2018.

The human resources sub-working group, led by WFP, saved US\$ 2,300 in total. In 2018, the group exchanged information pertaining to the recruitment process, including a roster of consultants, and had regular exchanges on UN personnel rules and regulations, and policies and procedures. A number of inter-agency training sessions, including on nutrition and conflict resolution, were conducted in the first quarter of 2019.

The common finance sub-working group, led by UNICEF, saved US\$ 52,000 in total by applying common



***The cumulative savings achieved for 2017 and 2018 are US\$ 426,500. [...] In addition to providing results-oriented cost-saving strategies on business operations in five key areas, the Operations Management Team strongly focused on the effectiveness and the quality of services across the UN Agencies.***



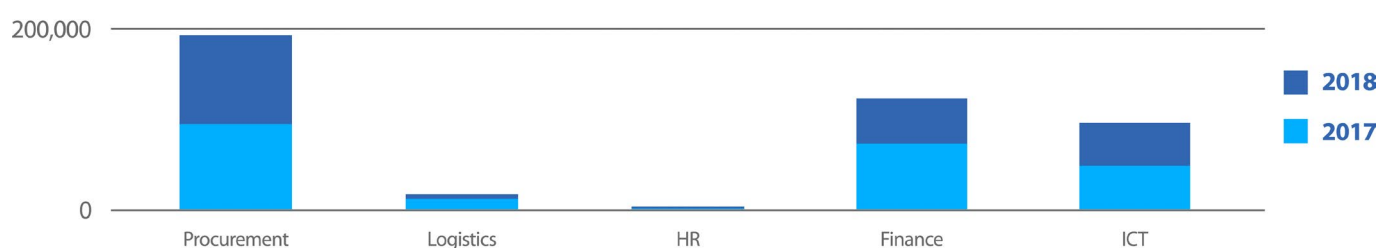
banking fees and using common electronic banking and currency exchange. The largest saving came from the currency exchange agreement where UN Agencies saved US\$ 45,000 in 2018.

The ICT sub-working group, under UNFPA's lead, saved US\$ 44,000 in 2018. The group adopted common Long-Term Arrangements on internet service provision and the ICT equipment maintenance to save cost and time while providing reliable services. The common Long-Term Arrangement on internet exceeded the target as some UN agencies increased their bandwidth.

In addition to providing results-oriented cost-saving strategies on business operations in five key areas, the Operations Management Team strongly focused on the effectiveness and the quality of services across the UN Agencies. In this context, a UN Client Satisfaction Survey was conducted and received valuable comments and feedback that provided the basis for improved services and in future will allow the monitoring of trends.

Besides saving costs and maintaining effectiveness in all areas through sub-working groups, the Operations Management Team has also actively addressed major operational issues faced by the whole UN as well as an individual UN staff. The team continues to serve as a professional and technical body of business operations for the entire UN system.

