



# Country Analysis Report: Lao PDR

Analysis to inform the Lao People's Democratic Republic–  
United Nations Partnership Framework (2017-2021)



**The United Nations in Lao PDR**

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# Acronyms

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ADB: Asian Development Bank	MFNSAP: Multisectoral Food and Nutrition Security Action Plan
AEC: ASEAN Economic Community	MMR: Maternal mortality ratio
AIDS: Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome	MNCH: Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health Care
ANAR: adjusted net attendance rate	MoES: Ministry of Education and Sports
ANC1: First antenatal care visit	MoH: Ministry of Health
ASEAN: Association of South-East Asian Nations	MoHA: Ministry of Home Affairs
ASLO: Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes	MoIC: Ministry of Industry and Commerce
AXO: abandoned explosive ordnance	MoNRE: Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
BEmONC: basic emergency obstetric and newborn care	MPI: Ministry of Planning and Investment
CCM: Convention on Cluster Munitions	MSM: Men having sex with men
CEDAW: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	NCAW: Lao National Commission for Advancement of Women
CMW: International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families	NCCA: National Committee for the Control of AIDS
CRC: Convention on the Rights of the Child	NCD: Non-communicable disease
CRPD: Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	NER: Net enrolment rate
CSO: Civil Society Organization	NGO: Non-governmental organization
DDF: District Development Fund	NPA: Non-Profit Association
DIH: Department of Industry and Handicraft	NSAP: National Strategic and Action Plan (for HIV/AIDS and STI Prevention and Control)
DOSMEP: Department for Small and Medium Enterprise Promotion	NSEDP: National Socio-Economic Development Plan
DPT: diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus	NTC: National Tuberculosis Centre
DTIS: Diagnostic Trade Integration Studies	NTS: non-technical survey (in the UXO sector)
ECD: Early childhood development	OECD: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
ECE: Early childhood education	PASEC: Program for the Analysis of Education Systems
EGRA: Early Grades Reading Assessment	PES: payment for ecosystem services
EMIS: Education Management Information System	PLHIV: People living with HIV
ETPR: employment to population ratio	PMTCT: Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission
EVI: Economic Vulnerability Index	PoU: Prevalence of undernourishment
FAO: Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations	PWID: People who inject drugs
FSC: Forest Stewardship Council	REDD: The United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries.
GARP: Global AIDS Response Progress Report	SEZs: Special and Specific Economic Zones
GER: Gross enrolment ratio	SME: Small and medium enterprises
GHG: Greenhouse Gases	STI: Sexually Transmitted Infections
GHI: Global Hunger Index	SUN: Scaling Up Nutrition
GNI: gross national income	TB: Tuberculosis
HCFC: hydro chlorofluorocarbons	TDF: Trade Development Facility

HEF: Health Equity Fund

HepB: Hepatitis B

Hib: *Haemophilus influenzae* type b

HIV: Human Immunodeficiency Virus Infection

HSRF: Health Sector Reform Framework

ICCPR: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

ICERD: International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

ICESCR: International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

ILO: International Labour Organization

INGO: International non-governmental organization

IUCN: International Union for the Conservation of Nature

JMP: Joint Monitoring Programme UNICEF/WHO

Lao PDR: The Lao People's Democratic Republic

LDC: Least Developed Country

LFS: Labour Force Survey

LFTU: Lao Federation of Trade Unions

LSB: Lao Statistics Bureau

LWU: Lao Women's Union

MAF: MDG Acceleration Framework

MCH: Maternal and child health

MDG: Millennium Development Goal

TFR: Total Fertility Rate

TVET: Technical and vocational education and training

UIS: UNESCO Institute for Statistics

UNAIDS: Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

UNCDF: United Nations Capital Development Fund

UN-CDP: United Nations Committee for Development Policy

UN-DESA: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

UNDAF: United Nations Development Assistance Framework Action

UNEP: United Nations Environment Programme

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNFPA: United Nations Population Fund

UNGASS: United Nations General Assembly Special Session

UNIAP: United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking

UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund

UNISDR: United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction

UPR: Universal Periodic Review

UXO: Unexploded Ordnance

VCD: Video CD or Compact Disc digital video

WHO: World Health Organization

# Executive Summary

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1. **Overview.** The Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) is a land-locked, ethnically diverse and mountainous country with an estimated population at 6.8 million. It has the distinction of having the highest total fertility rate (TFR) among ASEAN countries in recent years. With one of the youngest populations in the region, Lao PDR is projected to benefit from the “demographic dividend” to the economy in the medium-term. However, this will be realized only if young women and young men are better equipped with the appropriate skills and knowledge, and new jobs are able to keep pace with the growth of the working age population.

2. **Resource-reliant growth.** Strong economic growth has enabled Lao PDR to move from the ranks of low income economies to a “lower middle-income” country. However, the country's economic growth, which is heavily reliant on natural resources, has not created commensurate levels of employment. The economy will need to diversify to achieve more inclusive and sustained growth, particularly if the Lao PDR is to achieve its goal of graduation from Least Developed Country (LDC) status by the 2020s.

3. **Challenges related to AEC entry.** Regional economic integration is expected to lead to the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) by the end of 2015, with the 10 ASEAN countries expected to transform into a single region with free movement of goods, services, investment, skilled labour and freer flow of capital. Lao PDR will need to address a number of challenges to realize the benefits of AEC entry:

- **Skills gap.** The country urgently needs to upgrade the education and skills of its young population. Lao PDR will not be able to meet the demand for medium-skilled and high-skilled workers generated by AEC entry unless it can resolve the current mismatch between labour market needs and young people's education and skills. Indeed, to realize the full potential of its youth, an overarching youth policy will be needed.
- **Low productivity.** The agricultural sector, which accounts for around 70 percent of employment, is characterized by low productivity. Unless this is tackled, Lao will not be able fully develop its potential in the next decade. Lao PDR's economy needs to become much more competitive and diversified.
- **Weak institutional capacities** pose challenges in establishing rule of law and good governance and in fighting corruption. Looser controls with AEC entry could lead to a rise in illegal trade, trafficking and crime. Lao PDR is already a source, and to a lesser extent, a transit and destination country for sex trafficking and forced labour of women, children and men. Without proper protection mechanisms and enforcement of regulations and laws, AEC could have a negative impact.

4. **Human rights instruments.** Lao PDR has acceded to or ratified seven out of ten key international human rights instruments. The country continues to incorporate these obligations into its national laws, policies and programmes. However, enforcement and implementation lag behind, and most reports to treaty bodies are overdue. In 2015, the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) made 196 recommendations to address these gaps, of which the Government of the Lao PDR has accepted 116.



5. **Tackling poverty and inequality.** Lao PDR has achieved the poverty-related Millennium Development Goal (MDG) by halving its national poverty rate over the past decade. However, poverty reduction and consumption growth lag behind the country's GDP growth. The progress in poverty reduction varies by location, education, ethnicity, education and occupation of household heads. One-third of the population in upland areas is still below the poverty line. The growth in consumption has benefited the richer quintiles more than the poorer segments of the population, and the rural-urban gap remains significant. Inequality has increased, notably within urban areas. Policies and measures to increase the access of the most vulnerable groups to services, livelihoods and resources need to be much more explicit and better targeted. The country also needs to scale up social protection systems rapidly to achieve significant coverage of the poor.

6. **Achieving productive employment and decent work.** The share of vulnerable employment in Lao PDR remains high: over a third of working people do not earn sufficient income to lift themselves out of poverty. Yet there is potential for much more productivity, since a large share of the agricultural workforce are underemployed. The recommended approach has two thrusts. First, making the agriculture sector – especially the rice sector – more productive is key to both poverty reduction and livelihood improvement. Measures to achieve this include improving land tenure security and land administration, modernizing irrigation systems, improving production and processing facilities, incorporating the value chain approach into extension services, and incentivizing private investments in the rice value chain. Second, the country must anticipate the rise in demand for medium- and high-skilled workers by tackling weaknesses in education and training systems. The ongoing reform of the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) system must be accelerated and equip workers with competencies needed in key sectors.

7. **Improving food security and nutrition.** Lao PDR has achieved the MDG target of halving the proportion of hungry people. However, it still has a significant level of hunger, as measured by the Global Hunger Index. Food insecurity is still a significant issue, with one-fifth of the population consuming less than the minimum dietary energy requirements. To improve food security and livelihoods for rural communities, Lao PDR will need to shift from a subsistence to a market-oriented agricultural production that is resilient and focused on smallholder farmers. On the MDG target of reducing underweight and stunting among children, Lao PDR is off track. Stunting in particular shows strong inequalities across regions and groups and is associated with poverty, location and the lack of education among mothers. Sustained and sufficient resources are required for expanding simple yet effective nutrition-specific interventions, such as appropriate feeding of young children, micronutrient supplementation of women and children and management of acute malnutrition. Moreover, all such interventions should be coordinated, planned and targeted to converge with “nutrition-sensitive interventions” on high-risk districts.

8. **Ensuring inclusive and quality education.** While Lao PDR has achieved universal coverage of primary enrolment rates, primary education survival rate remains low, and the country has not yet fully achieved the MDG 2 of completing primary education. Secondary enrolment has improved, although it remains low because of the low primary survival rate. Disparities are prominent in education, more so for the secondary level. The quality of teaching and learning outcomes is inadequate, and need to be addressed by significantly improving teacher quality, teacher training programmes and teacher distribution. Public expenditure has grown significantly in the sector, but the share of non-salary operating budget is still inadequate. Tested policies and initiatives known to strengthen the foundations for quality basic education need to be applied. Early childhood education needs more attention, not least, to ensure better school readiness in children.

9. **Achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls.** In education, the gender equality gap has narrowed in all three levels of education enrolment, with gender equity nearly achieved for primary education. However, girls still encounter challenges in continuing with secondary education and among young people, the gender equality gap in literacy rate has not narrowed much. Early marriage is one of the many factors for girls not continuing in school. In employment, women generally occupy the lower rungs of the labour market and predominate in the more vulnerable sectors of employment. Violence against women is a common phenomenon but the statistics are unreliable. Achieving gender equality will require actions on three fronts. First, the implementation and monitoring of national gender equality laws, policies and instruments need strengthening and the political role of gender-related institutions upgraded. Second, interventions that empower women and girls should be prioritized in terms of resources and planning. These include, for example, preventing adolescent pregnancies and early marriage, educating girls and promoting small and medium enterprises (SMEs) run by women. Third, multi-sector programmes are needed to combat violence against women.

10. **Achieving maternal and child health.** Lao PDR has already met its national targets in under-five and infant mortality reduction, but has not yet achieved the international MDG target of a two-thirds reduction in under-five mortality rate relative to 1990 levels. On the other hand, the country has achieved the international MDG target of reducing maternal mortality ratio (MMR) by three-quarters between 1990 and 2015. However, the country still has a high MMR. The slow progress in maternal and child health is largely explained by the low coverage and inadequate quality of health services. Service coverage levels vary widely with residence, ethnic group, mothers' education and wealth quintile. Frequent stockouts of essential health and reproductive commodities, the inadequate quality of health staff and poor planning of staff deployment contribute to the poor quality of services. In the post 2015 period, it will be crucial to consolidate previous gains and focus on targets not yet achieved. Priority should also be given to preventing adolescent pregnancies and early marriage, and achieving the goals of the ongoing health sector reform, notably in human resources, health financing and health system governance. The existing Health Equity Fund (HEF) schemes and Free Delivery of Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health Care ("Free MNCH") will need further strengthening to lay the foundation for a national program and move towards Universal Health Coverage.

11. **Accelerating the HIV response.** Over the past 15 years, Lao PDR has kept HIV prevalence generally low. However, the country cannot afford to be complacent. Its HIV incidence is increasing, unlike in some neighbouring countries, and HIV prevalence also is increasing in sub-groups of key populations. Difficulties in reaching the key populations at higher risk, notably men having sex with men (MSM) and people who inject drugs (PWID), hamper prevention efforts. HIV testing and counselling services have improved, but insufficient demand is an issue, since most are unaware that HIV testing should be done even if they feel well. The majority of people living with HIV (PLHIV) do not understand the risks of not starting treatment early: well over half the newly diagnosed cases are already at an advanced stage of HIV infection. While Lao PDR is expanding the prevention of mother to child transmission (PMTCT) by integrating PMTCT interventions into antenatal care services, the low levels of antenatal care itself is proving to be a challenge. Three strategies are recommended for the post-2015 period. First, an enabling environment needs to be built through strengthening information systems and institutional capacities, reducing discrimination and mobilizing domestic resources. Second, prevention efforts should focus on key populations at higher risk. Third, HIV programmes can only be sustainable if HIV identification and treatment services are integrated into health services, and the care of those living with HIV is integrated into social welfare services.

12. **Combating malaria, tuberculosis (TB) and other diseases.** Malaria is on the rise in the south of Lao PDR after having declined since 2000. The increase appears to be associated with economic activities and large development projects. Compounding the problem, a confirmed artemisinin-resistant strain has recently emerged in Champasack, requiring urgent attention, given the risk of Artemisinin resistance spreading further and threatening regional and global health security. The fight against tuberculosis shows a mixed picture: the first-ever national TB prevalence survey (2010-11) revealed that Lao PDR had more than halved the prevalence of all forms of TB since 1990 and that the TB treatment success rate was high. However, the survey also found that only a third of all TB cases were detected and the remaining two-thirds undiagnosed and untreated, indicating weaknesses in the TB detection and control services. In the post-2015 period, national plans for malaria and TB control will need to prioritize actions to deal with these recent developments. Additionally, the growing share of deaths from non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and road traffic injuries will need attention.

13. **Protecting environmental resources and promoting resilience.** Lao PDR is off-track on the national target for forest cover, which has decreased significantly over the past decade. Efforts to reverse deforestation and biodiversity loss have so far made little progress. Over the ten years' period 1990-2000, the changes in forest and land use led to Lao PDR doubling its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, from recording a net sink to net emission. Policy and regulatory frameworks relating to natural resources and the environment have improved, but monitoring, governance and enforcement need strengthening. The private sector will need to be incentivized to participate in sustainable natural resource management. Communities in ecologically fragile zones and protected areas will need to be provided with sustainable livelihood opportunities and given a stake in the preservation of the environment. In terms of disaster management, Lao PDR's institutional structures and roles will need to be better defined and strengthened. The Government will need support in expanding payment for ecosystem services initiatives and in the preparations for REDD+.

14. **Ensuring sustainable water and sanitation.** Lao PDR has achieved the international MDG targets on safe water and sanitation. However, the high prevalence of open defecation is still a concern. The rural-urban gap has narrowed regarding the access to improved water sources but disparities in sanitation remain significant and are far greater than in water coverage. Water safety and water quality need increased attention. Pollution threatens surface water, the major source for urban water supply, and as in other countries of the Mekong Sub-region, rural water supply in the south has arsenic contamination in some localities. Investment in water, sanitation and hygiene is generally inadequate. Current spending levels are estimated to be about one-quarter of the needs. Sanitation, in particular, requires more attention and investment with dedicated funding from the government and development partners.

15. **Protecting vulnerable children.** Ensuring the protection of vulnerable children involves addressing all forms of violence, exploitation and discrimination. The illegal and often hidden nature of such transgressions against children mean that the phenomena are difficult to detect, report and address. With increasingly open borders, cases of trafficked, exploited and sexually abused children are likely to increase unless law enforcement is stepped up. There are no reliable statistics on sexual abuse of children, as this is often a hidden issue in society. A significant proportion of children are working, including in conditions hazardous to health and well-being. The underlying causes of these vulnerabilities are multiple and include the lack of birth registration and other records, domestic violence, abuse and poverty, resettlement or relocation of villages, and loss of traditional patterns of extended family support. Addressing child protection issues will require dedicated professionals. The

Government has taken the first steps to increase the number of social workers, who are only now emerging as a profession. Challenges remain, relating to budget allocation, institutional and policy gaps, law enforcement and human resources. A comprehensive national policy and plan of action are needed for a child protection system, as well as strengthened enforcement of laws and policies.

16. **Reducing UXO impact.** With an estimate of 8.7 million hectares contaminated by unexploded ordnance (UXO), resources are among the constraints to clearing the land. Despite the challenges, the past few years have seen a number of achievements. The number of UXO casualties has been reduced by 85 per cent over the last decade. Risk awareness have been integrated into school curricula. The Government has adopted a new results-oriented methodology for finding and clearing bombs, which is expected to enhance the effectiveness of UXO clearance operations and is already showing a dramatic increase in the land area being cleared. Long-term strategies will need to strengthen national capacities, as well as provide institutional support to the UXO sector, given the scale and scope of the issue, which lies well beyond the national capacity to cope. Another challenge is to integrate the UXO sector better into the overall national development goal. This will include the mainstreaming of UXO victim assistance into the health, education and social welfare systems and the disability programme. The UXO sector will need a long-term transition strategy to reduce its financial dependence on international sources.

17. **Expand partnerships for development.** Lao PDR still relies on official development assistance (ODA) for a significant share of its socio-economic development investments. Two lessons were learned from the experience of development cooperation during the past decade. First, the support by development partners to Lao PDR's progress towards global goals needs to be better coordinated, more results-oriented, and avoid duplication. This will require the alignment of development partners' programmes and priorities behind the country's plans, policies and goals. It will also need the Government to exert a strong coordinating role. Second, Lao PDR needs to identify alternative development financing sources, such as South-South cooperation, public-private partnerships and philanthropic organisations, to reduce the dependence on current external sources.

18. **Conclusion.** This Country Analysis, in reviewing Lao PDR's progress towards the MDGs, has identified the major challenges, opportunities and new areas for actions. The Country Analysis also identifies the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups left behind in the country's development, analyzes the determinants of such vulnerabilities and provides several forward-looking recommendations to guide the UN Country Team's planning for the next cycle. The process consulted closely with the concerned UN agencies and took into account the findings of several participatory consultations conducted at various times, including during the preparation of the 2013 MDG Progress Report. In some areas previously not covered by MDG reporting, such as disaster management and violence and discrimination against children and women, the progress is encouraging but not easily measurable due to the nature of the issues. These findings, together with the examination of SDGs, show that the post-2015 agenda will be a far broader one than the development agenda of past decades. As with all international goals, the SDGs will need to be adapted to Lao PDR's context, and quantitative targets will need to be formulated in line with national goals and priorities.

## Purpose of the Country Analysis

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19. The Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) integrates all international commitments it has made within its national policy, planning and legislative processes. For instance, previous National Socio-Economic Development Plans (NSEDP) incorporated the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), with some modifications to suit the national context and priorities. Similarly, the Eighth NSEDP (2016-2020), adopted in 2015 and having a goal of graduating from Least Developed Country status within the next decade, incorporates the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

20. The Lao PDR–United Nations Partnership Framework (2017-2021) articulates the collective response of the UN system to national development priorities. The Partnership Framework aims to identify strategic focus areas, promote synergy, improve coordination and ensure transparency and predictability of resources. It also aims to make the knowledge networks and expertise of the UN system more systematically accessible to the Government of Lao PDR. The UN Partnership Framework will be a successor to the 2012-2016 Lao PDR-UN Development Assistance Framework Action Plan (UNDAF).

21. The purpose of this Country Analysis is to guide the UN Country Team in selecting and prioritizing interventions, and targeting support to where the UN can make the biggest difference and most effectively respond to key national priorities. In particular, the Country Analysis analyzes the situation of the country with respect to international norms and goals and the patterns and causes of inequality. Looking forward, the Country Analysis identifies the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead in the path to achieving the SDGs within the context of the UN Partnership Framework.

# 1. Introduction

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22. **The Lao PDR is a land-locked and mountainous country.** The country has a total area of 236,800 square kilometres<sup>1</sup> and borders with the Kingdom of Cambodia, the People’s Republic of China, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, the Kingdom of Thailand and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (Figure 1.1). Some 80 percent of the land area is hilly or mountainous terrain (“midland” or “upland”), including areas that are remote and difficult to access. Lowland areas account for only 20 percent of the land area, but accommodate over half the country’s population (56 percent).<sup>2</sup> Only one-quarter of the country’s land area is considered cultivable.<sup>3</sup> Administratively, the country is divided into 17 provinces and Vientiane Capital, with 145 districts and 8,600 villages.<sup>a, 4</sup> Estimates of the rural population vary from 71 percent of the total population in a 2013 survey<sup>5</sup> to 68 percent in 2015.<sup>6</sup>

23. **Strong economic growth has enabled Lao PDR to move from a low-income economy to a “lower middle-income” country.** The economy grew at a rate of 7.5 percent in 2014 compared to an average of 8 percent over 2011-13.<sup>7</sup> Infrastructure construction (including for hydropower), forestry and services were the main contributors to this growth. The gross national income (GNI) per capita was reported as \$1,600 in 2014 according to the World Bank’s Atlas method.<sup>8</sup> The political economy of Lao PDR remains in transition: reforms were introduced in the late 1980s to a centrally planned economy, which has led to privatization of some productive assets and the introduction of some free market principles.

24. **The country’s economic growth is heavily reliant on natural resources.** From 2005 to 2013, the hydropower and mining sectors combined generated about one third of the country’s economic growth.<sup>9</sup> The natural resources sector has a high ratio of capital to labour, and was able to produce approximately 18 percent of Lao PDR’s gross domestic product (GDP) in 2013 with only 22,000 people. The economic growth was therefore, not able to generate a significant rise in shared growth and employment.<sup>10</sup> Statistics on mineral rents<sup>11</sup> as a percentage of GDP show a figure for the Lao PDR of 10.3 percent in 2013 (with an average of 10.5 percent since 2005), which is at the high end globally.<sup>b</sup> Diversification of the economy will be necessary to achieve a more inclusive growth that generates decent work opportunities.