### Cost Savings by Area in US\$

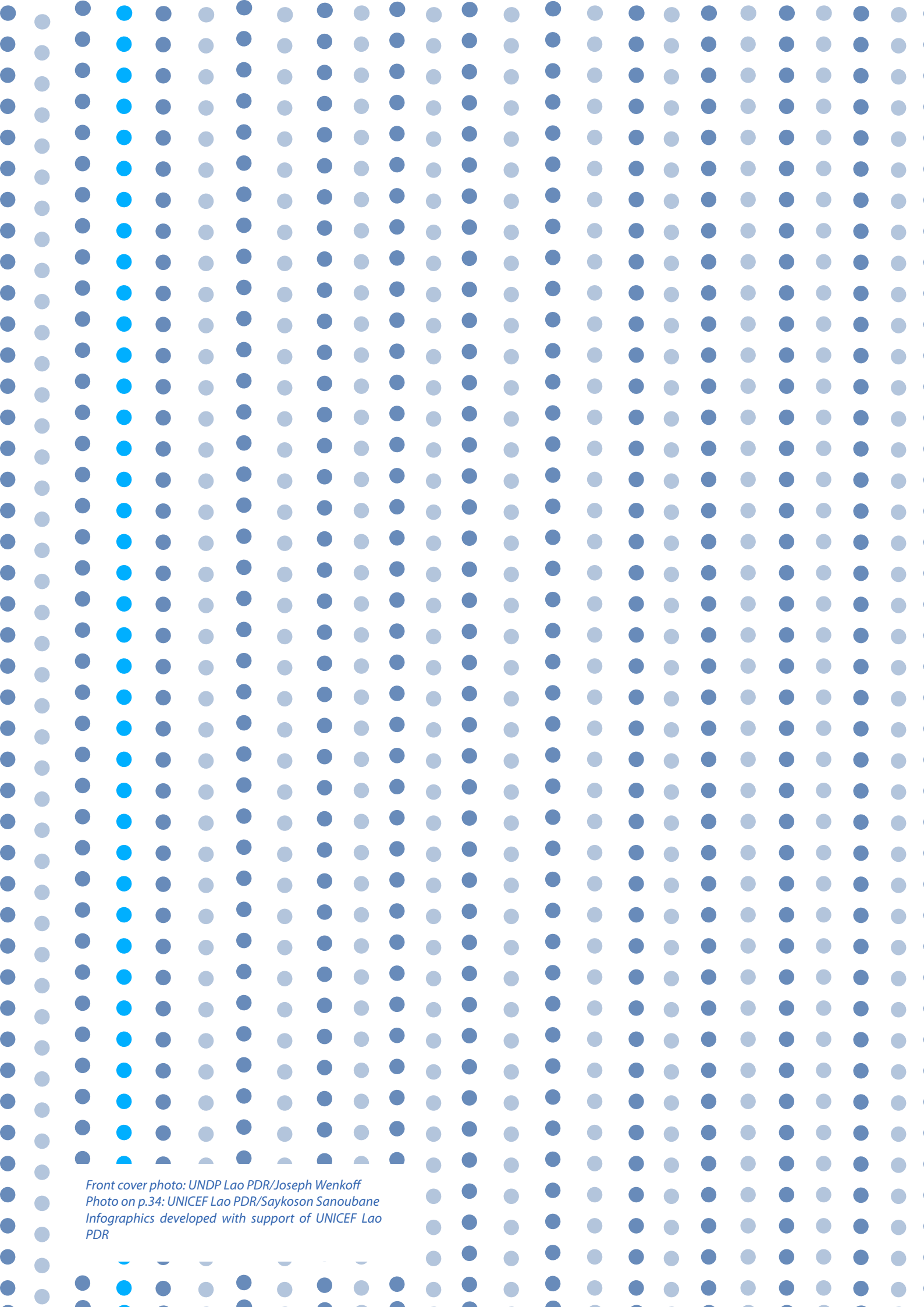




# INDICATIVE FINANCIAL OVERVIEW



Outcomes of the Lao PDR -- UN Partnership Framework	2018		2019		2020	
	Delivery (in US\$)	Planned commitments (in US\$)	Planned commitments (in US\$)	Funding gap (in US\$)	Planned commitments (in US\$)	Funding gap (in US\$)
Outcome 1 – Decent Livelihoods	7,415,551	8,950,836	8,950,836	2,412,248	2,062,203	0
Outcome 2 – Social Protection	1,550,613	1,230,812	1,230,812	0	883,000	50,000
Outcome 3 – Climate Change, Disaster Management and Environment	9,827,066	9,661,392	9,661,392	0	2,317,470	167,470
Outcome 4 – Education	15,455,691	16,544,481	16,544,481	300,000	12,658,515	2,984,445
Outcome 5 – Health, Water and Sanitation	12,757,146	15,322,892	15,322,892	1,787,015	15,992,368	1,310,000
Outcome 6 – Food Security and Nutrition	15,381,077	28,583,614	28,583,614	0	16,792,318	0
Outcome 7 – Institution Building	5,081,010	6,061,573	6,061,573	5,142,955	3,540,838	5,074,808
Outcome 8 – Access to Justice	1,394,986	2,075,832	2,075,832	3,000,000	1,100,000	3,400,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>68,863,141</b>	<b>88,431,432</b>	<b>88,431,432</b>	<b>12,642,218</b>	<b>55,346,712</b>	<b>12,986,723</b>



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