25. **The Lao PDR aims to become eligible for graduation from Least Developed Country (LDC) status by the 2020s.** LDC graduation is a six-year graduation process, since the reviews are triennial. The United Nations Committee for Development Policy (UN-CDP) determines pre-eligibility based on each country’s score and ranking on three criteria: the GNI per capita, the Human Assets Index (HAI) and the Economic Vulnerability Index (EVI). Lao PDR will need to meet pre-eligibility requirements in 2018 in order to achieve LDC graduation before 2024.<sup>12</sup>

26. **Lao PDR is an ethnically diverse country.** The country has 49 officially recognised groups and up to hundreds of sub-groupings. There are four main ethno-linguistic groups (Lao-Tai, Mon-Khmer, Hmong-Lu Mien and Chine-Tibetan). Lao-Tai is the official language; however many ethnic groups do not speak it.<sup>13</sup> Different socio-cultural traditions and low levels of literacy characterize the

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<sup>a</sup> The former Xaysomboon special region was approved as a province in late 2013

<sup>b</sup> Mineral rents for 2013 as a percentage of GDP: Mongolia 14.3 percent, Papua New Guinea 19.9 percent, Democratic Republic of Congo 18.6 percent

groups living in remote mountain areas. Lao PDR is also a country where both matrilineal and patrilineal social organization can be found. It has the distinction of being one of the few countries left in the world where matrilineal residence, matrilineal inheritance, and bilineal descent<sup>14</sup> and kinship still exist for a large group of women, notably women of the Lao Lum tradition.<sup>15</sup>

27. **The current population is estimated at 6.8 million.**<sup>16</sup> The lack of vital registration and of statistics on international migration makes such estimates imprecise. The population is relatively young, with 58 percent under the age of 25 and an estimated median age of 22 years in 2015. Life expectancy at birth is estimated at 65.8 years for both sexes. With current trends in infant and under-five mortality rates, life expectancy in Lao PDR is not expected to reach 70 years until 2036.<sup>17</sup>

28. **Lao PDR had the highest TFR among ASEAN countries in the 2005-10 period.** The TFR in 2011-12 was 3.2, well above the “replacement” level of 2.1. The TFR decreases with wealth status and education. Women in the lowest wealth quintile have a TFR of 5.3, while those in the top wealth quintile have a TFR of 1.9. Education has a similar effect, with the most educated women having a TFR of 2.0 while those with no education have a TFR of 5.3.<sup>18</sup>

29. **The share of urban population is projected to increase to over one-third of the total population in 2015.** This is still well below the global average of 50 percent. The urban population growth rate was 5.3 percent over the period 2005-2010, with more than two-thirds of population growth in Vientiane Capital in recent years caused by net in-migration.<sup>19</sup> Indications are that most migration is rural to urban, primarily to Vientiane Capital. There is also a significant movement across the border to Thailand, which has similar language and culture. However, reliable statistics are scarce.

30. **Lao PDR has the distinction of being one of the most heavily bombed nations in the world.** From 1964 to 1973, during the period known by the Lao people as the Second Indochina war, Lao PDR suffered intense ground battles, as well as some of the heaviest aerial bombardment in world history. During this period, more than 500,000 bombing missions dropped over two million tons of ordnance, or nearly one ton for every man, woman and child in the population at the time. Most of these were anti-personnel cluster bomblets intended to explode on or shortly after impact, but the failure rate may have been as high as 30 percent. As a result, more than 40 years after the end of war, unexploded ordnance (UXO)<sup>a</sup> still affects 15 of the 18 provinces. The National UXO Socio-Economic Impact Survey conducted in 1996-97 found that 86 of the 133 districts in the country (or 25 percent of all villages) reported continued UXO contamination. UXO can be anywhere, and are everywhere – in rice fields, on hillsides, in villages, along roads and in the centre of provincial towns.<sup>20</sup>

31. **Lao PDR has acceded to or ratified seven international human rights instruments.** Table 1.1 shows the status with regard to the ten core human rights instruments (nine treaties plus the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment). Lao PDR has also ratified five of the eight ILO Fundamental Conventions and one of four ILO Governance (Priority) Conventions<sup>21</sup> (Table 1.2). The country has been conducting various reviews and revisions of national laws, policies and programmes as part of its obligations to these ratifications and accessions. Other international commitments are covered in relevant chapters.

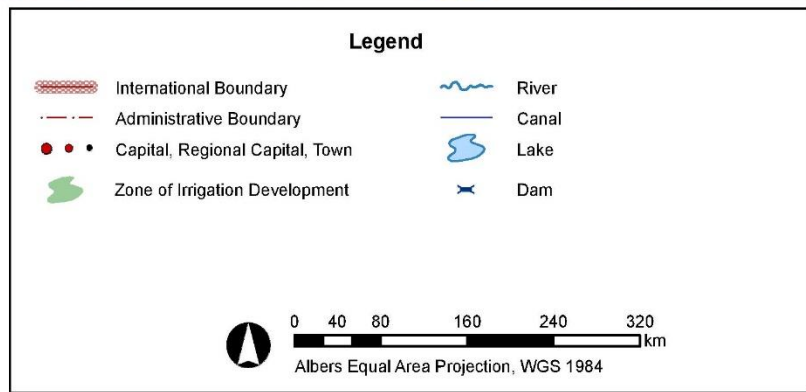
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<sup>a</sup> The term UXO is used generically for both unexploded ordnance (UXO) and abandoned explosive ordnance (AXO).

32. **The high ratification status needs to be supported by capacity strengthening and measures to accelerate implementation.** The Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR)<sup>22</sup> made 196 recommendations in 2015, of which the Government of the Lao PDR accepted 116, including those that have already been put into practice, and are in line with the Lao PDR's Constitution, laws, policies and practice.<sup>23</sup> Most reports to treaty bodies are overdue (Table 1.1). The Government has accepted the UPR recommendation to submit outstanding reports to the treaty bodies, and the United Nations in Lao PDR could play a constructive role in this regard.



Figure 1.1. Map of the Lao People's Democratic Republic



LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

FAO - AQUASTAT, 2011

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The designations employed and the presentation of material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

**Table 1.1. The status of the Lao People's Democratic Republic with regard to international Human Rights Instruments and Treaties**

	International Human Rights Instruments	Signature date	Ratification Date, Accession(a), Succession(d) Date	Reporting status as of 12 November 2014
1	CAT - Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment	21-Sep-10	26-Sep-12	Initial report overdue since 2013
2	OP-CAT – Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment			
3	CEDAW - Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	17-Jul-80	14-Aug-81	Eighth and ninth reports overdue since September 2014
	CEDAW-OP - Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women			
4	CMW - International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families			
5	CPED - Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance	29-Sep-08		
6	CRC - Convention on the Rights of the Child		08 May 1991 (a)	Combined third to sixth reports due in 2016.
	CRC-OP-AC - Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict		20 Sep 2006 (a)	Initial OP-CRC-AC and OP-CRC-SC reports to be considered in 2016
	CRC-OP-SC - Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children child prostitution and child pornography		20 Sep 2006 (a)	
	CRC-OP-IC - Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure			
7	CRPD - Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	15-Jan-08	25-Sep-09	Initial report overdue since 2011
8	ICCPR - International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	7-Dec-00	25-Sep-09	Initial report overdue since 2011
	ICCPR-OP1 - Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights			
	ICCPR-OP2 – Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty			
9	ICERD - International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination		22 Feb 1974 (a)	Nineteenth to twenty-first reports due in 2015
10	ICESCR - International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	7-Dec-00	13-Feb-07	Initial report overdue since 2009
	ICESR-OP-Optional Protocol to the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights			

**Sources:** UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, database accessed 6 November 2015. The reporting status and implementation status were compiled by the UN.<sup>24</sup> Several UN Member States made remarks and recommendations at the Universal Periodic Review,<sup>25</sup> which Lao PDR duly accepted or noted and rejected, in accordance with its laws or the reality of the country.<sup>26</sup> No attempt is made here to synthesize these extensive discussions, which may be obtained from the references cited in this paragraph.  
[http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/TreatyBodyExternal/countries.aspx](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/TreatyBodyExternal/countries.aspx)

**Table 1.2. The status of Lao People's Democratic Republic with regard to ILO Fundamental Conventions and ILO Governance (Priority) Conventions**

ILO Fundamental Conventions		Date	Status
1	C029 - Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29)	23-Jan-64	In Force
2	C100 - Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100)	13-Jun-08	In Force
3	C111 - Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111)	13-Jun-08	In Force
4	C138 - Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) Minimum age specified: 14 years	13-Jun-05	In Force
5	C182 - Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182)	13-Jun-05	In Force
6	C087 - Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87)		Not ratified
7	C098 - Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98)		Not ratified
8	C105 - Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105)		Not ratified
ILO Governance (Priority) Conventions		Date	Status
1	C144 - Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144)	29 Oct 2010	In Force
2	C081 - Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81)		Not ratified
3	C122 - Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (No. 122)		Not ratified
4	C129 - Labour Inspection (Agriculture) Convention, 1969 (No. 129)		Not ratified
<p><b>Sources:</b> International Labour Organization, NORMLEX Information System on International Labour Standards. Accessed 6 November 2015.  <a href="http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:1:0::NO:RP::">http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:1:0::NO:RP::</a></p>			

## 2. Enhance competitiveness

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### 2.1. Background: AEC entry and its implications

33. **Regional economic integration is expected to lead to the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) by the end of 2015.** The AEC aims to become a highly competitive economic region characterized by a single market and production base, equitable economic development, and full integration with the global economy. The 10 ASEAN countries<sup>a</sup> are expected to benefit from the free movement of goods, services, investment, skilled labour, and freer flow of capital.<sup>27</sup> The AEC will represent some 622 million population (nearly one-tenth of the world's population) and a GDP of 2.6 trillion.<sup>28</sup> The AEC areas of cooperation include human resources development and capacity building, recognition of professional qualifications, closer consultation on macroeconomic and financial policies, trade financing measures, enhanced infrastructure and communications connectivity, integration of industries across the region to promote regional sourcing, and enhanced private sector involvement for the building of the AEC. The AEC process is expected to phase in, allowing longer periods of adjustment for some countries than for others.

34. **Lao PDR has undertaken several initiatives in preparation for AEC entry.** In particular, the Government is emphasizing entrepreneurship development, examining the implications for its labour force, and establishing measures to better manage and ensure quality investment. Lao PDR has put in place the classification for quality investment in specific sectors such as agriculture, forestry, and hotel and tourism. The Government is working with development partners and private sector to take into account various concerns on the social and environment impacts of investment projects, especially for concessional investments.<sup>29</sup> The Government has put a moratorium on new land concessions, announced in June 2012,<sup>30</sup> together with plans to review existing land concessions and cancel or sanction those found to be violating the law. It has also agreed to the UPR recommendations on land reform, the better management of land leases and concessions in line with international standards, responsible investment in agriculture and protection of the rights of affected persons. Deeper structural reforms are needed to foster a conducive environment for finance and banking, lower barriers to trade, establish a transparent and non-discriminatory investment regime, and promote quality investment.<sup>31,32</sup>

### 2.2. Youth and the demographic dividend

35. **Lao PDR has one of the youngest populations in the region.** Nearly 60 percent of Lao PDR's population are estimated to be less than 25 years of age. Projections show a rapid increase in working-age population and a falling dependency ratio.<sup>33</sup> Thus, in the medium-term, Lao PDR is set to benefit from the "demographic dividend" to the economy. However, the full benefits of the demographic dividend will be realized only if new jobs are able to keep pace with the growth of the working age population and only if young women and young men are better equipped with the

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<sup>a</sup> The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) comprises ten countries: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

appropriate skills and knowledge. This issue will become all the more critical with the move towards regional integration.

36. **The young population represents a unique opportunity for the Lao PDR.** The demand for medium-skilled and high-skilled workers generated by AEC entry cannot be met without addressing the current mismatch between labour market needs and young people's education and skills. Lao PDR will, therefore, need to accelerate measures to upgrade education and training for young people and improve labour skills, set national skills standards and promote mutual recognition of qualifications (see Chapters 5 and 7).

37. **A multisectoral approach is needed to maximize the potential of youth.**<sup>a</sup> Such an approach would involve measures in not only the education and employment sectors to address the skills shortage among youth, but also in other sectors such as health and protection. These would include, for example, preventing early marriage and adolescent birth, promoting reproductive health and HIV knowledge, addressing gender disparities, and combatting violence, trafficking, and substance abuse. Later sections of this Report discuss these issues further.

38. **The participation and awareness of young women and men is still limited.** Participation should include not only the engagement of young women and men in community activities, but also the opportunity to contribute to relevant decisions. The barriers to their participation include the lack of representation from youth organizations in local or national development planning, limited opportunities for engagement, and – as in most societies in the region – traditional and cultural perceptions of the role of young women and young men. Young women and young men are also largely unaware of the laws and policies relating to them. Without this knowledge, they are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, and may not seek help from the authorities when appropriate. At the same time, parents, communities and authorities need to understand existing laws and policies affecting young women and young men, often differently.

### **2.3. Private sector partnerships**

39. **The role of the private sector in Lao PDR is expected to grow as the country opens up.** Key players in the private sector need to become advocates and change agents themselves on many of the SDG issues, given the potential for corporate social responsibility programmes. Child protection and child labour issues, for example, strike a chord with the public. In poverty reduction, private sector involvement is necessary to improve rural infrastructure, market access and livelihood opportunities for the poor. Vocational education requires public-private partnerships in designing relevant training courses and expanding skills development training centres. The private sector is already a key partner in tackling child undernutrition under the Scaling Up Nutrition approach. Health reforms require expanding public-private partnerships and developing stronger regulatory frameworks for private health care providers. Any effective response to HIV will need private sector cooperation, especially to work with large enterprises employing mobile workers. Fighting multi-drug resistance malaria and stepping up TB control, especially in border areas, will require health authorities to strengthen collaboration with private health care providers on both sides of the borders. In the environment sector, early benefits from public-private partnerships are already tangible, such as social contributions from large infrastructure projects. More such initiatives led by the private

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<sup>a</sup> UNICEF/WHO/UNFPA definitions: Adolescent: 10-19 years, Young People: 10-24 years, Youth: 15-24 years, while the UN Convention on Rights of the Child and UNICEF define children as all those below the age of 18 years of age. This Report follows the practice of using these terms loosely. <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-definition.pdf>

sector need to be expanded or accelerated, such as ecotourism, promotion of sustainably harvested non-timber forest products, and sustainable natural resource management. The growing global trend of “green cities” “green industries” and “green growth” will require the private sector to lead in many respects.<sup>a</sup>

## **2.4. Trade, SMEs and inclusive industrialization**

40. **Lao PDR is on a path of increasing openness to trade flows and integration with the world economy.** In February 2013, Lao PDR completed its accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO). As part of its efforts to secure WTO membership, Lao PDR has made legislative amendments to meet the WTO’s requirements in a number of areas, including tax, trade and intellectual property. The country has signed a series of free-trade agreements with China; Japan; Taiwan, China; the EU; and the USA, among other countries.<sup>34</sup>

41. **Lao PDR’s economy needs to become much more competitive and the overall business environment friendlier to the private sector.** According to the World Bank’s Doing Business Report 2014, Lao PDR ranks 134 out of 189 countries for overall ease of doing business. Lao PDR ranks particularly low in terms of the time and cost of resolving insolvency (position 189), protecting minority investors (178), starting a business (153) and getting electricity (158).<sup>35</sup> Structural reforms are needed for Lao entrepreneurs to conduct their business activities more efficiently and compete with other countries.

42. **Transforming Lao PDR’s economy to a more competitive one requires addressing key trade barriers.** Since 2006, the Government of the Lao PDR and development partners have conducted Diagnostic Trade Integration Studies (DTIS) to identify key institutional and operational bottlenecks and capacity gaps in increasing cross-border trade. The 2012 DTIS identified a number of trade and integration priorities. The Second Trade Development Facility (TDF) Project, led by the Ministry of Industry and Commerce (MoIC) and funded by the Multi-Donor Trust Fund, is implementing these priorities as follows: <sup>36</sup>

- (i) Trade facilitation, trade policy and regulations, comprising measures to improve transparency, predictability and lower associated compliance costs for traders.
- (ii) Diversification and competitiveness, which aims to strengthen private sector capacity to improve productivity and compete in international markets, focusing on the non-natural resources sectors. This includes promoting the effective participation of small and medium sized enterprises in the international economy, fostering better skills and labour standards in the manufacturing sector and supporting women’s economic empowerment.
- (iii) Measures to mainstream aid for trade.<sup>37</sup>

43. **To broaden the sources of growth in the economy, Lao PDR will need to build up small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).** SMEs are already an important part of the economy of Lao PDR and employ a large part of the population. The Prime Minister’s Decree 42<sup>38</sup> defines SMEs as independent enterprises that are legally registered and that operate according to the prevailing laws of the Lao PDR. Table 2.1 shows the classification of SMEs according to size. The 2006 industrial census reports that over half of SMEs are unregistered, primarily due to the high cost of licensing.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> See Chapters 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12 and Section 2.4, which provide the contexts for private sector participation.



<b>Enterprise Size</b>	<b>Units</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Small enterprises (1 to 19 staff)	125,616	98.98
Medium enterprises (20 to 99 staff)	1,081	0.85
Large enterprises (more than 100 staff)	196	0.15
No answer	20	0.01
<b>Total</b>	<b>126,913</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Department for Small and Medium Enterprise Promotion (DOSMEP), Ministry of Industry and Commerce (2010)

44. **SMEs in Lao PDR are a major employer but their productivity is relatively low.** In 2010, SMEs accounted for 81 percent of the total employed by registered firms.<sup>40</sup> However, SMEs contribute to only about 16 percent to GDP,<sup>a</sup> which is a relatively low share compared to 38.9 percent in Thailand, 32 percent in Malaysia and 32 percent in Philippines. It also reflects the low productivity of SMEs versus larger firms.<sup>41</sup> Data is not available on the number of firms and micro-entrepreneurs operating in the informal economy, such as street vendors, tuk-tuk drivers, handymen, construction workers, etc.

45. **The mix of constraints faced by SMEs in Lao PDR varies according to the size of the enterprise.** Small registered firms in Lao PDR mention unfair competition from informal sector, high tax rates and difficult access to finance as their three major obstacles for business growth. Registered medium enterprises list the inadequately educated workforce as the main constraint, followed by unfair practices from the informal sector, and difficulty of access to finance. For large firms in Lao PDR, the main constraints are inadequately educated workforce, transportation and unfair practices from the informal sector. Overall, in 2014, less than 20 percent of SMEs had access to long-term credit, which makes it difficult for them to grow and compete against other SMEs in Asia.<sup>42</sup>

46. **Promoting SMEs will be especially beneficial for women.** Women make up more than half the owners of newly registered enterprises.<sup>43</sup> Around 31 percent of formal enterprises with more than five employees are owned by females in Lao PDR, which compares favourably with many countries and regions, but is still lower than the average for East Asia.<sup>44</sup> Female-owned firms are more likely to operate in the retail sector and less in the manufacturing sector. Those firms owned by women are much smaller in terms of number of employees compared to firms owned by men. Analysis from the also indicates that while the legal framework for doing business does not have gender discriminatory elements, in practice, enterprises owned and operated by women face a number of barriers. Female entrepreneurs report that their household responsibilities and lack of mobility due to personal duties makes it more difficult to start a business. Female entrepreneurs in Lao PDR are also less likely to have a bank account or credit line.<sup>45</sup>

47. **Lao PDR will need to address weak institutional capacities and the financial constraints to the growth of SMEs.** DOSMEP, the government agency responsible for SME development, is still a young and weak institution. Its capability to formulate policies, implement new programs, monitor implementation and evaluate the impact of its different programs to support SMEs is quite limited.<sup>46</sup> Additionally, statistics and information on SMEs in Lao PDR are extremely limited. A major problem is that the available statistics do not distinguish between micro-enterprises and small enterprises, and do not capture informal firms, or firms operating in rural areas. As a result, it is difficult to know the size of informal enterprises, the factors that prevent them from becoming formal,

<sup>a</sup> Data was not available on the contribution of SMEs per economic sector.

and plan accordingly.<sup>47</sup> Lao PDR will also need to strengthen the policy framework for SMEs, eliminate bureaucratic barriers and introduce measures to enable SMEs to take advantage of the Lao PDR's increased trade openness.<sup>48</sup>

48. **The establishment and development of Special and Specific Economic Zones (SEZs) will need to be carefully managed.** The SEZs allow different economic policies and flexible governmental measures in certain areas of the country. On the other hand, villagers who are displaced to make way for the SEZ development are deprived of their land and may be unable to have access to new means of livelihood.<sup>49</sup> Additional resources and expertise will be needed to ensure that SEZ development is conducted in line with international commitments made by the Government at the 2015 UPR. The Government accepted the UPR recommendation on full, adequate and effective compensation for land expropriation and on the recognition of customary land rights<sup>50</sup> (see Chapters 3 and 12 on the issue of concessions).

49. **Green Growth<sup>51</sup> and Green Industry<sup>52</sup> need further promotion.** The MoIC, in particular the Department of Industry and Handicraft (DIH), aims to promote participation by both public and private sectors in Green Growth and Green Industry. The "Greening" of industry will include policymaking, improved industrial production processes and resource-efficient productivity. The country's Green Industry status is still at an early stage. The DIH is developing policies to promote high value-added products in various sectors, including from agro-processing, wood manufacturing, manufacturing for the construction sector, food processing, and textile and garment manufacture. The aim is to encourage these sectors to be more efficient in resource utilization, and improve product quality, competitiveness and work place environment. Specific policies and instruments still need to be developed for Green Growth. Each Ministry has its own interpretation, and there is a need for a common strategy that could bring all the relevant Ministries together.<sup>a</sup>

## 2.5. Migration and transnational crime

50. **With AEC entry, greater economic integration may increase regional disparities, at least initially.** The economic activity in more affluent Member States and demographic factors would stimulate demand for low-skilled workers in specific sectors and create a temporary "migration hump."<sup>53</sup> ASEAN migration hubs such as Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand could thus benefit early on from freer trade by employing more migrant workers from the poorer countries. Regardless of AEC integration, the flows of low-skilled workers are expected to continue in the short and medium-term. In Thailand, for example, the labour force is expected to shrink by 2022 and the demand for the low- and medium skilled migrant workers will rise, providing that Thailand sustains production and continues its economic growth.<sup>54</sup>

51. **The AEC is an opportunity for countries to manage migration better.** Increased and affordable access to regular migration channels would protect migrant workers, while reducing exploitation and trafficking. Providing incentives for migrant workers to use regular channels would also help to eliminate self-appointed agents responsible for visas and paperwork, and provide workers with the right to join unions and benefit from social security programs.

52. **However, without effective law enforcement and protection mechanisms, AEC will have a negative impact.** Looser controls and shortcomings in customs and border control procedures could lead to a rise in illegal trade, trafficking and crime. Immigration checkpoints will be

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<sup>a</sup> Information from UNIDO.



crucial, especially in the Greater Mekong Subregion of Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam and Cambodia. In this Subregion, porous borders and improvement of highways, bridges and telecommunications will facilitate movement not only of people seeking work, but also of traffickers. Increased connectivity may be beneficial for trade and economic growth, but it also opens the way for transnational crime syndicates if done without adequate safeguards.

**53. Transnational crime already generates more than \$100 billion a year in revenues in Southeast Asia.**<sup>55</sup> Illicit money flows already pose a significant threat to sustainable economic development, fuelling corruption (Chapter 3) and diverting funds away from investment in public services. As trade facilitation grows and borders become more porous, it may become more difficult to intercept those involved in smuggling or human trafficking, money, drugs, precursor chemicals,<sup>a</sup> counterfeit goods, wildlife and forest products. Looser controls would also reduce the chance of intercepting criminals and would-be terrorists. Governments are now more aware of such threats and need support in coordination among the different ministries in each country, since ministerial structures are often highly compartmentalized.

**54. Lao PDR is a source, and to a lesser extent, a transit and destination country for sex trafficking and forced labour of women, children, and men.** Many victims, particularly women and girls, some reportedly as young as 11 years old, are exploited in Thailand's commercial sex trade and in forced labour in domestic service, factories, or agricultural industries. (Section 14.1 further explores the issue). Lao trafficking victims are often migrants seeking work outside the country — sometimes with the assistance of brokers charging high fees — who then are trapped in forced labour or sexual exploitation after arriving in destination countries, usually Thailand and China. Human trafficking in and out of Lao PDR is a direct consequence of inequitable growth within the country and in the region as a whole. People are lured by promises of opportunities in Lao cities and in foreign countries. What often starts as unsafe migration quickly evolves into human trafficking as employers confiscate travel documents and inhumane working conditions are imposed. The US State Department has placed Lao PDR on its "Tier Two Watch List"<sup>56</sup> for three consecutive years, which calls for strong response measures.

**55. A new Trafficking in Persons Law will provide a sound legal basis for advocacy and action.** State authorities have continued to prosecute trafficking offenses and convict traffickers, and to provide short-term assistance to some victims. This has largely happened due to significant external support, primarily through the UN. With UN support, the Government has been drafting legislation to curb human trafficking. At the time of this report, the Law is still being developed.

**56. Corruption is another barrier impeding the Lao economy from becoming more competitive.** Corruption may scare away some investors but affects the poor most, since it increases the price for public services, lowers the quality and often restricts poor people's access to essential services. Corruption impedes poverty alleviation efforts by reinforcing inequality and distorting public expenditure allocation. Corruption is not a problem peculiar to Lao PDR, but it is not inevitable. The Lao PDR enacted the Anti-Corruption Law in 2006 and ratified the United Nations Convention against Corruption in 2009.<sup>57</sup> Corruption is also discussed in the Governance chapter.

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<sup>a</sup> Precursor chemicals are those used to make heroin and methamphetamines.

## 2.6. Looking forward: recommendations for UN support

57. **Frameworks.** The issues in this Chapter contribute to the goal of enhancing the competitiveness and inclusiveness of the country's economy. Within the NSEDP 2016-2020, these issues relate to the Government's goal of LDC graduation, the Key Directions<sup>58</sup> of the Plan, and Outcomes 1 and 2 (sustained, inclusive economic growth and human resources development). Among the SDGs, the issues in this Chapter relate to SDG 17 (trade), SDG 9 (industrialization and SMEs), SDG 16 (transnational crime), while youth and private sector are relevant to most SDGs. Within these frameworks, UN support to the Government of Lao PDR is recommended as follows

### Youth

- **Develop a comprehensive national youth policy extending across the different sectors and existing laws.** Adolescents, youth and young people need to realize their potential and undertake an important role in enriching the country's human capital and making Lao PDR's economy more inclusive and competitive. Several important elements relating to youth extend across many different sectors; these would benefit from integration within a youth policy. Such issues include (but are not limited to) the following: (i) rights, laws and policies relevant to youth, (ii) prevention of adolescent pregnancies and early marriage, (iii) sexual and reproductive health education, (iv) lifestyle issues, such as obesity, substance abuse and risk behaviour, (v) access to contraceptives, (vi) knowledge of HIV and other health issues, (vii) school retention and secondary school graduation, vocational education and other skills building measures to prepare youth for employment, and (viii) youth participation related to environment, climate change and resilience, since young people have far more at stake in these issues.

### Trade

- **Address key trade barriers hindering the competitiveness and diversification of Lao PDR's economy.** This would include continued collaboration on the Second Trade Development Framework (TDF) funded by the Multi-Donor Trust Fund, which is implementing projects through the Diagnostic Trade Integration Study.

### SMEs and industrialization

- **Promote sustainable industrialization with greater resource-use efficiency and environmentally sound technologies.** Cooperation should emphasize policy development and policy testing in the following areas: (i) public-private partnerships in Green Growth/Green Industrialization initiatives, (ii) value-added products for various industrial sectors, (iii) greater efficiency in resource utilization, product quality and competitiveness, and better work place environment, (iv) promotion of industrialization towards a non-natural resource base, and (v) the development of Special and Specific Economic Zones (including industrial zones) in line with sustainability and equity principles.
- **Promote inclusive industrialization through SME development, especially SMEs run by women.** This would include measures to enhance the access of SMEs to affordable credit and other financial services, support SME integration into value chains and markets, make SMEs more competitive, resolve the bottlenecks constraining the expansion of SMEs (Section 2.4) and help women entrepreneurs to start small businesses. Since the resources sector is the main contributor to the Lao PDR's economy, expanding a SME-dominated private sector would help the government to achieve a more balanced, inclusive growth. Establishing and improving

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a UNICEF/WHO/UNFPA definitions: Adolescent: 10-19 years, Young People: 10-24 years, Youth: 15-24 years, while the UN Convention on Rights of the Child and UNICEF define children as all those below the age of 18 years of age. Most of the terms are used loosely. <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-definition.pdf>

statistical systems for inclusive and sustainable industrial development would be a related “software” priority.

- **Upgrade technological capabilities by encouraging local innovations.** In sectors and subsectors relevant to Lao PDR, applied research and innovation can shape the development of agro-industries and food industries, as well as boost rural productivity and resilience (Chapter 5). The innovations and technologies will need to inform the development of agricultural extension packages and other forms of livelihood support.

### **Partnerships with the private sector**

- **Strengthen partnerships with private sector to accelerate the achievement of national and SDG targets.** Section 2.3 identifies possible areas for collaboration. Among these, private sector involvement is especially crucial in boosting rural productivity, bridging the gap between skills training and job markets, ensuring environmental sustainability and promoting green growth.

### **Transnational crime**

- **Support the implementation of the law on combatting human trafficking following its finalization and adoption.** The Law will only be effective to the extent that implementation is focused and effective. Continued support from the UN system and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) will clearly be crucial. Given the relatively weak position of civil society in Lao PDR, the UN is uniquely positioned to support the implementation of the new Law.

### 3. Promote good governance

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58. **Governance is especially relevant in the context of the Eighth NSEDP.** The Plan implicitly requires a more strategic, self-reliant and sustainable model for Lao PDR's development. More explicitly, the Eighth NSEDP recognizes the importance of governance with an output dedicated to governance-related areas (Outcome 2, Output 7). The overall framework for governance reform is set out in Lao PDR's draft Strategic Plan on Governance, which emphasizes the government's commitment to building "an effective, efficient, well-trained, honest and ethical public service". The Government's framework identifies four major governance themes: Public Service Improvement, People's Participation, Rule of Law and Sound Financial Management. Each of these areas plays a critical role in ensuring the balanced and sustainable development of Lao society and administration.<sup>59</sup>

59. **Lao PDR has made significant advances in certain areas of governance.** These include strengthening public administration capacity, decentralizing delivery of local services, improving accountability with a greater share of responsibility being taken by the National Assembly, enlarging the space for stakeholders (with a larger number of contributing civil society organizations compared to that in the previous five-year period), clearer goals, and a focus on improving the justice sector in the country. Lao PDR's progress in improving governance was commended at the 2015 UPR.

#### 3.1. Public sector reform and local governance

60. **Changes in the executive machinery of government have contributed to developing a more competent and professional civil service.** In recent years, the number of line ministries has grown to 18, and these ministries are able to provide greater policy direction and management over a more comprehensive range of sectors and services than in the past. The size of the civil service has expanded to over 150,000 (with women accounting for 43 percent), including teachers and health workers, the vast majority of whom are at district and local level. The agency responsible for the management of the civil service has been upgraded from a sub-ministry to full ministry status as the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA) in 2012.

61. **Local administrations have been systematically strengthened in governance.** The introduction of effective frameworks for local governance and capacity strengthening at local levels has led to improved local services. The District Development Fund (DDF) system uses the government's own systems and staff to provide untied block grants together with practical learning to District administrations, enabling them to engage with local communities to identify and provide services related to priority MDGs. By developing the capacity of local administrations, the DDF strengthens social service provision and, equally important for sustainability, the ability of the local government machinery to lead and manage local services delivery. The 2,500 local officials across 53 districts and 7 provinces – who can now plan, procure and financially manage the delivery of locally prioritized services in health, education, agriculture and public works – have expressed high satisfaction with the new DDF frameworks that empower them to meet local priority needs.<sup>60</sup>

62. **The local governance interventions mark the introduction of real cross-sector local planning and a more joined-up response to local service priorities.** District Development Support Teams and Committees are now operating in 53 DDF districts. This local governance

framework will need to be scaled up: to date, it has brought about priority service investments and interventions in services outreach,<sup>61</sup> directly benefiting 374,000 households in 4,900 villages.

63. **Lao PDR has various channels and forums for participation.** These range from indirect channels, involving participation through representative institutions such as the National Assembly, to the approved Party mass organisations and formal business associations. Participation also takes place through other interest groups, civil society organisations (CSOs), Non Profit Associations (NPAs), the media and other forms of communication. The 2009 Decree 115 on Associations marks an important step in the formal recognition of NPAs as partners in development. Approximately 140 NPAs have been registered since then. These organisations are primarily engaged in community development activities rather than advocacy, and are still struggling to establish their space in meaningful policy dialogue. Further advocacy and support will be needed to foster an enabling environment for greater civil society participation.

64. **Significant steps have been taken towards creating a more effective and accountable Administration.** Over the past five years, the National Assembly has played an increasingly important role. This includes, for example, playing a key role in the legislation process prior to the adoption of Laws, in the oversight of public services, and in enhancing participation in the decision-making process.<sup>62</sup> A constitutional amendment, scheduled for adoption in December 2015, is expected to pave the way for establishing local assemblies and changing the political landscape at the lower level.<sup>63</sup> Constitutional changes and updates to the Law on Local Administration provide for the introduction of Provincial Local Assemblies and more clearly defined mandates. There is also a planned separation of powers between the Provincial Governor and Provincial Party Secretary.

### 3.2. Rule of law and access to justice

65. **While Lao PDR has made steady progress towards establishing rule of law, significant challenges remain.** These include insufficiencies in the number and capacity of judicial professionals in the country, the weak implementation and enforcement of laws, and the need to harmonize domestic legislation with a number of international legal obligations.<sup>64</sup> There is also the need to improve women's and men's access to justice, stakeholders' participation in decision-making processes and the reporting to international human rights bodies (Table 1.1).

66. **Lao PDR has publicly committed to tackling corruption.** The Government recognizes the importance of preventing and combating corruption. In its statement at the UPR,<sup>65</sup> the Lao PDR delegation emphasized the implementation of the Law on Anti-Corruption, other related laws and legal instruments, particularly the decree on the declaration of assets for government officials at all levels. In a ranking conducted by the INGO Transparency International, Lao PDR ranked in the bottom fifth of the Corruption Perception Index (145 out of 175 countries and territories) in 2014. In terms of actual score, Lao PDR was marked 25, on a scale of zero (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean).<sup>a</sup>

67. **With significant expansion of investment in land throughout the country, the impacts of land investment are being scrutinized much more than before.** Large-scale land investment in Lao PDR has brought significant transformations in national landscapes, which have in turn, engendered drastic socioeconomic and environmental changes and affected food security and

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<sup>a</sup> The Corruption Perception Index is a composite index of the opinions of mainly "internationally focused experts, typically from a corporate background and/or with higher education levels." <http://www.transparency.org/cpi2014/results>

traditional livelihoods.<sup>66</sup> The Government has accepted the recommendation made during the 2015 UPR on providing full, adequate and effective compensation for land expropriations and on recognizing and protecting customary land rights.<sup>67</sup> It also agreed to step up enforcement of its 2012 moratorium on new mining investments and on the granting of concessions for rubber plantations, and review new and existing land concessions, with a view to cancelling or sanctioning those found to be violating the law (see also Chapters 3 and 12 on the issue of land investments).

68. **Knowledge of legal services have improved.** A recent survey in three provinces<sup>68</sup> indicates that two-thirds of respondents knew how to submit a grievance to the Village Mediation Unit (65 percent) and to the police (67 percent). A smaller proportion knew how to approach lawyers (22 percent), prosecutors (28 percent) and courts (43 percent). These numbers indicate an improvement from the justice perception survey conducted in 2011, which demonstrated that awareness about village mediation units and courts was respectively 35 percent and 15 percent. Urban and peri-urban respondents tended to have similar levels of knowledge, with a greater proportion of men knowing about grievance submission procedures compared to women. The type of village, membership within a socio-economic group and the level of education were found to be strong determinants of the level of knowledge about correct grievance submission procedures. Semi-formal grievance resolution mechanisms, traditional or customary forums and village forums were found to be much faster in resolving disputes (between one to seven weeks on average) than were formal mechanisms (10-39 weeks).

69. **Pragmatic laws are vital for unambiguous application and implementation.** An assessment of law-making conducted by the Ministry of Justice in 2014 found no draft law that strictly complied with the requirements set out under the 2012 Law on Laws, which includes broad participatory consultations, explanatory notes and impact assessment reports. The recently developed law-making manual is expected to provide technical support to law drafters in order to comply with these requirements.

70. **Human and financial resources constrain the expansion of legal services.** As of June 2015, Lao PDR had six legal aid clinics in Vientiane Capital (three clinics), Oudomxay, Champasack and Xayabouly with another one to be launched in Xiengkhouang. Before 2012, there were only three legal aid clinics in the country. Although the number of legal aid facilities may increase in the coming years to meet growing demand, the low number of lawyers in the country and financial challenges in meeting the running costs of the clinics are concerns. As of 2015, about 185 lawyers are licensed and some provinces do not have even a single lawyer based in that province. In response, the Government has established the National Institute of Justice for systematic human resources development in the justice sector and for promoting the role of professionals such as lawyers and prosecutors.

71. **Increasingly, domestic laws are integrating international obligations.** This encouraging trend is evident from the penal code and the recent national laws, such as the National Law on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women and Children, adopted at the end of 2014. In 2015, Lao PDR accepted 116 out of the 196 recommendations arising from the UPR. Subsequently, monitoring mechanisms are being set up to ensure coordinated and comprehensive follow-up on UPR implementation progress. To meet domestic goals and international obligations, Lao PDR's Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA) is leading the process to establish a national Vital Registration system<sup>a</sup> to record the birth, death, marriage and other vital statistics of citizens.

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<sup>a</sup> Birth registration is a fundamental right, recognized by Article 24, of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and article 7 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

### 3.3. Connectivity

72. **With increasing prosperity, significant proportions of the poor now possess mobile phones and television sets** (Table 3.1). Cable and satellite TV have burgeoned, with coverage extending into remote areas. Thirty-seven TV stations (9 at the central level, including 3 private TV channels, 17 in provinces and 11 in districts) offer a wide mix of channels via cable and satellite connections. Compared to the private channels, official government-run media are less popular. There are 11 daily newspapers. All media are subject to censorship, and most media organisations practice some degree of self-censorship. Recent years have seen greater relaxation and tolerance for debate and discussion.<sup>a,69</sup> Web-enabled media have grown significantly, providing a more educated segment of the population with access to news debates and exposure to topical issues, although almost none of these directly relate to the Lao context.<sup>70</sup> In 2014, the Government issued a decree on the Internet in order to regulate social media. In response to the UPR, the Government noted that this decree formed a legal basis for the enjoyment of the right to information access and expression of opinions in a responsible manner, which was in line with international law, including the provisions and permissible limitations in Article 19 of the ICCPR.<sup>71</sup>

**Table 3.1. Changes in household durables possession, 2007/8 to 2012/13**

Possession of Durables	Lao PDR (%)		Population living under the national poverty line (%)	
	2007/8	2012/13	2007/8	2012/13
Mobile phone	48.1	76.0	21.1	56.1
Television	60.2	75.1	35.1	50.2
Radio, VCD	62.6	19.6	48.2	17.5
Satellite disk connection	18.6	58.3	8.8	39.4
Computer	2.0	7.5	0.4	1.3
Bicycle	43.7	29.8	31.6	21.1
Motorbike	58.6	79.5	33.6	62.7
Car	8.2	16.4	2.3	3.6

Source: LECS surveys, Lao Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Planning and Investment

73. **The penetration of TV and mobile phones, even into remote villages, provides an opportunity for programming.** Radio ownership has declined due to the inroads made by television, clearly a more favoured form of entertainment. Half of all poor people (the population group who have poorer health, education and social status) can now be reached through television, with promising potential for behaviour change messages and campaigns. A slightly greater proportion of poor (56.1 percent) have mobile phones, but messages on mobile phones require a degree of literacy. Experience in other countries show that the expanding reach of mobile phones could be useful, especially for service providers who can use appliances linked to SMS to collect and improve data and services, for example, on public health and nutrition issues. Development partners will need to explore the means to exploit such avenues, adapting examples from other countries. These include Malawi and Rwanda, which used RapidSMS to improve health and nutrition;<sup>72</sup> Uganda for surveillance of infectious diseases,<sup>73</sup> and Nigeria for tracking immunization and bed net distribution programmes.<sup>74</sup> In China, the SMS technology was used in the aftermath of the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake in Sichuan province to lay the basis towards establishing a better health management information system.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>a</sup> There is no established right to freedom of information in the Lao PDR legal framework. However, provisions related to availability of some government information to the public are present in a few laws, mentioned in the notes.

### 3.4. Looking forward: recommendations for UN support

74. **Frameworks.** Governance is an area that all UN agencies will need to support in one way or another. Governance is not only a key output of the Eighth NSEDP but also makes up most of SDG 16. Within the frameworks provided by the NSEDP and SDG 16, UN support to the Government of Lao PDR is recommended as follows

- **Promote good governance in every sector.** The Government's framework identifies four major governance themes: public service improvement, participation, rule of law and sound financial management. These four elements cut across every sector. Health, education and other social services have issues in service delivery and financing planning and management, which need to be addressed through a "governance" lens. Indeed, good governance is one of the five priority areas of the health sector reform. Additionally, the realization of women's rights and child protection/child rights relate to several governance issues.
- **Determine where the constraints to participation lie.** In general, all development stakeholders need to give more attention to participation, but approaches to increasing participation have to be culturally sensitive. In some contexts, such as in service delivery, the actors themselves do not think that participation merits much attention, although participation is needed to attain a high degree of sustained coverage, for example, in the case of immunization programmes or programmes for youth.
- **Analyze governance structures and mechanisms to identify areas where joint UN work and joint problem solving could make a difference.** The governance issues analyzed in this Chapter mainly concern public administration and the justice/ law sectors. Joint analysis of governance in other sectors might be useful, for example, where implementation of policies or laws has been ineffective. The response to such challenges could well lie in improving local administrative structures and capacities, rather than in the technical sector itself.



## 4. End poverty and reduce inequalities

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### 4.1. Trends, disparities and determinants

75. **Lao PDR has achieved the MDG target of halving its national poverty rate over the past decade** (Annex 1). Household welfare also improved in terms of ownership of assets, condition of housing and access to services. Some 56 percent of poor households now own mobile phones, 50 percent own a television and 63 percent own a motor bike. The durability of housing materials showed significant improvement. Over the same period, access to electricity among poor households increased by 18.5 percentage points to 58.7 percent.<sup>76</sup>

76. **The poor on average have become less poor.** The country has seen a steady reduction in the poverty gap and poverty severity over time.<sup>77</sup> The poverty gap has come down from 11.2 percent in 1992/93 to 5.5 percent of the national poverty line in 2012/13, while the squared poverty gap (poverty severity index) has declined from 3.9 to 1.9 over the same period.<sup>78</sup>

77. **However, poverty reduction and consumption growth lag behind the country's GDP growth.** International comparisons<sup>a</sup> show that compared to some neighbouring countries, Lao PDR's consumption has lagged behind its high economic growth. From 2007/08 to 2012/13, Lao PDR's annualized growth in real per capita consumption was 2 percent, which lagged behind the rate of per capita GDP growth by 4 percentage points.<sup>79</sup>

78. **The growth in consumption has benefited the richer quintiles more than the poorer segments of the population.** Consumption among the bottom 40 percent of the population grew at 1.3 percent compared to 2.4 percent among the richest 20 percent.<sup>80</sup> Over the 20-year period 1992/93 to 2012/2013, the difference in the share of national consumption between the poorest and richest quintiles has widened by about 6 percentage points. In 2012/13, consumption of the richest quintile was 6.4 times that of the poorest. Two decades ago, the difference was 4.7 times.<sup>81</sup>

79. **The rural-urban gap remains significant at 18.6 percentage points.** The poverty rate in rural areas is 2.9 times that of the urban areas. Even so, over the past two decades, the rural poverty headcount ratio fell from 51.8 to 28.6. From 1992/93 to 2007/08, the decline in rural poverty has been slightly faster than the decline in urban poverty. However, in the five years' period from 2007/08 to 2012/13, rural poverty rates declined much slower (by 9.8 percent), while urban poverty declined by 42.5 percent. The reversal in trend has been correlated with agricultural produce prices<sup>82</sup> (see below).

80. **The progress in poverty reduction varies by altitude and location.** One-third of the population in upland areas is still below the poverty line, while in lowland areas, about one-fifth of the population is poor (18.8 percent). In earlier years (2002/3 to 2007/8), poverty fell relatively quickly in the lowland areas and declined much more slowly in highland areas. In contrast, from 2007/8 to 2012/13, the rate of poverty reduction slowed in the lowland areas, while that in upland areas was more than twice as fast. Poverty reduction in midland areas has proceeded relatively steadily: with a

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<sup>a</sup> Comparison across countries was made using the international standard of PPP\$ 1.25 per day

poverty rate of 22 percent in 2012/13, the midland areas appear to be catching up with the lowland areas.<sup>83</sup>

81. **Ethnicity and education also play determinant roles.** The Lao-Tai, with the highest levels of education, have the lowest poverty rates, continuing the trend of the previous two decades. In contrast to previous trends, the poverty rate among the Chine-Tibetan group has declined dramatically (from 42.2 percent in 2007/8 to 16.4 percent in 2012/13), and is catching with the Lao-Tai (15.4 percent). Poverty remains high among the Mon-Khmer and Hmong-Lu Mien, at 42.3 percent and 39.8 percent respectively. The Mon-Khmer group has the highest poverty rate, but poverty is declining faster in this group than among the Hmong-Lu Mien. One analysis<sup>84</sup> attributes the different patterns to the lower levels of education among the non Lao-Tai groups. The poverty headcount rate is much higher among households where the household head has no education (41.7 percent) or only some primary education (32.4 percent). Non Lao-Tai groups traditionally live in upland or more remote areas difficult to access, and this factor is important, since location and access affect education and livelihoods.

82. **The employment of the household head and the prices of agricultural produce appear to be important determinants.** From 2007/8 to 2012/13, poverty declined more slowly among agricultural households than among wage workers. One report<sup>85</sup> correlates this with the decline in prices of agricultural produce over this period, which reduced large farmers' welfare, but raised the welfare of wage workers, who are net food buyers. Conversely, in the earlier period (2002/3 to 2007/8), agricultural produce prices rose significantly, favouring the large farmers but hurting the paid wage workers. The report attributes the changing urban-rural consumption trends (previously mentioned) to employment and price trends.

83. **In 2012/3, poverty was significantly lower among female-headed than male headed households.** Those living in male-headed households had a poverty rate of 23.7 percent, while those living in female-headed households had a poverty rate of 16.8 percent.<sup>86</sup> The reasons behind this pattern require further study.

84. **The districts targeted by the government's National Growth and Poverty Eradication Strategy showed significant progress but are still poor.** One-third of the population in both first priority and second priority districts remain below the poverty line. From 2007/8 to 2012/13, the first priority districts saw the poverty headcount rate drop nearly five times as fast as second priority districts.<sup>87</sup> First priority districts have now caught up with second priority districts in terms of poverty reduction.

85. **Three provinces saw poverty rise from 2007/08 to 2012/13.** These were Bokeo, Champasack and Saravane. The poverty headcount rate doubled in Champasack, and in the other two provinces, it increased by over one-third over the same period. The rise of poverty in Champasack and Saravane is a reversal from the previous period (2002/3 to 2007/8), when poverty declined in these two provinces. In contrast, Bokeo has seen a continuing rise in poverty from 21.1 percent in 2002/3 to 44.4 percent in 2012/13. Among the remaining 14 provinces, poverty declined at varying rates. Vientiane Capital, Attapeu and Phongsaly made the fastest progress in terms of percentage reduction from 2007/8 to 2012/13.<sup>88</sup>

86. **The depth of poverty is greatest in Xiengkhuang, Huaphanh, Bokeo, Sekong and Saravane.**<sup>a 89</sup> Of these five provinces, however, both the depth and severity of poverty increased from 2007/08 to 2012/13 only in Bokeo and Saravane, while the other three show progress in reducing poverty depth and severity. Champasack also shows increased depth and severity of poverty over the same five years, but to a lesser extent. The depth of poverty is least in Attapeu and Vientiane Capital. Among all provinces, Phongsaly made the fastest progress in reducing both the depth and severity of poverty.

87. **The provinces accounting for the largest share of the poor are Savannakhet, Saravane, Champasack, Huaphanh and Luangprabang.**<sup>90</sup> Together, these provinces make up over half the poor population in Lao PDR. Savannakhet, Champasack and Luangprabang all have relatively large populations, so even with a moderate poverty headcount rate, these provinces account for substantial numbers of the poor. On the other hand, Huaphanh and Saravane, with only 4.6 percent and 5.9 percent of the country's population, account for a disproportionate share of the poor because of high poverty headcount ratios.

88. **Inequality has increased, notably within urban areas.** The Gini coefficient increased slightly from 35.0 to 36.2 in the period 2007/8 to 2012/13. An analysis<sup>91</sup> by rural and urban areas showed that inequality had decreased in rural areas over this five-year period (due to a slowdown of growth in incomes of the rural non-poor population). However, this was more than offset by rising inequality in urban areas. Inequality has therefore increased within urban areas, and between rural and urban areas. Although the poor of Lao PDR have become better off in real terms over the past two decades, the rich have benefited more, in both proportionate and absolute terms.<sup>92</sup> A report shows that the increased inequality slowed down the pace of poverty reduction. If inequality had not increased, a greater extent of poverty reduction would have been achieved nationally.<sup>93</sup>

89. **Summing up, the international MDG target of halving the poverty rate has been achieved but inequalities have increased.** Three provinces saw a rise in poverty as well as increase in the depth and severity of poverty. Various analyses identify education, agricultural produce prices, livelihoods and geographic location as important factors in determining poverty patterns and trends. Underlying these are factors that are more difficult to quantify, such as ethnicity, traditions, and attitudes towards gender and education.

## 4.2. Context

90. **The Government has committed to strengthening its evidence base for policy, planning and assessment.** To this end, sectoral ministries, with support from Lao Statistics Bureau (LSB), have conducted several surveys and studies over the past few years, including a number mentioned in this Report. A Population and Housing Census is being conducted in 2015. Data availability and robustness have improved in recent years, but the data is not always used effectively in planning and targeting. Moreover, the limitations on accessibility to raw data hamper the depth of analysis.

91. **Poverty reduction is a priority on the national agenda.** The overall goal in the Eighth NSEDP includes reduced poverty, graduation from LDC status, and sustained and inclusive growth

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<sup>a</sup> The poverty gap in Xiengkhuang, Huaphanh, Bokeo, Sekong and Saravane is respectively 8.3, 11.3, 11.6, 11.6 and 14.7 percent of the poverty line.

as desired outcomes. The NSEDP also aims to achieve balanced regional and local development, and improved living standards.

92. **A strong propensity to save has led to a large pool of household savings.** In 2014, 77 percent of Lao adults declared having savings, using a large variety of conduits where informal channels predominate (village funds, livestock, gold) along with a fair banking penetration (21 percent). Only 20 percent of adults currently borrow, with village funds and banks as predominant sources.<sup>94</sup> Lao people are generally reluctant to take credit. It is less about access than a combination of attitudes, lack of business skills and inadequate credit products.

### 4.3. Looking forward: recommendations for UN support

93. **Frameworks.** SDG 1 on ending poverty and SDG 10 on reducing inequalities cover the issues in this Chapter (Annex 2). SDG 1 emphasizes social protection for the poor and vulnerable. Both SDGs recognize the importance of policies and laws in addressing inequalities. Lao PDR has accepted the UPR recommendations to focus on those with vulnerabilities in development planning, and to spend more resources on population groups and sectors that would directly contribute to poverty reduction. Based on the frameworks of the NSEDP, SDG 1 and SDG 10, UN support to the Government of Lao PDR is recommended as follows

- **Continue analyses on inequality.** A previous analysis<sup>95</sup> (Section 4.1) has shown that rising inequality slowed down progress towards the poverty reduction goal. Other analyses would be required on the reasons behind the increased poverty rates in Bokeo, Champasack and Saravane, the increased depth and severity of poverty in Bokeo and Saravane, and the reasons for reversal from previous declines in poverty (Champasack and Saravane). It would also be useful to analyze the increased polarization in the south, the apparently lower poverty rates among female-headed households, the dramatic poverty reduction in Phongsaly and among the Chine-Tibetan group.
- **Target the poor in planning, budgeting and programme delivery.** The poorer groups are largely known (Section 4.1). The issue is whether appropriate targeting is made below the district level, whether different sectors are working in a coordinated and convergent approach<sup>a</sup> and whether realistic budgets are being allocated. Reaching the poorest in remote areas will require much more resources than reaching the less poor in other areas. A strategy for assured and predictable funding is needed.
- **Prioritize interventions based on evidence.** Recent analysis<sup>96</sup> shows that education, employment/livelihood and the price of agricultural produce are important determinants of poverty levels. Accelerating education access, retention and literacy/ numeracy skills among the poor needs priority attention, including technical and vocational education and training (TVET).<sup>b</sup> Improving agricultural productivity through appropriate policies and programmes (Section 5.3) will also be necessary. Studies also show that rural infrastructure is another factor in poverty reduction, notably roads that enhance market access for agricultural produce<sup>97</sup> and improve livelihood opportunities. The rising inequality in urban areas<sup>98</sup> shows the need for targeting the urban poor with specific interventions.

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<sup>a</sup> In this regard, the arguments made and the interventions recommended for nutrition (Chapter 6) apply equally to poverty reduction.

<sup>b</sup> Chapter 5 on employment and Chapter 7 on education.

- **Establish and strengthen a system that links planning and budgeting to research and evidence.** Such a system should be part of good governance initiatives and would be useful for the implementation of the Eighth NSEDP, the effective use of resources and the adaptation of the SDGs to Lao PDR's context.
- **Develop social protection systems to achieve substantial coverage of poor and vulnerable groups.** Initiatives such as the Health Equity Fund and Free MNCH represent significant progress. However, access to formal social security insurance coverage remains limited and welfare programmes fragmented, consisting mostly of *ad hoc* disaster relief and small-scale initiatives. Development partners need to support the government in widening the scope of social protection schemes to include the largely uncovered informal sector and the poor, move towards full coverage of employment-based social insurance and achieve the government's goals of universal health care coverage by 2020.<sup>99</sup> The informal sector includes the majority of poor female workers. Social protection in both formal and informal sectors should cover maternity and childcare benefits.
- **Increase the access of the poor to services, livelihoods and resources.** Poverty is multidimensional: the poor suffer deficits not only of income, but also of food, clean water and education. Sustained poverty reduction can only be achieved by tackling gross inequities in basic services and resource distribution. The goal of reducing inequality needs to be explicitly incorporated in policies and programmes aimed at poverty reduction.<sup>100</sup> Measures such as ensuring good local governance, empowering communities to participate in decision making, expanding livelihood options, enhancing resilience to economic and climate-related setbacks, providing basic services, creating jobs, and providing skills, training and education contribute to narrowing the gap between rich and poor. Policies for consolidating villages and stabilizing settlements and livelihoods should ensure not only adequate infrastructure provision, but also capacity development and access to productive land for resettled groups.
- **Increase efforts to tap domestic capital through public-private partnerships.** Currently, local administrations rely heavily on the limited state budget for local development. They will need to mobilize much more private sector resources to invest jointly in local economic development. Such efforts need to take into account the huge pool of household savings.

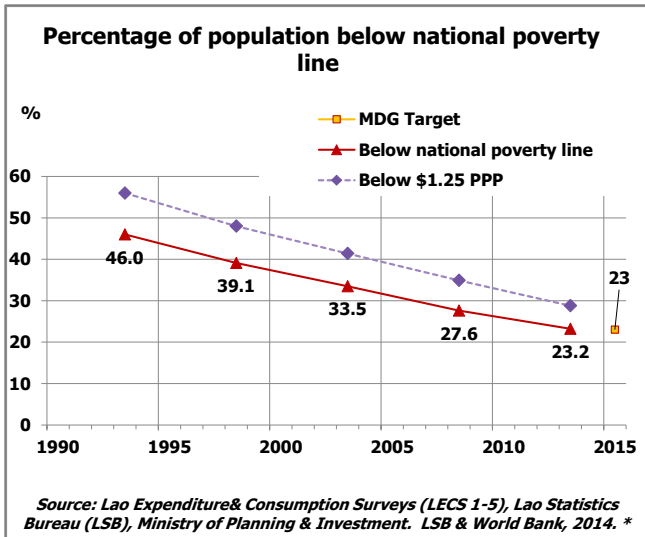


Figure 4.1. Lao PDR has halved the poverty rate over the past two decades and achieved the MDG 1 target on poverty.

Figure 4.2. The urban-rural gap in poverty headcount ratio has decreased, but is still significant.

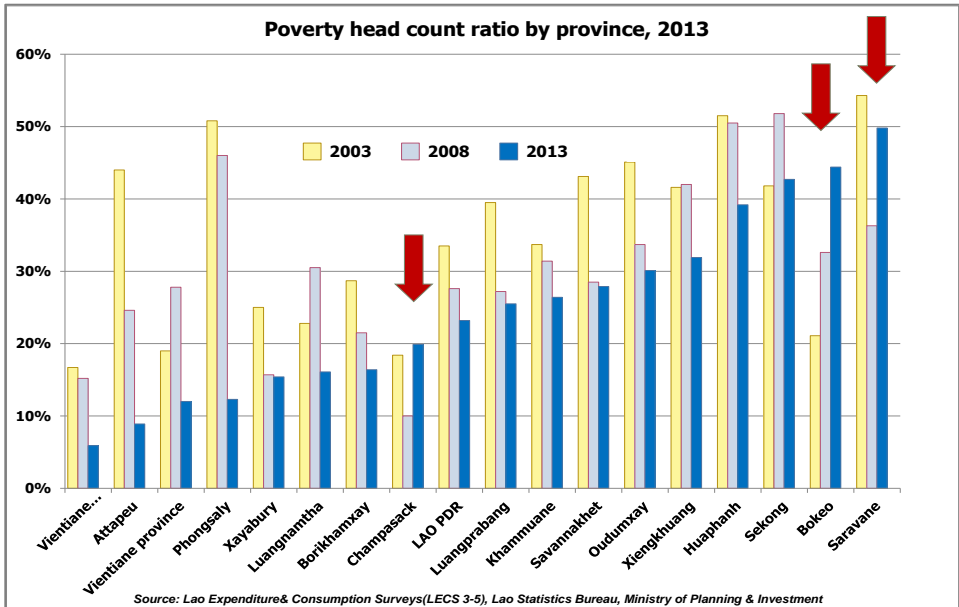
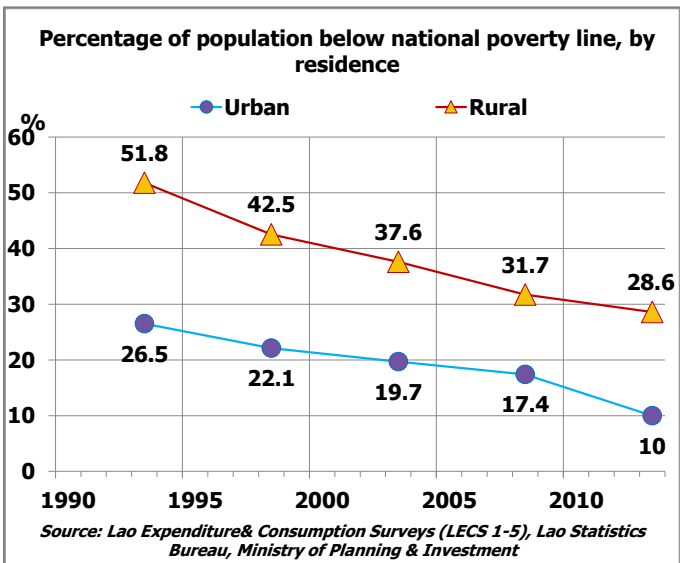


Figure 4.3. Most provinces show significant progress in poverty reduction over time. However, poverty rates in three provinces have increased over the past decade. In Bokeo, poverty rates have been increasingly steadily: the poverty rate is now more than twice that of a decade ago in the same province.

## 5. Achieve productive employment and decent work

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### 5.1. Trends, disparities and determinants

94. **The Lao PDR has made progress but still has some way to go in achieving productive employment and decent work** (Annex 1). Labour productivity<sup>101</sup> grew from 1995 to 2010, but this was because high economic growth outstripped the growth in employment. The largely resource-driven and capital-intensive growth meant that GDP per person employed grew, but did not generate a sufficient number of decent employment opportunities. The agriculture and fishery sectors<sup>102</sup> dominate in Lao PDR, accounting for about 70 percent of employed persons in 2010. This has implications for decent work and poverty reduction, since the agriculture sector has low productivity (4 to 10 times lower than non-agricultural sectors in 2010)<sup>103</sup> with a lack of domestic value-added.

95. **Lao PDR's employment-to-population ratio (ETPR) has decreased, but remains among the highest in the region** (77.7 percent in 2010). One reason for the high ETPR in Lao PDR is poverty – the poor cannot afford not to work. A large percentage of the employed work in semi-subsistence agriculture, which is the main driver of the high ETPR. The ETPR is highest in the remote rural areas without road access and lowest in urban areas. The poorest quintile of the household population has a high ETPR of 85 per cent (against 71 per cent for the richest).

96. **Over a third of working people do not earn sufficient income to lift themselves out of poverty.** Some 36 per cent of employed people belong to the two poorest quintiles of the household population.<sup>104</sup> They are less likely to have various amenities and services (such as clean water and toilets), and are more likely to be negatively affected by droughts, disasters, and catastrophic health expenditure.<sup>105</sup>

97. **The share of vulnerable employment in Lao PDR remains high.** Own-account workers and unpaid family workers constitute 84 per cent of those who work. The high level of vulnerable employment is driven by the agriculture and fishery sector, sales workers, and elementary occupations.<sup>a106</sup> Within these three sectors, respectively 99, 73 and 73 per cent of workers are in vulnerable employment (self-employed, but not employer, or in unpaid work for the family). The bulk of agricultural work is characterized by low incomes,<sup>b</sup> poor working conditions and deficits in access to both social protection and workplace representation. However, vulnerable employment is not confined to agriculture. Since informal employment is widespread, other jobs often have low pay and poor working conditions.

98. **The unemployment rate is low, at only 1.9 per cent in 2010** (1.8 per cent for males, 2.0 per cent for females). The poor (from remote rural areas and from the poorest quintiles of the household population) have the lowest unemployment rates, because these groups cannot afford to remain without working, whatever the quality of work. On the other hand, urban and more affluent groups can afford to be more selective about the nature of work.

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<sup>a</sup> Elementary occupations include cleaners, roadside vendors, messengers, etc. ILO's full definition is given in the notes.

<sup>b</sup> This is 'incomes' rather than wages, since the majority are not wage workers.

99. **Lao migrants abroad – a large source of income for families in southern Lao PDR – are a vulnerable group.** These migrants make up around 8 percent of the working population,<sup>107</sup> mostly in low-paid, labour intensive work in neighbouring Thailand. Remittances sent back home by Lao migrants in 2013 accounted for 1.9 percent – 2.5 percent of the country’s GDP.<sup>108</sup> 11.5 percent of the adult population received international remittances in 2014: varying from nearly 20 percent in the South to only 2.7 percent in the North.<sup>109</sup> Migrants are disproportionately exposed to a range of decent work deficits, including occupational injury or illness, weak representation, and threats and extortion by police and other authorities. Migrants are also at greater risk of becoming trafficked victims.

100. **Making the agriculture sector – especially the rice sector – more productive is key to both poverty reduction and livelihood improvement in Lao PDR.** The Agricultural Census (2012) estimated a “farm population” of 4.5 million: those who live in “farm households,” the definition being a household engaged in agricultural production activities such as growing crops, raising livestock, or engaged in aquaculture.<sup>a</sup> These account for approximately 70 percent of employed persons,<sup>110</sup> while around 76 percent of all households in the country grow rice.<sup>111</sup> Commercial agriculture (e.g. cassava and maize) is expanding rapidly, and crops tend to be grown by small farmers under contract. Plantations, such as bananas and rubber, are normally concessions managed by companies, which rely on cheap manual labour often resourced from migrants, generally with low wages.

101. **There is potential for much greater productivity since a large share of the agricultural workforce are underemployed.** Only 11 percent of farmers report working 9-12 months per year on the family farm, while 45 percent work for only 3-6 months.<sup>112</sup> Agricultural productivity in Lao PDR is still less than half of Thailand’s, although it has increased over the past few years to overtake productivity in Vietnam and Cambodia.<sup>b</sup> In the rice sector, low farm productivity is due to factors such as inadequate access to high-quality seeds and other inputs, limited extension services, inefficient and inadequate irrigation and drainage infrastructure, and regional differences in social and climactic characteristics. Beyond the farm, numerous factors limit profitability, such as low milling quality, high marketing costs, trade bans and price ceilings, rice export restrictions, and unstable trade relationships due to the unpredictability of restrictions. Public expenditures in the sector are trying to increase farm incomes but inward-oriented trade policies work against this.<sup>113</sup> Greater productivity would not only improve the livelihoods of the large proportion of farmers, but also free up labour to move into higher-productivity sectors.

## 5.2. Context

102. **Lao PDR adopted an amended Labour Law (the “2013 Labour Law”)<sup>114</sup> that is more in line with international labour standards.** The new law became effective on 4 November 2014. It aimed to address the concerns of the Lao Federation of Trade Unions (LFTU) that the 2006 labour law was inadequate for the protection of workers. The new law sets out limitations on the hours of work, overtime work and provides for weekly rest, sick leave and leave entitlements,<sup>115</sup> with special provisions for pregnant women and women who have delivered.<sup>116</sup> Moreover, it has a clause on

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<sup>a</sup> The World Bank (2014a) cites a figure of 2.3 million *people* engaged in agriculture. Given that nearly all rural (and some urban) households are involved one way or the other in agriculture at some time in the year, the definition and estimate from the Agricultural Census are used here.

<sup>b</sup> In 2014, the average agricultural value added per worker (expressed in 2005 US\$ prices) in Lao PDR was US\$522, compared to US\$514 in Cambodia, US\$489 in Vietnam and US\$1,195 in Thailand. Source: World Databank.



compulsory social security for employees in accordance with the new Social Security Law. Other changes include the obligation of employers to provide training to develop employees' skills and ensure safe and sanitary working conditions.

103. **Lao PDR's entry into the AEC at the end of 2015 offers opportunities for promoting decent work but the change needs to be properly managed.** Estimates indicate an additional 130,000 jobs and an increase in industry and service sector jobs. Nonetheless, agriculture will remain the country's largest employer and will expand the most in absolute terms. With expected expansion in sectors such as vehicles, trade and transportation, the demand for both medium-skilled and high-skilled workers is forecast to rise, although the flows of low-skilled workers are expected to continue in the short and medium-term (Section 2.5). The bulk of the Lao workforce may not meet the AEC provisions for skill criteria.<sup>a</sup> Hence, without appropriate measures, the AEC may not lead to quality employment for the majority<sup>117</sup> and could perpetuate gender disparities (since the female workforce is less educated than the male workforce, Section 8.1.3).

104. **Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) must be effective to equip workers with competencies needed in key sectors.** The Strategic Plan for the Development of TVET (2006-2020) is expected to address policy issues, reform and promote TVET, while also providing quality assurance and improved labour market information. A recent study of ASEAN employers found that only one-third of respondents agreed that the skills of secondary graduates in Lao PDR matched enterprise needs.<sup>118</sup>

105. **Demographic and economic structural factors suggest that outward migration from Lao PDR will continue.**<sup>119</sup> Low-skilled workers constitute the bulk of Lao emigrants, with employment concentrated in industries such as agriculture, construction and domestic work. The government is taking steps to protect Lao migrants by establishing mechanisms in receiving countries to extend legal and other services.

### 5.3. Looking forward: recommendations for UN support

106. **Frameworks.** The international human rights instruments, the ILO Conventions (Table 1.2) and the NSEDP provide the policy and legislative framework for the employment sector. The Eighth NSEDP emphasizes "improved public / private labour force capacity" as a strategy to enhance national development and Lao PDR's competitiveness in the region. SDG 8 emphasizes the close relation between employment and inclusive economic growth by linking the two in the same goal (Annex 2). Within these broad frameworks, UN support to the Government of Lao PDR is recommended as follows

- **Put in place complementary policies that maximize the potential benefits of the AEC.** These include policies related to infrastructure, education and training, credit suitable for micro and small enterprises, the preparation of small businesses to meet requirements set by financial institutions, decent employment opportunities and better wages, the social protection system; and the protection and skills recognition of migrant workers.<sup>120</sup> The ongoing work on enhancing the capacity of the LFTU will need to accelerate.

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<sup>a</sup> Current AEC provisions are on free mobility of eight high-skilled occupations: accountants, architects, dentists, engineers, medical doctors, nurses and midwives, surveyors and tourism professionals. These occupations, however, account for merely 1.3 per cent of employment in Lao PDR.

- **Invest in measures to increase productivity and earnings<sup>a</sup> in the agriculture sector.** The Government has prioritized the following measures<sup>121</sup> to enhance agricultural productivity, income, sustainability and resilience, while reducing poverty:
  - Improved land tenure security and transparent and efficient land administration (see Section 2.4 and Chapter 3 on compensations for land appropriations)
  - Well-designed and maintained irrigation systems to accommodate the production of rice and non-rice crops and maintain soil fertility through crop rotation
  - Improved production and processing facilities, especially rice mills with private sector involvement (which would improve milling quality and lower milling costs, thereby raising profitability for farmers), and labour-saving mechanized technologies suitable for small-scale farms and producer groups
  - Organization of producer groups and cooperatives, for low-cost and efficient dissemination of knowledge and information and for seed multiplication and out-grower arrangements with rice mills
  - Facilitation of rural finance through (i) small short and medium-term loans at reduced interest rates for rice producers through intermediaries such as the rice mills, and (ii) co-funding of crop insurance schemes with the Government to reduce farmers' investment risks
  - Investments in applied agricultural research, especially on good seeds for rice and other crops and measures to increase profitability, promote climate-smart agriculture and nutrition sensitivity of farming, including through crop diversification
  - Emergency rice seed reserves for natural disasters
  - Marketing and incorporation of the value chain approach into extension services to promote private investments in the rice value chain.
  
- **Invest in measures to promote SMEs** (Section 2.6). These include, for example, promoting SMEs run by women, focusing on upgrading technological capabilities and encouraging local innovations. Measures are also required to accelerate the development of relevant skills for establishing and running SMEs.
  
- **Anticipate the rise in demand for medium- and high-skilled workers by tackling weaknesses in education and training systems.** This is critical to Lao PDR's industrial growth and competitiveness in AEC. Children need to stay in primary school and continue on to secondary school. TVET programmes need to be boosted in quantity and quality. The ongoing work by the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare to develop national skills standards, testing and certification systems that are benchmarked with standards of other ASEAN economies should proceed together with the reform and modernisation of the TVET system, to make training and education more relevant, higher quality, and more responsive to the needs of the labour market.
  
- **Scale up public-private partnerships using tested strategies applied by certain TVET institutions.** As an incentive for industries that have the capacity to support Competency Based Training, the Government should provide official recognition of in-service training courses in the private sector. For example, the Garment and Textile Association, the Furniture Association, the Lao Hotel and Restaurant Association and the Lao Handicraft Association have established skill development training centres for their members.

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<sup>a</sup> Raising productivity is important, but only if people receive adequate returns.

- **Strengthen capacities to collect, manage and disseminate robust and up-to-date labour market information for policy development.** The lack of information contributes to a large and growing mismatch between the skills available and those required by enterprises, which undermines both productivity and national competitiveness. The lack of information also weakens the development of forward-looking employment policies, which are necessary to prepare the workforce for employment opportunities likely to arise.
- **Develop a strong social protection system.** Such a system should be designed to cope with expected labour market movements due to AEC entry, mitigate adjustment costs and support workers who may not find immediate employment in emerging sectors.<sup>122</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 4, the Government will need to accelerate measures for achieving full coverage of employment-based social insurance and universal health care coverage by 2020. In the medium term, the Government will also need to develop alternative micro-insurance products to protect the poor, to help them avoid falling back into poverty after a crisis.
- **Strengthen the protection and skills recognition of Lao migrant workers going to other countries.** Existing commitments, such as the Memorandum of Understanding with Thailand, 2002, and the ASEAN Declaration on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Migrant Workers, 2007, are significant achievements but lack enforcement mechanisms.<sup>123</sup> Lao PDR should play a key role in ASEAN to promote mutual skills recognition, especially for low- and medium-skilled workers, who constitute the bulk of migrants from Lao PDR.<sup>a</sup>

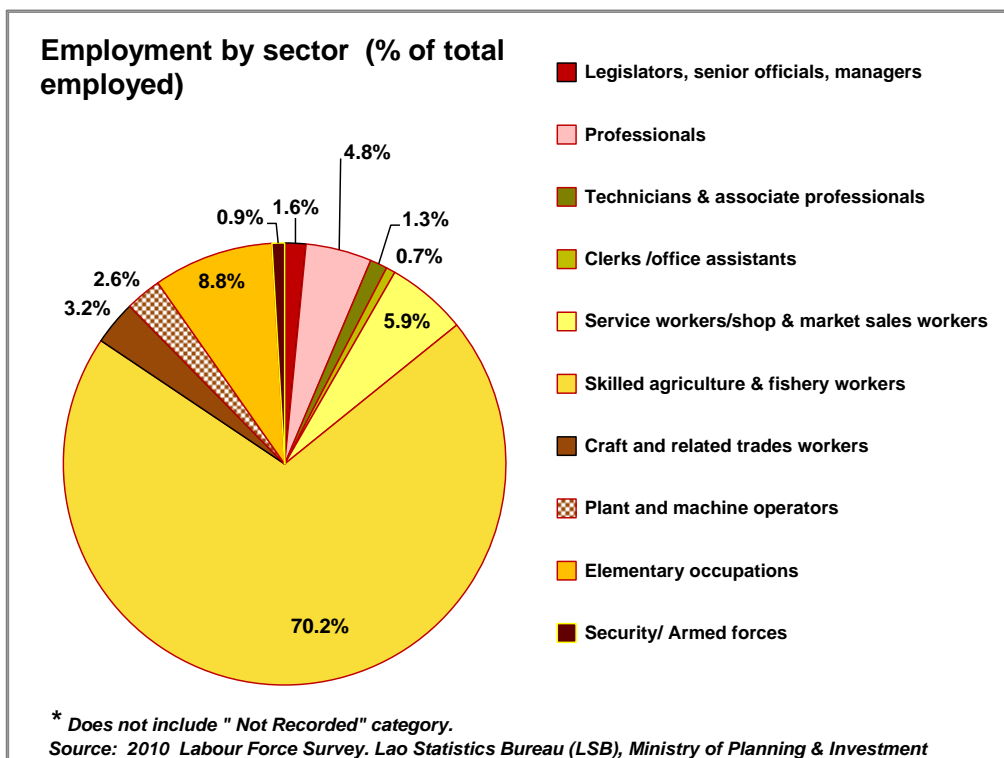
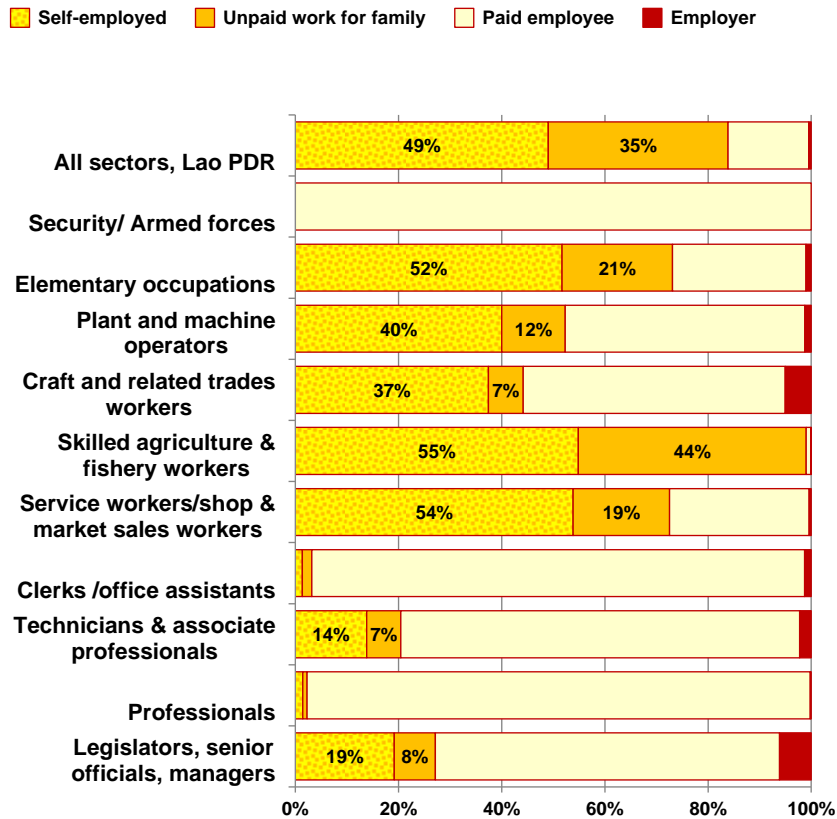


Figure 5.1. In Lao PDR, the agricultural and fishery sector accounts for 70.2 percent of the employed population, followed by elementary occupations (cleaning, washing, carrying, etc.) who account for 8.8 percent. All these are vulnerable occupations. Service workers follow next at 5.9 percent.

<sup>a</sup> As mentioned in an earlier footnote, the high-skilled occupations specified by AEC account for merely 1.3 per cent of employment in Lao PDR.

### Total employment by type of employment (%)\*



\* Does not include "Not Recorded" category.

Source: 2010 Labour Force Survey. Lao Statistics Bureau (LSB), Ministry of Planning & Investment

Figure 5.2. Around 35 percent of those employed are highly vulnerable unpaid workers. Agriculture, elementary occupations and service workers have high proportions of such unpaid workers – 44 percent of agricultural workers do unpaid work for family, 55 percent are self-employed. Both are vulnerable.

## 6. End hunger and improve nutrition

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### 6.1. Trends, disparities and determinants

107. **Lao PDR has achieved the MDG target of halving the proportion of hungry people.** The proportion of undernourished in the population<sup>124</sup> has declined from 42.8 percent in 1990 to around 18.5 percent in 2015.<sup>125</sup> However, the country still has a significant level of hunger, as measured by the Global Hunger Index.<sup>126</sup> Around one-fifth of the population consumes less than the minimum dietary energy requirements.<sup>127</sup> Among 120 countries measured by the Global Hunger Index (GHI)<sup>128</sup> Lao PDR is among the 16 countries with “extremely alarming” or “alarming” levels of hunger. It also has the second highest GHI among the 17 countries measured in the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>129</sup> Achieving the objective of graduating from Least Developed Country (LDC) status will require further reducing the proportion of population that is malnourished, which is one of the factors for calculating HAI.<sup>130</sup>

108. **Lao PDR is off track on the MDG target of reducing underweight and stunting** (Annex 1). In 2011/12, some 44 percent of children under five years of age were stunted, 27 percent were underweight and 6 percent were wasted.<sup>131</sup> Since the early 1990s, stunting has declined at an average annual rate of 0.8 per cent,<sup>132,133</sup> less than the average population growth rate, which means that if present trends continue, the number of stunted children will likely increase.

109. **Undernutrition in Lao PDR shows strong inequalities across regions and groups, associated with poverty patterns.** In rural areas without road access, stunting and underweight prevalence are twice those in urban areas. Stunting prevalence rates in children from Hmong-Lu Mien and Sino-Tibetan ethno-linguistic groups exceed 60 percent, nearly double those of children from the Lao-Tai group. The prevalence of stunting among children from the poorest households is three times higher than that in the richest households. This gap has widened in recent years, with little progress among the poorest children. Even amongst the richest households, 20 per cent of children suffer from stunting.<sup>134,135</sup>

110. **Global evidence shows that child undernutrition has several determinants.**<sup>136,137</sup> These include food and nutrient intake, linked to feeding and care practices, and a high burden of infectious diseases, especially diarrhoea and parasitic infections. Underlying these are the mother’s health and nutrition, adolescent pregnancy, women’s knowledge and education, food availability and diversity, dietary practices, health care services, water, sanitation and hygiene practices. Determinants at a deeper level include cultural beliefs, food taboos, women’s status, farming practices, and prevailing power structures. Some determinants are summarized below.<sup>a</sup>

111. **Infant and young child feeding practices are poor, and diets lack diversity.** The main issues are the relatively low rates of exclusive breastfeeding under the age of 6 months, the alarming increase in the use of baby formula, inappropriate complementary feeding<sup>138</sup> and low dietary

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<sup>a</sup> Other chapters of this Report cover underlying determinants in more detail (maternal and child health, water, sanitation and hygiene, women’s empowerment, education, livelihoods, environment, etc).

diversity for both mothers and children.<sup>139</sup> Only an estimated 5 percent of young children have a minimum acceptable diet. The lack of diversity in foods leads to micronutrient deficiencies. Iron deficiency anaemia and vitamin A deficiency are high in young children (42 and 45 per cent respectively).<sup>140,141</sup> The diets for children as well as adults are rice-dominated (often glutinous rice) and deficient in protein, fats and micronutrients, relative to WHO-recommended levels.<sup>142</sup>

**112. The high levels of child stunting in Lao PDR underscore the need to address maternal nutrition.** Since the process of becoming a stunted child begins *in utero*, and continues up to two years of age<sup>143</sup> (that is, the first 1,000 days of life), the mother's dietary intake and her health and nutrition status before and during pregnancy is a crucial determinant of stunting. High anaemia rates,<sup>144</sup> low contraceptive use<sup>145</sup> and high fertility rates contribute to poor maternal nutrition. High adolescent birth rates among the non Lao-Tai groups (22- 39 per cent)<sup>146</sup> are another contributor to child stunting.<sup>147</sup> The support women receive from their families, communities and service providers is critical to improving their own nutritional status, as well as that of their children.

**113. Female education strongly influences child nutrition.** Stunting rates are four times higher among children of uneducated women than among children of mothers with secondary or higher education.<sup>148</sup> Women have a critical role in care and feeding of their children, and in adopting healthier choices for themselves during pregnancy and postpartum. Education makes a difference in these areas.

**114. Lao-specific cultural beliefs and food taboos among the 49 ethnic groups are not always conducive to good nutrition.**<sup>149,150</sup> Pregnant women often eat less, believing that they are preventing obstructed labour, as they do not want bigger babies. Lactating women in urban areas consume a low diversity diet excessively based on glutinous rice, which puts infants at risk for vitamin A, C and thiamine deficiencies. Infants in their first or second month are often given chewed glutinous rice, a practice associated with stunting<sup>151</sup> and possibly with bladder stones in childhood.<sup>152</sup> On the other hand, some traditional beliefs are beneficial: for example, the Phunoi's belief that children with measles should eat mango and papaya, both good sources of vitamin A.<sup>153</sup>

**115. Food insecurity appears to be less critical than malnutrition but is nonetheless a significant issue.** While 89 percent of the population has acceptable food consumption patterns, around 11 percent of rural households have poor and borderline food consumption.<sup>154</sup> Households with poor/borderline food consumption tend to cultivate less land, rely more on cash crop production as a source of income, had less access to vegetable plots, and have household heads with lower educational attainment, compared to households with acceptable food consumption patterns. Households most vulnerable to food insecurity are those living in remote areas with little access to basic infrastructure, households with low engagement in fishing and hunting or unskilled labours, those practicing upland farming on small slopes, and those without kitchen gardens.

**116. Subsistence farming remains widespread, despite increasing market orientation for many farmers.** Approximately 90 percent of rural households grow rice, with more than one-third of households reporting growing additional crops, cash and/or food crops. Raising a small number of livestock is common, with cattle production becoming increasingly market-oriented in the central provinces. Fishing, hunting and gathering of wild foods are central to food procurement and increasingly to cash generation for a large number of households, particularly in the northern uplands. Access to food is not consistent for a large proportion of rural households. On average, one in three villages has a food produce market in the village, but less than 2 percent of villages have a permanent market.

117. **A significant proportion of the non-poor urban population do not spend enough on food.**<sup>155</sup> A greater proportion of the urban population is under the food poverty line<sup>156</sup> (12 percent) than that under the overall poverty line (10 percent). This means that some non-poor urban households do not spend enough on food to bring themselves above the food poverty line, even though their total expenditures are sufficient to bring them above the overall poverty line. In Vientiane Capital, at least one in ten people who are not poor live in households with inadequate spending on food. In rural areas, 23 percent of population live in households not spending enough on food.<sup>157</sup>

118. **The threats to food security cut across a broad range of sectors.** Products from terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity can provide much needed essential fatty acids and proteins, but these products are under threat. Population and land pressure contribute to soil degradation and decreasing yields.<sup>158</sup> Other threats include UXOs, large-scale investment projects,<sup>159</sup> rainfall-dependent agricultural practices, limited access to irrigation, disasters, disease outbreaks among livestock and the difficulties in finding economically attractive legal alternatives to opium growing.<sup>160</sup>

## 6.2. Context

119. **Undernutrition has high human and economic costs.** Undernutrition accounts for around 45 per cent of young child deaths<sup>161</sup> and for at least 20 per cent of maternal mortality.<sup>162</sup> Moreover, undernutrition during pregnancy and the first two years of life affects physical growth, impairs cognitive development and affects educational performance and future earning potential. Childhood anaemia alone is associated with a 2.5 per cent drop in adult wages.<sup>163</sup> The annual economic cost of undernutrition is an estimated 2.4 per cent of GDP, or for Lao PDR, USD 200 million a year.<sup>164</sup> Investing in nutrition, therefore, has the largest benefit-cost ratio of any human capital investment.<sup>165</sup>

120. **Lao PDR reaffirmed its commitment to fight hunger and undernutrition through the launch of the National Zero Hunger Challenge in May 2015.** The country's Agricultural Development Strategy and the National Nutrition Strategy will provide the framework for achieving the Zero Hunger Challenge. High-level commitment to tackling undernutrition is also seen in various policy and planning instruments, such as the 2010 MDG Acceleration Framework (MAF) action plan<sup>166</sup> and the NSEDP (under Outcome 2). In 2014, the United Nations Chief Executives Board's MAF review<sup>a</sup> assessed Lao PDR's progress towards the MDG nutrition target.

121. **The key factors critical for nation-wide implementation and effectiveness of nutrition interventions are in line with the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement.** Lao PDR has committed to SUN since April 2011.<sup>167</sup> Lao PDR's successes in promoting exclusive breastfeeding, universal salt iodization, Vitamin A supplementation and deworming of young children show that nationwide implementation of nutrition interventions can be achieved effectively. Relatively quick gains in maternal and child nutrition (and survival) should now be made through a rapid expansion of additional nutrition-specific interventions, such as promotion of appropriate infant and young child feeding and counselling, micronutrient supplementation of women and children, and management of acute malnutrition.

122. **The Government has taken measures to improve multi-sectoral response to undernutrition.** This led to the establishment of the National Nutrition Committee, the mobilization of

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<sup>a</sup> The MAF Review on child undernutrition in Lao PDR was undertaken by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB). While the MAF Review was internal, the process of preparation involved the Government and its Development Partners.



major stakeholders around UN Recommendations for the Multisectoral Food and Nutrition Security Action Plan (MFNSAP), the updating of the National Nutrition Strategy to 2025 and the Plan of Action 2016-2020. It will be important to translate such political commitment into increased investments in nutrition commodities and integrated health outreach, and into nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions that converge on high-risk districts. The “*First 1,000 Days*” approach<sup>168</sup> (from pre-conception to two years of age), which Lao PDR has already committed to, needs to be scaled up, together with behaviour change interventions.

123. **Progress has been slow due to inadequate prioritization and insufficient budget allocation and financing.** To date, the Government relies heavily on external funds, which undermines sustainability and makes planning unpredictable. Additional challenges include the difficulties in access to remote areas, particularly during the rainy season, a strong belief in local traditions and a general lack of nutrition awareness, which makes behaviour change efforts difficult. Inadequate information sharing among development partners with regard to activities in food security and nutrition also slows down coordination and planning.

124. **The agriculture sector is a key factor to the country’s overall development.** The main objective of the Agricultural Development Strategy for 2011-2020 is to ensure food security and improve the livelihoods of rural communities. The Strategy sets out the necessary shift from a subsistence to a market-oriented agricultural production, adapted to climate change and focused on smallholder farmers.

### 6.3. Looking forward: recommendations for UN support

125. **Frameworks.** SDG 2 and its associated targets are much broader than the hunger-related targets of MDG 1 (Annex 2). The five targets relating to the Zero Hunger Challenge have already been incorporated into the SDGs. Based on the framework provided by the Eighth NSEDP, the MFNSAP, and SDG 2, UN support to the Government of Lao PDR<sup>a</sup> is recommended as follows

- **Strengthen and sustain high-level political commitment.** This includes mobilizing the required investments to implement a comprehensive and holistic approach to address undernutrition, especially maternal and child undernutrition, including the actions below.
- **Coordinate, plan, sequence and target nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions** in the health, water, sanitation, agriculture, education and social protection sectors of the NSEDP, and in other rural development, livelihood and resilience initiatives. The coordination should extend to engagement with external development partners, civil society and private sector.
- **Strengthen management information systems.** Regular monitoring and reporting systems need to be able to report on the nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive multisectoral interventions above. Consider alternative innovative methods, such as mobile and ICT platforms to fill data gaps and validate routinely collected data (Section 3.3). Quick and systematic

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<sup>a</sup> The present recommendations take into account the recommendations of the United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination (November 2014) on accelerating progress towards improved nutrition for women and children. These recommendations include the alignment of UN Agencies programming with the government’s strategy, improved coordination among UN Agencies, support for a behavioural change campaign, encouragement of national budgetary allocations and the strengthened sustainability of current interventions.



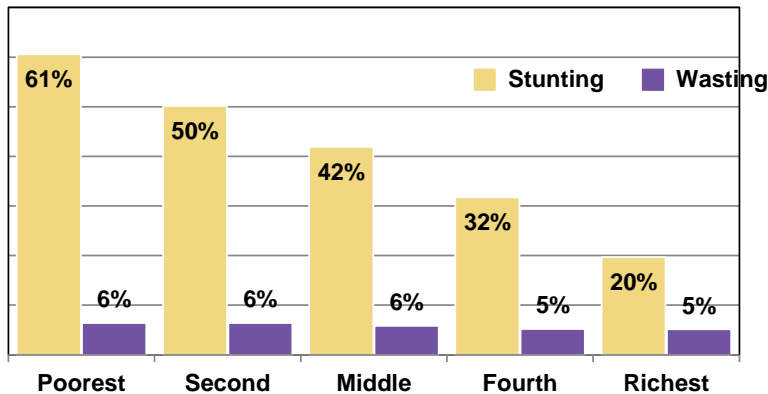
feedback from each level (village, district, province, central levels) will be required to enable corrective action and timely use of information.

- **Strengthen governance and institutional capacities to improve service delivery.** The following groups are the most deprived, with the lowest access to services, and also have the highest levels of stunting:
  - The population living in rural areas without road access (constituting 7 per cent of the total population in 2011/12)
  - Households in the poorest quintile (19 per cent of the total)
  - Families with uneducated or poorly educated women (21 per cent of the total)
  - The non-Lao-Tai ethnic groups in the country (33 per cent of the total).<sup>169</sup>

For each intervention, key barriers or bottlenecks in four main areas that affect service delivery (enabling environment, supply, demand and quality) need to be examined and resolved.

- **Strengthen the implementation of nutrition interventions within the health sector.** This can be done by sustaining and increasing relatively small investments in nutrition commodities and service delivery, which are critical for accelerating progress among the most vulnerable and hard to reach populations.
- **Promote participatory strategies to reach disadvantaged groups.** Often language and cultural barriers result in consultation only with village authorities, who are mostly men. Participatory strategies will require ensuring the engagement of caregivers, women and young people, incentivizing village health volunteers and empowering various groups and networks such as the Lao Women's Union, farmer groups and village extension workers with knowledge and support.
- **Promote behaviour change interventions.** Behaviour change is also an essential component of the "*The First 1,000 Days*"<sup>170</sup> approach, already committed to by Lao PDR. Building on previous success in increasing exclusive breastfeeding, the Ministry of Health aims to expand the promotion of maternal, infant and young child feeding and counselling. Health providers and the Lao Women's Union volunteers will be the main delivery platforms for interpersonal communication. Financial incentives may be required to change behaviour, as shown elsewhere by examples such as cash transfers to pregnant women for health seeking behaviour.
- **Increase agriculture productivity, diversify and improve the agriculture sector.** This includes measures to raise farmers' incomes and increase the capacity of farmers' associations, climate-resilient agronomic practices, improved agricultural or production infrastructure, the use of modern technologies, and strengthened access to inputs and financial products for agriculture (see Section 5.3 on rural productivity).
- **Address gender differences that have a negative impact on food security and nutrition.** Girls' education and mothers' knowledge on nutrition translate into better decisions on food and nutrition, and enhanced livelihood opportunities and food security. Men and boys also have a key role in nutrition, and should be included in awareness raising activities.

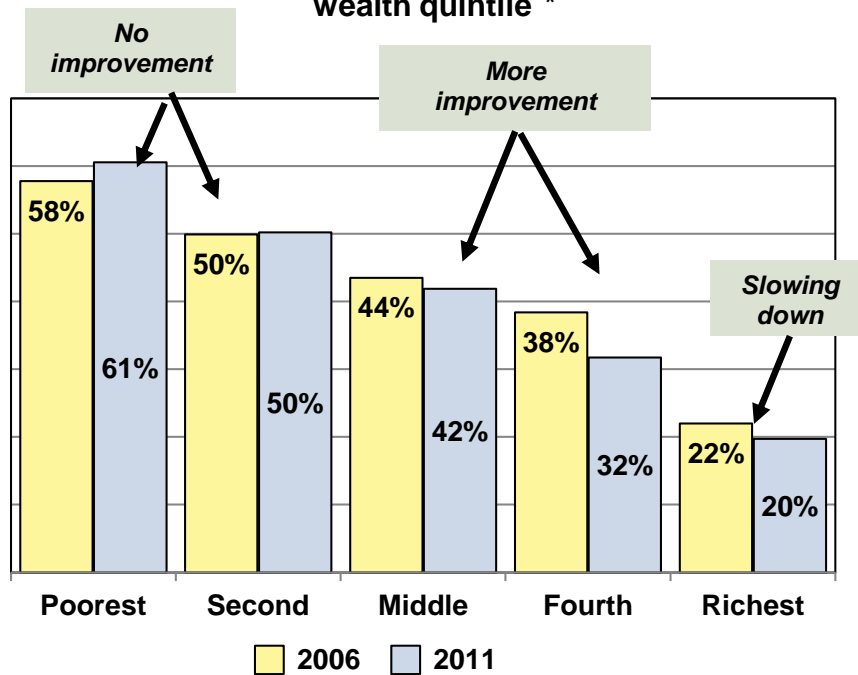
**Percentage of children under age 5 who are stunted & wasted by wealth quintiles, 2011 \***



\* Expressed in percent below minus 2 standard deviation units from the median of the 2006 WHO standards. Source: LSIS 2011/12, Lao Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Planning & Investment

Figure 6.1. Children from the poorest quintile households are two to three times more stunted compared to those from the richest quintile. Wasting (weight for height) is not such a problem. Stunting (height or age) is more serious.

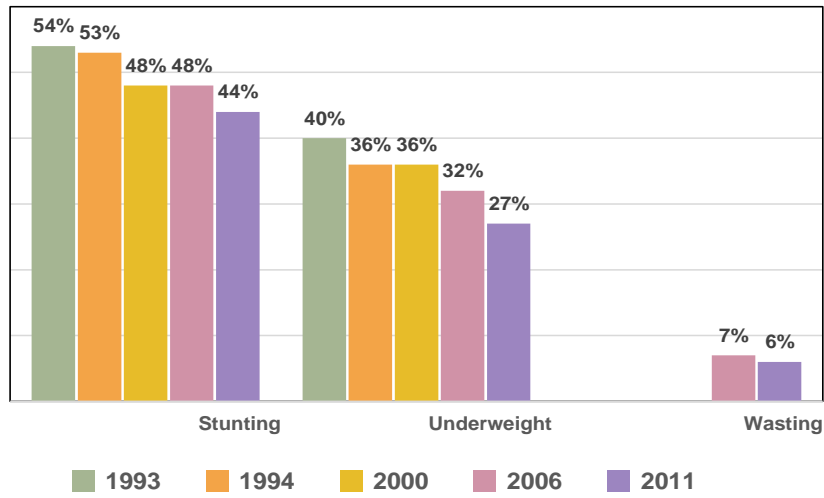
**Stunting in children under age 5 from 2006 to 2011 by wealth quintile \***



\* Expressed in percent below minus 2 standard deviation units from the median of the 2006 WHO standards. Source: LSIS 2011/12, Lao Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Planning & Investment

Figure 6.2. Among children from the poorest households, stunting has shown little improvement from 2006 to 2011. The middle quintiles show more improvement, more so than children from the richest quintile. Even among the rich, one in five children suffers from stunting. Clearly, the cause is not a lack of food.

**Percentage of children under age 5 affected by stunting, underweight & wasting 1993-2011, Lao PDR \***



\*Expressed in percent below minus 2 standard deviation units from the median of the 2006 WHO standards. Source: LSIS 1993 & 2011-12; MICS 1994, 2000 & 2006. Lao Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Planning & Investment

Figure 6.3. This chart shows the extremely slow progress in the reduction of stunting between 1993 and 2011. Over this 18-year period, stunting declined by 10 percentage points only.

## 7. Ensure inclusive and quality education

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### 7.1. Trends, disparities and determinants

126. **By 2014, Lao PDR had met MDG target on enrolment, with a primary education net enrolment ratio (NER) of 98.5 percent.**<sup>171</sup> However, survival rate to grade 5<sup>172</sup> remains low, at around 78.3 per cent in 2014/15.<sup>173</sup> Although the survival rate has increased by over 7 percentage points from that in 2012, it still needs to be much higher for full achievement of MDG 2, which involves *completion* of primary education (Annex 1). The Mid Term Review of the Education Sector Development Plan 2011-15 linked the low survival rate to high repetition and dropout.<sup>174</sup>

127. **The early years are a key bottleneck within the country's basic education system.** The low survival rate is a consequence of most children dropping out in the first year of school or not progressing to the next grade level (see below). Children's lack of school readiness is a key factor. Other causes for dropping out include incomplete schools, the limited capacity of teachers, irregular teacher attendance, poor quality of teaching and learning, the direct and opportunity costs of schooling for families, and insufficient funding for investments in education quality.

128. **The construction of "complete primary schools" has enabled many more children to go to school.** The proportion of complete schools rose from 48 percent in 2007/08<sup>175</sup> to 80 percent in 2015<sup>a</sup> of all primary schools. Nonetheless, an estimated 1,500 primary schools are still incomplete,<sup>b</sup> mostly in remote rural areas, forcing children to leave school before finishing their primary education. Around 10,000 primary students drop out from primary education every year.<sup>176</sup>

129. **The access to early childhood education is limited.** The percentage of new entrants to grade one having preschool experience in 2014/15 was 51.2 percent,<sup>177</sup> with most of these enrolments in urban areas. Access to early childhood education varies significantly across districts, ranging from an enrolment rate of 18.6 percent in Toumlarn District to 80.2 percent in Sisattanak District, a 61.6 percentage difference (2013/14).<sup>178</sup>

130. **The greatest proportion of children not retained are those in grade 1.** Some 15 per cent of grade 1 children do not progress to grade 2. In subsequent grades, non-retention reduces to an average of 4 to 5 per cent of children who are lost each year between successive grades. The first year of school is therefore the most critical, as this is when most children drop out or do not progress to the next grade level.

131. **Secondary enrolment<sup>179</sup> has improved, although it remains low because of low survival rates in primary education.** In 2014/15, Lao PDR achieved 78.1 percent gross enrolment ratio (GER) for lower secondary education, thus exceeding its national target of 75 percent GER. Upper secondary GER has also increased from below 40 percent in 2012 to 45.8 in 2014/15. Overall, secondary education GER has increased from 50.5 percent in 2012/13 to 64.6 percent in 2014/15.<sup>180</sup> Further progress in secondary enrolment will require primary education survival rates to improve.

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<sup>a</sup> Ministry of Education data provided for this Report, 2015.

<sup>b</sup> Incomplete schools do not have sufficient facilities for children to complete the primary cycle up to grade 5.

132. **Secondary education gross graduation rates, which are much lower than gross enrolment rates, indicate significant dropout during the secondary cycle.** From 2012 to 2014, the lower secondary gross graduation rate increased to approximately 56 percent, while the upper secondary gross graduation rate increased to around 34 percent.<sup>181,182</sup> Non-completion of secondary education may be due to the low demand from communities, grade repetition in secondary school, which may lead to loss of interest and dropping out, and difficulty in access to secondary schools. The government is expanding the construction of secondary schools with dormitories for children and this has contributed to increasing female enrolment in lower secondary and upper secondary.<sup>183</sup>

133. **Disparities in primary enrolment have decreased, but disparities in attendance are still significant.** The interprovincial disparities in primary NER have decreased over the years<sup>184</sup> from 30 percentage points in 2007 to around 3.5 percentage points in 2014.<sup>a</sup> However, the primary adjusted net attendance ratios (ANAR)<sup>185</sup> between the provinces varied by as much as 22 percentage points in 2011/12. Key determinants of attendance are the ease of access, mothers' education (leading to a difference of 24 percentage points in ANAR between uneducated and educated mothers), ethnic group (20 percentage points difference), and poverty headcount rate (27 percentage points difference between poorest and richest).<sup>186</sup>

134. **Disparities in survival rates remain large.** While survival rates have improved since 2012, the difference between provinces in 2015 remain significant at 28 percentage points (65.4 percent in Saravane to 93.3 percent in Xayabury).<sup>187</sup> Saravane, Attapeu (65.5 percent) and Savannakhet (70.1 percent) are the three provinces with lowest survival rates in 2015. Survival rates are lowest in rural areas without road access, among children in the poorest quintile and children of mothers with no education. Interestingly, Chine-Tibetan children had the highest primary survival rate (87 percent in 2012), higher than did Lao-Tai children (67 percent in 2012), while the Mon-Khmer had the lowest survival rate (59 percent in 2012).

135. **Children from certain ethnic groups face particular challenges.** Those from non-Lao Tai communities face the difficulty of being educated in a language that is not their mother tongue, which has a direct impact on their ability to learn the foundational skills required to graduate from primary education. Despite the national policy on inclusive education (Chapter 14), children with disabilities face difficulties in attending school, even if they are able to enrol at a school.

136. **The secondary ANAR shows strong disparities.** It is lowest in rural areas without road access (26 percentage points below the national average in 2012), among the Mon-Khmer, among children of households in the poorest quintiles, and among children of mothers with no education. In 2012, there was a difference of 54 percentage points between Vientiane Capital (76.4 percent) and Saravane (22.3 percent). Savannakhet, Attapeu and Phongsaly also had very low secondary ANARs.

137. **Early grade literacy and the overall quality of teaching and learning need improvement.** A 2015 report<sup>188</sup> summarised recent assessments of Lao students' language and literacy performance. These assessments were (i) three rounds of the Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes (ASLO), for Grade 5 in 2006 and 2009;<sup>189</sup> and for Grade 3 in 2011; (ii) an early grades reading assessment (EGRA) in 2012; and (iii) a learning assessment of ten year olds by the Program for the Analysis of Education Systems (PASEC) in 2013. The assessments highlighted

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<sup>a</sup> Lao EMIS/EduINFO data: Xaysoumboon Province has the lowest primary NER at 96.5 percent and two provinces have 100 percent primary NER (Sekong, Vientiane Capital)

concerns on the low language learning outcomes achieved by students. The 2009 ASLO on Lao language found that only 19 percent of Grade 4 students had a level of independent functioning in Lao language. The results were consistent with the finding from the 2012 EGRA, which identified weak literacy skills in the first grades of primary education. In that assessment, almost 30 percent of Grade 3 students were unable to read a single word of a given text, while a further 30 percent of those who could read at least one word did not understand the meaning of the text.

138. **Lao PDR suffers a severe shortage of skilled workers - a significant issue for ASEAN integration.** Much of it results from the poor quality of basic education. A report<sup>190</sup> identified three challenges that Lao PDR must overcome to achieve broad-based growth and poverty reduction, one of which was poor literacy skills among workers.<sup>a</sup> Yet enrolments in TVET have increased over the past two years. TVET is provided at the primary, upper secondary and post-secondary level.<sup>191</sup> The country has 37 vocational & technical schools in 2013/14, including 22 under MoES, with the rest under other ministries.<sup>192</sup> The challenge lies in both demand and quality issues: despite increased enrolment in TVET, most students still prefer going into higher education rather than post-secondary non-tertiary TVET, and the quality of education and training provided in TVET institutions is generally poor. This is due to the shortage of appropriately qualified and trained teachers,<sup>193</sup> weaknesses in curricula and teaching-learning materials, and lack of facilities.

139. **Although the Government has made significant investments in expanding non-formal adult literacy programmes, progress has been slow.** Lao PDR has a low literacy rate, even among youth,<sup>b</sup> possibly because of the large proportion of children not continuing to secondary education. The number of learners within the non-formal education for the lower secondary level has increased rapidly. However, the quality and efficiency of such learning programs need improvement.

## 7.2. Context

140. **The revised Education Law, approved in July 2015, makes primary and lower secondary education compulsory.** Commendably, it raises the age of compulsory education to at least 14 years. Other aspects still need to be addressed. The rise in the age of compulsory education should also require an increase in the minimum age for admission to employment, since the minimum age for employment should not be younger than the official age of compulsory education completion. However, this is not yet the case, as discussed in Chapter 14 on child labour. More work may be necessary in this respect.

141. **The distribution of teachers is not equitable, varying across provinces.**<sup>c</sup> Phongsaly and Houaphan are among the provinces with teacher shortages.<sup>194</sup> Remote areas, usually non Lao-Tai communities, face difficulties in attracting and maintaining qualified teachers. For Lao PDR as a whole, the Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) was around 24 for 2013-14.<sup>195</sup>

142. **Teacher quality and teacher training programmes need to improve.** The results from learning assessments suggest that teachers may not be delivering the high quality teaching needed to develop problem solving or independent thinking skills. While around 98 percent of primary

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<sup>a</sup> The priorities for Lao PDR identified by the World Bank (2014a) were to (i) increase agricultural productivity, (ii) create more attractive off-farm jobs, and (iii) ensure basic literacy skills.

<sup>b</sup> The LSIS data from 2011/12 shows a tested literacy rate of 73 per cent among the age group of 15-24 years in 2011/2012, showing a drop from 79 per cent in 2001.

<sup>c</sup> From Vientiane Capital (6.4 primary teachers per school) to Phongsaly (2.4 primary teachers per school)

teachers and 99.6 percent of secondary teachers have received training, one report notes that continuous professional development is infrequent.<sup>196</sup> Reviews<sup>197</sup> have shown that pre-service teacher training programmes rely heavily on rote learning, with very little meaningful interaction between student teachers and few opportunities for trainees to learn to think for themselves. This approach to teaching is then repeated in the teacher's own approach to teaching when graduate teachers begin to work in schools. The existing curriculum and the limited teacher resources available tend to reinforce rote learning as a teaching methodology.<sup>198</sup> The lack of budget available to district education offices for supervision visits further contributes to the inability to apply the teaching improvements learnt through in-service development.

143. **School environments and teaching learning supplies are often inadequate.** A national review<sup>199</sup> highlighted the insufficiency of teaching and learning supplies, with the majority of schools unable to meet the 1:1 student-textbook ratio set out in the Ministry policy. Where textbooks are available, these are difficult to maintain within classrooms. Schools often omit to provide adequate water and sanitation facilities for boys and girls.

144. **School Block Grants for the basic education cycle will need to be disbursed in a timely manner, with the use of an equity funding formula.** This will ensure adequate funding for those schools that need it most. While 'per pupil' grant amounts are small in relation to the overall needs, this mechanism supports the Government's efforts to decentralize basic social services and increase community ownership of their children's education.

145. **Public expenditure on education and sport has grown significantly, but the share of non-salary operating budget is still too small.** From 2006 to 2013/14, education as a share of government expenditure increased from 13.6 to 15.5 per cent<sup>a</sup> and as a share of GDP, from 3.0 percent in 2006 to 4.7 percent in 2013,<sup>200</sup> which is slightly higher than the developing country average for East Asia and the Pacific (4.4 per cent of GDP in 2010).<sup>201</sup> The current expenditure per primary student has increased by 11 times from 2007/08 to 2012/13.<sup>202</sup> One major concern is the low share allocated to non-salary recurrent expenditures within the overall education budget (around 10 per cent).<sup>203</sup> Recognizing that quality improvements across the education sector will require sufficient funding, the new Education Law passed in July 2015 has committed to providing the education sector with 18 percent of the total government budget. However, recent budget figures show that this target may not be achieved.

146. **The incentive structure for budget savings and allocations needs to be changed.** In current practice, savings realized by a shift by the Ministry from one budget line to another (for example, from salaries to textbooks) are transferred back to the Treasury.

### **7.3. Looking forward: recommendations for UN support**

147. **Frameworks.** Enhancing human development and addressing low primary school completion are key goals of the Eighth NSEDP (2016–2020). Other reference frameworks for this sector include the draft National Human Resource Development Strategy (2016-2025) and the Education Sector Development Plan (2016-20), as well as the 2015 Education Law. The SDG 4 is much broader than the MDG 2 on primary education (Annex 2) and includes all levels of education. Within these frameworks, UN support to the Government of Lao PDR is recommended as follows

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<sup>a</sup> Updates for 2013/14 provided by Department of Finance, Ministry of Education and Sport

- **Position Lao PDR to benefit from ASEAN integration.** This will require addressing the gap in the supply of skills and qualifications in the workforce to meet the changing demands of the economy. The lack of basic skills leads to capacity challenges when it comes to undertaking further education and training at the level required in the labour market. The current TVET system needs improvement and expansion.
- **Strengthen financial planning to ensure fiscal sustainability and meet priority needs.** Projections and recent budget allocations indicate the uncertainty of attaining the 18 percent target for the education sector as a proportion of the total government budget. This will have an impact on the education budget for non-wage recurrent support (including for teacher training, textbooks and provision of school block grants and so on). This may lead to greater reliance on external sources, which will jeopardize the sustainability of programmes. Joint planning with the government is required for prioritization and resource allocation. Initiatives that do not align with sector priorities or are fiscally unrealistic should be reconsidered.
- **Address non-performance in teachers.** This issue contributes directly to the low-level of student performance.<sup>204</sup> Teachers' non-performance is linked to factors such as the policy environment, poor management, lack of opportunity for continuous professional development, low motivation, lack of proper working conditions and faulty deployment practices. This is a critical area requiring technical and financial support. To recruit and retain quality teachers, Lao PDR will need to implement not only skills upgrading and quality assurance, but also appropriate human resource policies, such as local area recruitment and salary improvements.<sup>205</sup>
- **Ensure cross-sectoral support to early childhood development and education (ECD/ECE).** In view of its impact on school readiness and education outcomes, ECD/ECE needs to be developed further through a holistic approach with health, nutrition and parenting education.
- **Invest more in policies and targeted initiatives known to strengthen the foundations for quality basic education.** Interventions may include aligning the school year with the agriculture calendar, and allocating funds for school improvement in disadvantaged ethnic communities. The planning and selection of such groups will need to use the appropriate indicators.
- **Expand alternative or flexible learning or non-formal education programmes** for students who have dropped out from primary and lower secondary education. Such programmes should provide a bridge into mainstream education and promote lifelong learning.
- **Coordinate and harmonize development partner support to the sector,** ensuring that this aligns closely with the Education Sector Development Plan (2016-20) and sub-sector plans. The UN will need to consider the overall funding environment in Lao PDR, which will have an impact on availability of UN funds for the education sector.



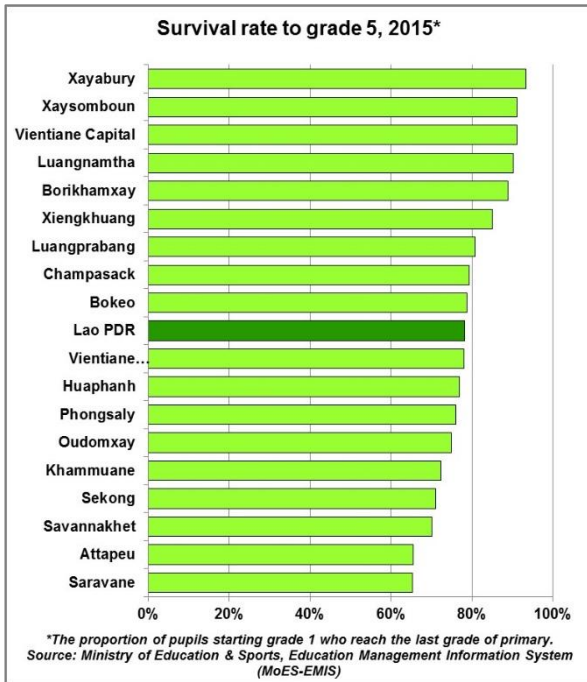


Figure 7.1. Although primary net enrolment rate is above 98 percent, children who enrol in primary school drop out over the course of the primary education cycle.

This shows the wide differences in survival rates between provinces.

Figure 7.2. This chart from 2011/12 shows that all children – even those from the richest quintiles and those of educated mothers – drop out of school, with the highest percentage who drop out in the first year of school.

In families from the poorest first quintile, only 58 percent of students who originally were in the cohort survived to grade 5.

In other words, the early years of schooling are the bottleneck in the system.

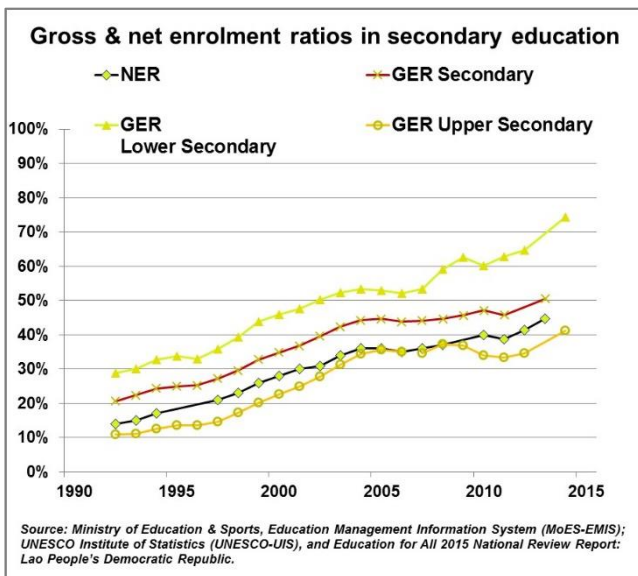
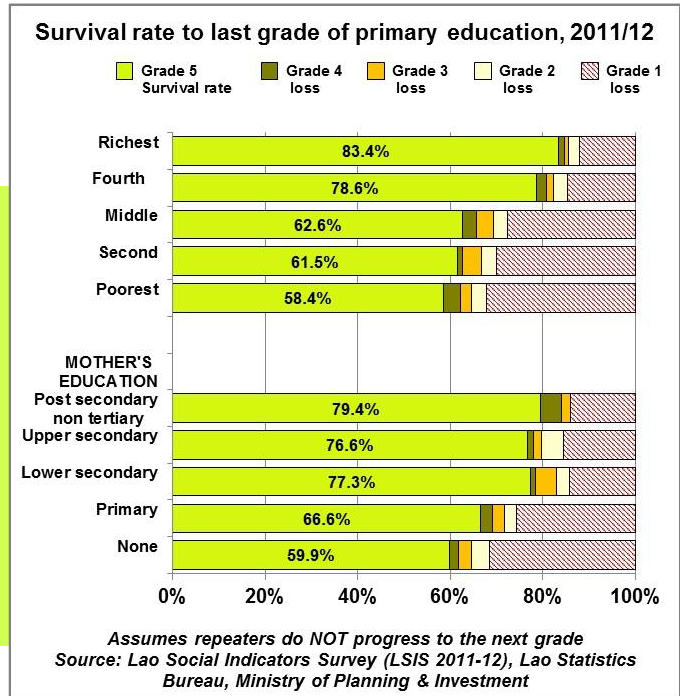


Figure 7.3. Lao PDR has achieved universal coverage with primary education enrolment. However, since primary survival rates are low (Figure 7.1), these bring down the secondary education enrolment rate – which is an essential indicator for LDC graduation.

Additionally, the wide gap between the net and gross enrolment rates (NER and GER secondary) shows inefficiencies in the system, such as repetition and over-age students

## 8. Achieve gender equality and empower women and girls

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### 8.1. Trends, disparities and determinants

#### 8.1.1 Education and gender

148. **The gender equality gap has narrowed in all three levels of education enrolment, but challenges persist in education completion.** With a gender disparity index (GPI)<sup>a</sup> of 0.96 for primary education GER in 2014, gender analysis of education shows the following:

- Families are increasingly willing to send girls to primary school. However, beyond the primary level, families still prioritize boys' education and girls are more likely to be left behind, especially in rural areas. From primary and lower secondary to upper secondary, gender disparity in enrolment progressively widens in favour of boys (from GPI 0.96 in primary to 0.94 in lower secondary, and GPI 0.86 in upper secondary education).
- Once in primary school, girls generally do better than do boys. Girls stay longer, have less repetition, and are more likely to complete primary schooling than are boys. The GPI calculated with survival rate, repetition rate and completion rate is respectively 1.04, 0.80 and 1.06.
- However, girls have less opportunity than boys have to continue with secondary education (GPI for primary-secondary transition: 0.97). The GPI for graduation rates from lower secondary, although improved from 2012 (0.87), has not yet reached parity (0.94 in 2014). The GPI for upper secondary graduation is still low, at 0.84.
- Girls have better school attendance rates, although their enrolment is lower than that of boys. ANAR in 2012 showed gender parity at both primary and secondary level.
- At tertiary level, the gender equality gap is still well below parity. However, it is narrowing at a faster rate than that at secondary level. This is probably because young women who make it to tertiary level are likely to come from families where gender is less of a barrier.

149. **Two key determinants drive the patterns of gender inequity in education:**

- Girls are more likely to be kept at home due to safety concerns and household responsibilities, especially if the secondary school is far from home.
- Parents do not put the same value on education for girls as they do for boys, especially if this view is part of their tradition, or if the parents are poor, or have little or no education. When GPI is calculated for primary and secondary school attendance in different socio-economic groups and locations, the widest gap in gender equality is found among children from rural areas without road access, children from the non Lao-Tai groups, children of uneducated mothers and children of families in the poorest quintiles. This gap is much larger in secondary education: for example, in the appropriate age group of the poorest quintiles, 66 girls attend secondary school for every 100 boys.

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<sup>a</sup> GPI in education enrolment is obtained by dividing female GER by male GER. Additionally, this Report analyses gender disparities in other areas – for instance, survival, transition, graduation, etc. by dividing the relevant indicator for females by that for males. The Report specifies which indicator the GPI relates to (e.g., GPI for survival rate). For all indicators, a GPI of 1 means equality, GPI below 1 means a greater proportion of boys relative to girls. GPI above 1 means a greater proportion of girls relative to boys.

150. **Gender disparity in young people's literacy has not changed significantly.** In 2011/12, the GPI for literacy in the age group 15-24 years was 0.89,<sup>206</sup> compared to 0.90 in 2001.<sup>207</sup> This reflects the pattern above, where girls have less opportunity to progress to the secondary level after primary school. Primary schooling is not a guarantee of literacy: the survey found that over half (54 to 55 percent) the respondents who were illiterate had attended primary school.

### 8.1.2 Sexual and reproductive health

151. **Lao PDR has one of the highest rates of early marriage in the region.** One-third of women marry before age 18, while one-tenth marry before age 15.<sup>208</sup> Early marriage is often associated with early pregnancy. In 2012, 19.4 percent of reproductive aged women had given birth by age 18, while 3.6 percent had done so by age 15.<sup>209</sup> Both early marriage and adolescent birth have a negative impact on the education and livelihood opportunities of women.<sup>a</sup>

### 8.1.3 Employment and gender<sup>210</sup>

152. **The share of women in wage employment is low in all sectors (35 percent), including non-agricultural sectors (34 percent).**<sup>211</sup> Instead, among the unpaid workers for the family, 65 percent are women. The low share of women in wage employment, relative to men, is associated with lower education levels. Among those employed, 33 percent of employed males have completed secondary education, compared to 25 percent of employed females; 28 percent of employed females have no education, compared to 17 percent of employed males. Some 6 and 7 percent of employed men respectively have tertiary and technical school education, compared to 3 and 5 percent of employed women. On the other hand, 67 percent of employed females have no education or only primary education, in contrast to 54 percent of employed males.

153. **An equal share of men and women make up the working population,<sup>b</sup> but women generally occupy the lower rungs of the labour market.** Women are relatively more excluded from formal sectors and the social protection that this entails. Some 64 percent of workers in the elementary occupations<sup>212</sup> and 63 percent of those classified as service, shop and market sales workers are women. On the other hand, men account for the majority of civil servants, professionals, technicians and other sectors. Although women have significant roles in agriculture, they have less access to and control of farming inputs and credit.<sup>213</sup> Women account for only 23 percent of all employers,<sup>214</sup> more often of small enterprises, rather than medium to large firms.<sup>215</sup>

154. **Women undertake multiple roles and begin working at an earlier age, which affects their well-being.** Women spend over four times the amount of time in housework each day (2.6 hours) than do men (0.6 hours), in addition to agricultural activities (2.3 hours for women, 2.5 hours for men).<sup>216</sup> Across all ages and locations, the proportion of economically active girls is substantially higher than that of economically active boys. In urban areas, for example, nearly 40 percent of girls aged 15-19 work; compared to some 28 percent of boys the same age. The likely causes are boys' higher participation rates in secondary and tertiary education, and a lower age of marriage for girls, especially in rural areas.<sup>217</sup>

155. **Migration for work, whether within or outside the country, entails significant risks for women.** For example, in the export-oriented garment industry, labour standards are poorly enforced<sup>218</sup> and women often work long hours in poor conditions, suffer from poor nutrition and various illnesses.<sup>219</sup> Other issues include forced overtime, underpayment of salaries, penalties for

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<sup>a</sup> Section 9.1.2 covers other aspects of maternal and reproductive health.

<sup>b</sup> Females form 49.8 percent and males form 50.2 percent of those employed.

slowness and verbal abuse in the workplace. Young uneducated rural women are exposed to higher risks of violent or coercive sexual encounters, unwanted pregnancy and unsafe abortion.<sup>220</sup> When the migrant goes to a foreign country, most often Thailand,<sup>a</sup> the risks of abuse and exploitation are heightened. Many “push” and “pull” factors drive the migration, such as the desire to escape hardship and poverty, the presence of friends and relatives in the place of migration, the ease of transportation, information and media linkages, and the attraction of jobs perceived as tickets to a better life.<sup>221</sup>

156. **Female migrants who work abroad are more at risk than male migrants are.** The average age of female migrants is only 16.5 years while it is 21 years for male migrants. Some 63 percent of female migrants are under 16 years of age, in contrast to 14 percent of male migrants. The younger age makes girls extremely vulnerable to labour and sexual exploitation.<sup>222</sup> Women from Mon-Khmer and Tibeto-Burman ethnic groups are disproportionately represented among young migrants 15-25 years old who go to work in Thailand.<sup>223</sup> Women from resettled villages<sup>b</sup> account for a high proportion of trafficked women.<sup>224</sup>

#### 8.1.4 Political participation and gender

157. **Lao PDR has one of the highest proportions of women (25 percent) in national parliaments, well above the world average.** However, the proportion of women in other decision-making institutions within the Government is still low (5 percent as of 2012). The Government’s goal was to have women in at least 15 percent of such decision-making positions by 2015, and 30 percent women in the national parliament following the 2016 election. To increase the number of women in decision-making positions in the public sector, the Government has now developed a Gender and Governance Sector Strategy. At local level, 98 percent of village chiefs are men, although the Lao Women’s Union (LWU) is represented in village councils.<sup>225</sup> There are no data on the private sector.

#### 8.1.5 Violence against women

158. **Violence against women is a common phenomenon and Lao PDR is no exception.** The impact of violence on women may include poor health, miscarriage and abortion. A recent study<sup>226</sup> showed that some 30 percent of Lao women had experienced physical, sexual or emotional violence. The Ministry of Education and Sports is conducting a pilot project in secondary school to explore ways to tackle gender-based violence in schools in the Lao context.<sup>227,c</sup>

159. **Lao PDR has a range of mediation and counselling mechanisms,<sup>228</sup> including traditional channels.** The Counselling Centre for Women and Children Protection under the Central Lao Women’s Union provides counselling and temporary shelters for the victims of violence. There are also Provincial Counselling Offices, Districts Counselling Units and village mediation units. Both formal and traditional systems of intervention, protection and compensation are needed to respond to domestic violence.<sup>229</sup> As mentioned in Section 3.2, the access to justice needs to improve, but no data disaggregated by sex were available for this Report.

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<sup>a</sup> Thailand’s language and culture similarities, as well as its proximity and affluence attract migrant workers from Lao PDR.

<sup>b</sup> Women in such cases have been dislocated and are likely to have lost land and use-rights.

<sup>c</sup> See also Chapter 14 for violence against children.

## 8.2. Context

160. **Significant advances have been made in gender-focused policy and legislation over the past five years.** Following the Concluding Observations made by the CEDAW Committee,<sup>230</sup> Lao PDR passed the National Law on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women and Children in 2014 and adopted the National Action Plan on Eliminating Violence Women and Children the same year. However, an appropriate amount of budget will need to be allocated for the implementation of these instruments. The Lao National Commission for Advancement of Women (NCAW) is currently developing the National Gender Equality Development Plan for 2016-2020 and the long-term vision to 2030. It is also drafting the Eighth and Ninth periodic report on CEDAW implementation for submission (Table 1.1).

161. **Three main institutions are responsible for gender-related work.** NCAW and LWU are the main institutions responsible for monitoring CEDAW implementation, mainstreaming gender into various sectors, ensuring social justice and combatting violence against women. The work of NCAW and LWU also includes coordinating the gender-related work of line ministries and development partners, monitoring and evaluating the implementation of national strategies and action plans, and conducting advocacy programmes on gender issues. The Women's Parliamentary Caucus of the National Assembly reviews and drafts laws on gender, monitors laws on women and children, and monitors the policy on gender equality.<sup>231</sup>

162. **The political role and capacities of gender-related institutions, particularly NCAW, need to be upgraded.** The gender agenda is transformative, but requires other ministries and departments to implement it, since gender is a cross-cutting issue. Within the country's political structure and hierarchy, the gender-related institutions do not necessarily have the leverage or influence to bring about fundamental changes.

163. **Disaggregation of data by sex and age has improved, but is still inconsistent.<sup>a</sup>** Moreover, many areas such as employment, migration, incomes, disability, domestic violence, ethnicity and residence need in-depth research and robust gender-related data. The country also needs a monitoring and evaluation system to report on the implementation of the National Strategy for the Advancement of Women and CEDAW.

164. **Lao PDR has amended the Labour Law with important new provisions for women in occupational safety, health and maternity benefits and protection.** The new law explicitly prohibits discrimination in hiring and firing of women due to pregnancy or maternity status. It also provides additional protections with regard to discrimination and equal pay. The revised labour law also states that an employee may terminate her or his employment contract and seek compensation in case of sexual harassment, but does not provide a definition of the latter. However, the amended Law does not provide a comprehensive definition of discrimination, and does not appear to prohibit discrimination on several of the grounds required by the ILO Convention No. 111 on Discrimination (Employment and Occupation), such as religion, political opinion, race, and social origin. The ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations expressed the view that sexual harassment was a form of sex discrimination and should be addressed within the requirements of the Convention.<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> The 2010 Statistics Law states: "attention should be made for gender disaggregated statistics" (Number Order 03 /NA 30 June 2010)

### 8.3. Looking forward: recommendations for UN support

165. **Frameworks.** The Eighth NSEDP highlights gender as an important factor for ensuring the quality of human capital and includes measures to address violence against women, gender issues in health, education and employment, and women's participation in decision-making. SDG 5 covers a range of areas previously not covered by MDG 3, including violence and discrimination against women, sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, economic resources and technologies (Annex 2). Within the framework provided by the NSEDP, other national frameworks and SDG 5, UN support to the Government of Lao PDR is recommended as follows

- **Improve the implementation and monitoring of national gender equality laws, policies and instruments.** These include the Eighth NSEDP, the 2016-2020 National Gender Equality Development Plan, the National Law on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women and Children, the National Action Plan on Eliminating Violence Women and Children, and other national priorities on gender equality, including CEDAW implementation and recommendations. Ministries, institutions and organizations will need to mainstream gender into policies and programmes in relevant sectors.
- **Promote and implement national laws on equal opportunities in training and employment.** The goal is to ensure women's full participation at all levels, including at leadership level, in the labour market and with equal pay for equal value of work.
- **Strengthen national capacity for generating and using data disaggregated by sex.** The evidence from analysis and research should be used to inform decision-making, policy advocacy, stakeholder education, and the development and implementation of programmes. Particular care is needed in collecting and interpreting data on violence against women and children, and indeed, on all issues that are socially frowned on, taboo or illegal. A rise in reported cases may indicate that the phenomenon is increasing, that reporting systems are better or that women are more willing to report the issue.
- **Integrate gender budgeting in all programmes and projects.**
- **Prioritize the prevention of adolescent pregnancies and early marriage, given the scale of the issue and its importance to female education.**<sup>233</sup> Prevention needs to be done by educating communities and by enforcing the existing family law, which does not allow marriage before the age of consent. Prevention should also be part of a comprehensive national youth policy (Sections 2.2, 2.6), which should include the accessibility of contraceptives for unmarried youth and education on sexual and reproductive health and rights.
- **Develop integrated programmes to combat violence against women.** Research into customary law and the role of the Village Mediation Unit (Section 14.1) in addressing gender-based violence may provide a greater depth of understanding on how to fine-tune the various responses.<sup>234</sup> Primary prevention, such as educating children from an early age, would be required as well as public awareness campaigns on the unacceptability and the sanctions against such practices. The Government will also need to establish appropriate detection, response and protection mechanisms, such as increased legal access for women, telephone hotlines, safe houses and clear response protocols. Institutional capacities will need to be strengthened, especially in the health, social welfare and judicial systems. Greater political

commitment and resources are needed. In this regard, ongoing efforts to develop and cost a basic essential service package for survivors of violence will clarify resource needs and contribute to ensuring adequate funding allocations.

- **Focus on marginalized women and girls identified by other MDG/SDG areas.** This has the potential to accelerate progress towards other goals, because of the key roles that women play in communities and families. Female migrant workers,<sup>235</sup> women in remote, ethnic communities, and women living with HIV/AIDS are among the marginalized groups. Programmes for female migrant workers, for example, will need to improve employment and living conditions, prevent abuse and exploitation, and provide life skills education. Peer support networks for such women may be needed to counter workplace abuses and pressures, and facilitate assistance from service providers. Such programmes would be crucial in view of the growing inequality within urban areas, the 2015 AEC integration and the expected expansion of the industrial sector in Lao PDR.
- **Harness the full economic potential of Lao women’s participation in the market economy as entrepreneurs, employees and consumers.**<sup>236</sup> Women must have a certain level of freedom if they are to penetrate and fully interact with markets, and if markets are to include them. This requires women-centric strategies to assist female entrepreneurs, develop fairer labour policies that reduce the gender equality gap and encourage young mothers to stay employed.
- **Strengthen coordination and partnerships to leverage resources.** NCAW and LWU are charged with coordinating the gender-related work of line ministries and development partners. However, partnerships and coordination should also be strengthened with NGOs, NPAs and private sector partners. Areas where joint approaches and interventions would be useful should be identified.

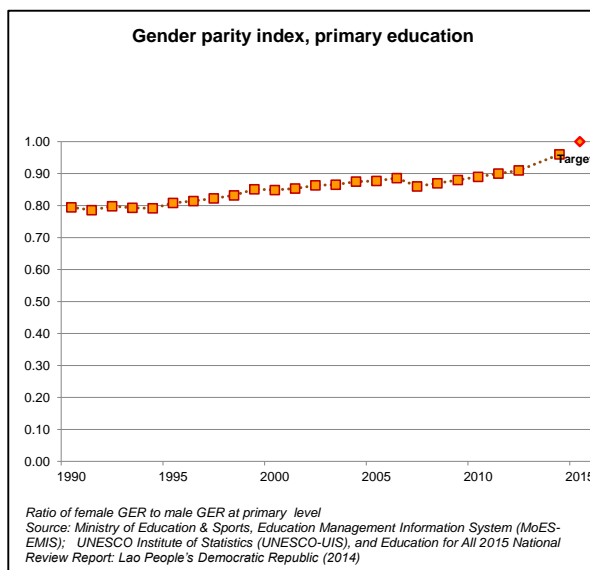


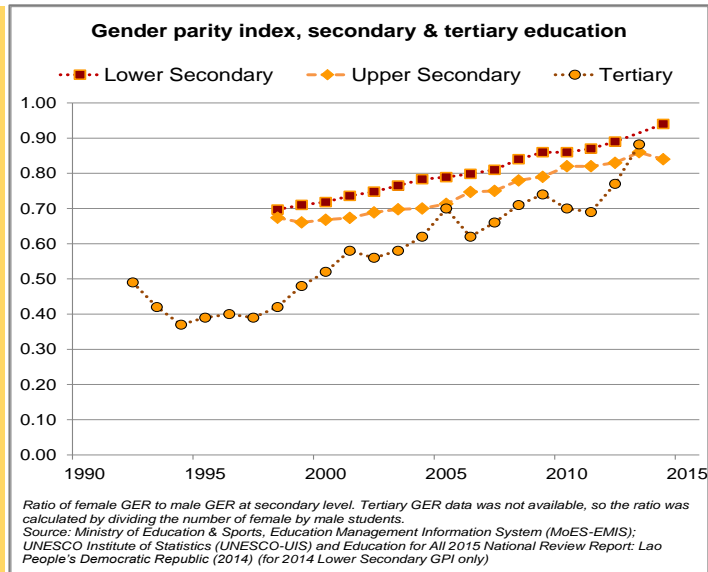
Figure 8.1. Lao PDR has achieved gender equality in primary education enrolment.

The gender parity index, calculated by dividing gross enrolment ratio of girls by that of boys, has almost reached 1.

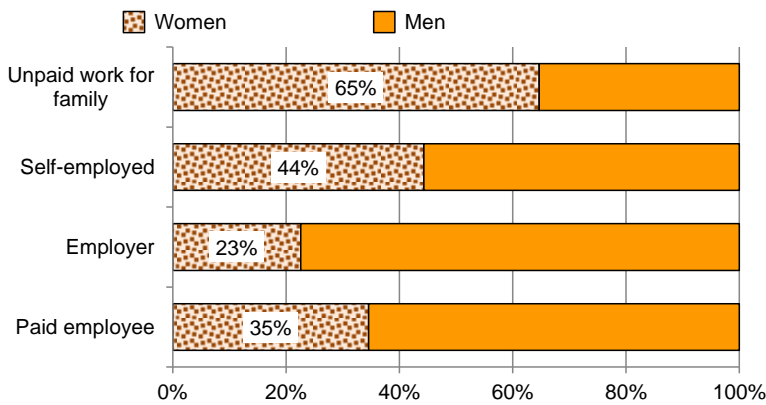
Girls now have the same opportunities as boys have to participate in primary school.



Figure 8.2. The gender equality gap has narrowed in recent years at secondary level, but is still below 1.0, indicating that families prioritize boys' education when it comes to secondary school.



**Women and men in employment by type of employment (% in each type)\***



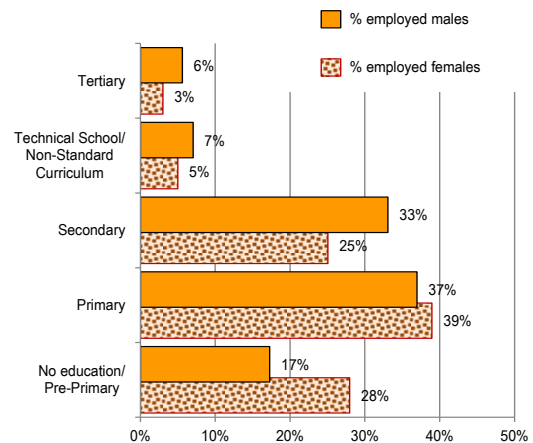
\* Includes agriculture & fisheries sector. Does not include "Not Recorded" category  
Source: Labour Force Survey (LFS 2010), Lao Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Planning & Investment

Figure 8.3. In employment, 65 percent of unpaid workers for the family and 44 percent of self-employed people are women. These are known as vulnerable workers. On the other hand, men dominate among employers (77 percent) and employees with salary (65 percent) with possibly other employment benefits.

Figure 8.4. The chart shows one of the main reasons why most women are lower than their male counterparts in the job ladder. Since a significant proportion of girls do not complete secondary education, women dominate among the ranks of workers with no education or only primary education.

A greater proportion of male workers have completed secondary school and higher education compared to the proportion of female workers.

**Women and men in employment by level of education (% of total male/female employed)**



Source: Labour Force Survey (LFS 2010), Lao Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Planning & Investment



## 9. Achieve maternal and child health

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### 9.1. Trends, disparities and determinants

#### 9.1.1 Child health

166. **From the early 1990s, Lao PDR recorded significant declines in infant and under-five mortality rates.** The decline may be attributed to improvements in socio-economic conditions of the population and increased coverage with high-impact interventions, in particular immunization and breastfeeding. Projections show that Lao PDR has already met its national targets in under-five and infant mortality. Despite this significant progress, however, according the 2015 Report of the UN Inter-agency Group on Child Mortality Estimation,<sup>237</sup> the country did not achieve international targets (reduction by two-thirds of 1990 levels). New international targets on ending preventable child deaths have been now set in the form of target 2, SDG 3 (Annex 2). To achieve these new global targets, Lao PDR will need to make large investments to accelerate interventions in the poorer and remote areas.

167. **Disparities in young child mortality are marked across socio-economic groups:**

- Children in the poorest quintile are up to four times more likely to die before their fifth birthday than those from the richest.
- A child born in Phongsaly is nearly five times more likely to die by the age of five years and over four times more likely to die by age one than is a child born in Vientiane Capital.
- Demographic factors play a significant role: children born of older mothers (35 years and above) or too-young mothers (below age 20) are one and a half times more likely to die before their fifth birthday, compared to children born of mothers 20 to 34 years old. Short birth intervals reduce a child's chance of survival, highlighting the important role of child spacing.

168. **Most of the child deaths are preventable or treatable with high-impact cost-effective interventions.**<sup>238</sup> Nearly 70 per cent of children in Lao PDR die of neonatal causes, pneumonia and diarrhoea. Lao PDR shows good progress on some of these interventions but overall, the coverage is still low for many of the interventions. The coverage levels of interventions also vary widely, depending on residence, ethnic group, mothers' education and wealth quintile. The following provides a glimpse of such disparities:

- **Coverage of vaccination with tetanus toxoid** is 1.4 to 2 times lower among women from disadvantaged groups, such as those living in rural areas without road access, women in the poorest quintile, women with no education and women from non Lao-Tai groups.<sup>239</sup>
- **Immunization coverage** remains low and inequitable, with the equity gap widening or remaining the same since 2006, because wealthier groups and urban families show quicker progress. Immunization challenges include high dropout rates and problems of access or utilization. While the coverage by initial vaccinations is higher, between 75-77 per cent, the coverage falls significantly in subsequent doses.<sup>240</sup>
- **Access to antibiotics** is uneven, with poorer and more remote groups having less access. The availability of antibiotics at the district and health centre levels is generally unsatisfactory.<sup>241,242</sup>

- **Oral rehydration therapy (ORT)** with continued feeding for diarrhoea saw some improvement at national level in 2011, but declined in rural areas without road access.<sup>243</sup> Less than 1 percent of children received zinc for diarrhoea.<sup>244</sup> The reliance on public sector distribution for oral rehydration salts (ORS) and zinc through health facilities limits coverage, because of inadequate care seeking for diarrhoea.
- **Hygiene practices<sup>a</sup>** vary by socio-economic characteristics and locality. Saravane and Phongsaly, for example, have very high rates of open defecation (78 and 62 per cent respectively).<sup>245</sup>
- **Women's empowerment and well-being** strongly affect pregnancy outcomes and child survival. Unplanned and frequent childbirths, heavy workload, inadequate dietary intakes and low levels of education have a negative impact on pregnancy outcomes and child survival. Women in remote rural areas, women from non Lao-Tai groups and from the poorest households are especially disadvantaged in this regard.<sup>246</sup>

### 9.1.2 Maternal and reproductive health

169. **Lao PDR has achieved the MDG target of reducing its maternal mortality ratio (MMR) by three-quarters since 1990.** Over the past two decades, MMR has declined from 1,100 per 100,000 live births in 1990 to around 220 in 2013. This revised 2014 estimate by United Nations agencies <sup>247</sup>shows that Lao PDR has achieved the MDG target of 75 percent reduction in MMR.<sup>248</sup> However, the MMR is still among the highest in the region.

170. **The high MMR is explained by the low coverage and inadequate quality of services.** The proportion of births assisted by trained health personnel continues to increase, but is still low at 42 percent. The facility-based delivery rates is still too low (38 per cent in 2011/12). The antenatal care (ANC) coverage by trained health personnel was an estimated 69 per cent in 2014,<sup>b</sup> achieving the national goal set for 2015 (60 percent). However, this is only for one visit by trained health personnel, while the UN recommends at least four visits.<sup>249</sup> Furthermore, it means that 31 per cent of pregnant women are still without proper ANC coverage. Regarding ANC service quality, only one in five pregnant women had a blood pressure check and urine and blood samples taken,<sup>250</sup> while less than half the pregnant women had their blood pressure checked. During pregnancy, only 25 per cent took the recommended dosage of iron pills, while 48 per cent did not take any at all. Although major hospitals can provide caesarean services and basic emergency obstetric and newborn care (BEmONC) services are available in every district, service quality and referral systems need improvement.<sup>251</sup>

171. **Disparities in service coverage are pronounced.**

- Both the proportion of deliveries assisted by a trained health personnel<sup>252</sup> and facility-based delivery rate are lowest in rural areas without road access (both 12 percent), among women with primary or no education (below 35 percent), among women from the poorest quintile households (11 percent), and among women from non Lao-Tai groups (below 21 percent). The disparities are starkest between poverty quintiles, with 76 to 80 percentage points difference between the richest and poorest quintiles. Phongsaly, Attapeu, Oudomxay and Huaphanh have the lowest coverage (18-24 percent).

<sup>a</sup> Around 26 per cent of the total disease burden in Lao PDR is attributed to environmental causes (Ministry of Health and World Health Organization, 2011)

<sup>b</sup>Note, however, that the 2006 and 2011/12 data (35 and 54 per cent respectively) are from surveys, while 2014 is from MoH administrative data, and the datasets are not comparable.

- The caesarean section rate is still low, at 4 per cent of all births, indicating that some women who needed a caesarean delivery were not able to have one.
- Antenatal care coverage (ANC1) shows less disparities, but again the same pattern of disadvantaged groups. The gap is greatest between the wealth quintiles (69 percentage points). Phongsaly, Oudomxay and Bokeo had the lowest ANC1 coverage in 2012 (25 to 38 percent).<sup>253</sup>

172. **Several determinants affect maternal survival and health in Lao PDR.** Regular visits are likely to prevent one in 3.6 maternal deaths.<sup>254</sup> The factors conducive to regular visits include the woman's education, her household income, pregnancy that is intended (indicating knowledge of family planning), physical closeness to a health facility, and the time available for herself (which is reduced by a necessity to work during pregnancy). The woman's health, nutrition, and the quality of health services she receives, however, have a greater impact on maternal survival than the number of visits have.

173. **The availability and use of contraceptives are key determinants.** Family planning alone could cut maternal deaths by almost a third, making it one of the most cost-effective interventions to help reduce maternal mortality. The use of modern contraception was 42 percent in 2011/12. Contraceptive pills and injectable contraceptives are the methods most used. The unmet need for contraception has gone down from 40 percent in 2000 to 20 percent in 2011/12, showing an increased access to contraceptives. However, these statistics also show that one in every five women wants to limit her family size or have birth spacing, but is not able to use contraception for various reasons.<sup>255</sup>

174. **The adolescent birth rate in Lao PDR is still high, at 94 live births per thousand adolescent women.** Country level data is not available on abortion, which is illegal under most circumstances. However, in one study, some 23 percent of respondents aged 15–24 who have had sexual intercourse reported having had an abortion.<sup>256</sup> Unmarried adolescents have difficulty in accessing health education and contraceptives, although the national policy on birth spacing stipulates the provision of contraceptives to those in need, regardless of age, marital or social status.<sup>257</sup> The public health sector is the major source of modern contraceptive methods, serving 71 per cent of users.

175. **In principle, contraceptives are widely available, but stock outs are alarmingly high.** Many maternal and reproductive health medicines and child health supplies are not regularly stocked by the health facility, regardless of the level of the facility. In 2014, 51 percent of facilities reported stockouts of priority medicines for maternal health.<sup>258</sup>

176. **Disparity patterns in contraceptive use are shaped by ease of access and a complex mix of belief and behaviour.** The use of modern contraceptives is lowest in rural areas without road access, among the Hmong-Lu Mien group, among adolescents (15-19), among women with no education and those from the poorest quintiles. On the other hand, modern contraceptive use rate is highest in women with primary education (48 percent) and appears to decline with higher levels of education (28 percent for those with higher education). The survey showed that significant proportions (12-19 percent) of women with secondary or higher education also use traditional methods, such as periodic abstinence.<sup>259</sup>

177. **Culturally appropriate approaches to promote contraceptives and reproductive health education show promise.** In areas far from health centres, community-based distribution (CBD) agents<sup>a</sup> undertake contraceptive distribution and health education together with other health supplies. Being from the same community and culture, these CBDs are more easily accepted by remote communities.<sup>260</sup>

## 9.2. Context

178. **The quality and deployment of health staff need to improve.** The recent rapid expansion of the health workforce by 4,000 has eased the general understaffing of health facilities. However, specific skill gaps remain due to the mismatch between the demand by provincial health services on one hand, and on the other, training programmes, the inadequate quality standards of many health profession training institutions and the lack of a functioning regulatory system for licensing and registration of health professionals. Qualified staff are unwilling to be deployed to rural and remote areas, where health facilities remain understaffed and unable to offer basic services. In 2013, only 33 percent of health centres had a community midwife (against a target of 100 percent) and 90 percent of health centres had less than four health workers (against a target of at least five health workers). In the short term, shortage of numbers of staff may not be such a constraint, since workloads remain relatively low, due to low ambulatory care (outpatient) visits per capita and limited outreach provision. However, the quality and composition of the available staff are more critical.

179. **Financial barriers impede access to health services.** The utilization of health services in Lao PDR is relatively low. Ambulatory care visits per capita per year have typically been below one in most areas of the country. National Health Accounts for 2013 suggest out-of-pocket expenses constitute around 40 percent of total health expenditure, equivalent to US\$ 13 per capita. Total health expenditure per capita was US\$ 32 in 2013.<sup>261</sup> Recognizing that user fees are a significant barrier to health access, especially for vulnerable groups, the government has financed various HEF schemes across the country.<sup>b</sup> The most recent data from the Ministry of Health (2013) show that HEF schemes cover about 109,000 poor families, or about 42.2 percent of the target population (around 9.2 percent of the total population). The government has initiated the roll-out of Free Delivery of Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health Care (“Free MNCH”) using a combination of government revenues and external assistance to finance the program.

180. **Health governance remains a challenge.**<sup>262</sup> Significant resource and capacity constraints are driven in large part by inadequate governance, management and logistics systems, which undermine effectiveness at all levels of the health system. In 2014, for example, only 58 percent of health facilities had child survival medicines in stock over a six-month period preceding the survey.<sup>263</sup>

181. **From 2016 on, health sector reforms will move towards a decentralized and results-based Health Service Delivery approach.** The approach focuses on realizing the following: (i) a Basic Integrated Service Package emphasizing reproductive, maternal, neonatal and child health, (ii)

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<sup>a</sup> CBD agents are trained nonprofessional members/or retired health workers of the community to provide health services directly to other members of the community. In the case of family planning, CBD services provide information and modern temporary contraceptive methods, including pills and condoms. CBD agents report every 1 to 3 months, and replenish their stocks of contraceptives, Vitamin A, Iron, and other items.

<sup>b</sup> Health Equity Fund (HEF), established starting in 2007, is a social protection scheme that provides free public health care services for the poor by removing major barriers to public health services access, such as transportation and costs of pharmaceuticals and other health care costs paid by those seeking care.

strengthened health human resources capacity, and (iii) improved health sector financing, including the eventual removal of financial barriers to health services by national programs such as HEF and Free MNCH, and by harmonization of external assistance.

### 9.3. Looking forward: recommendations for UN support

182. **Frameworks.** The Eighth National Health Sector Development Plan (2016 to 2020) and Health Sector Reform Framework (HSRF, 2016-2025)<sup>264</sup> constitute the guiding frameworks for the Government and development partners. The HSRF aims to increase access to basic services by 2020, and provide universal health coverage by 2025. Within the framework provided by these national frameworks, and SDG 3, UN support to the Government of Lao PDR is recommended as follows:

- **Continue to consolidate previous gains and address the unfinished agenda relating to MDG targets.** The Government is introducing and expanding new services and health facilities. However, it will be crucial to continue consolidating previous gains by improving coverage and ensuring the sustainability of preventive and promotive maternal and child health (MCH) interventions, such as immunization, micronutrient supplementation and mass deworming. In such efforts, the Government will need to prioritize the strengthening of integrated health outreach services as the main channel for reaching the most vulnerable groups with preventive interventions. The failure to reach high coverage levels with preventive services increases health care costs (from curative treatment) and leads to lost productivity.
- **Focus on health interventions known to improve maternal and child health and reduce maternal and child mortality.** These include improving the reach and quality of health care education, improving the quality of health care provided, increasing access to well-equipped and well-stocked facilities, and ensuring effective referral systems.
- **Ensure the availability of and access to maternal and child survival commodities and contraceptives.** This includes strengthening forecasting/planning, supply and logistics systems to prevent stock-outs.<sup>265</sup> These should be part of the broader health sector reform, which include measures to improve the governance, organization and management of the health system.
- **Develop and strengthen interventions beyond the health sector that are also necessary for tackling the challenge of high maternal mortality and morbidity.** Women's empowerment and education need to be promoted as an effective long-term measure for improving maternal health and reducing maternal mortality. Male involvement is also crucial. Behaviour change interventions need to use community networks and other channels to reach both men and women with key messages on maternal and reproductive health. Referral systems need to be strengthened not only through health facilities, but also with interventions to facilitate rapid transport to health facilities. Cultural traditions need to be tackled if these are harmful to maternal health and nutrition, one example being heavy workloads and inadequate diet while pregnant. Social assistance measures should remove financial barriers to health care access and facility delivery, and protect women from overwork during pregnancy.
- **Prioritize the prevention of adolescent pregnancies and early marriage.** See the recommendation for sexual and reproductive health and (section 8.3) and on youth policy (section 2.6).

- **Support the five priority areas of the HSRF.** The goal is to ensure quality, equitable and low cost health services to all Lao citizens, regardless of age, race, ethnic and social status. The five priorities for health sector reform are as follows:
  - **Strengthen human resource capacity.** This will include improving employment capacity, prioritizing the deployment of skilled health workers in rural and remote areas, strengthening health professions' education and training, and strengthening the health human resources information system to make it capable of generating evidence for rationalizing quota and skills needs by location. It also involves tackling the gaps in skills and quality standards mentioned earlier. Institutional changes are required to incorporate systematic feedback from the trainees on applying the knowledge after training. The complaints about the attitudes and behaviours of health services staff need to be addressed.
  - **Improve health sector financing.** This will include increasing and securing higher levels of domestic investments in health, and the eventual removal of financial barriers to health services through national programmes for HEF schemes and Free MNCH. It will entail the establishment of common rules, procedures and management systems for each of the two schemes as the first step in creating a national program and moving towards Universal Health Coverage.
  - **Improve the governance, organization and management of the health system.** This will include strengthening accountabilities and management structures at all levels and ensuring the effective functioning of primary health care services, including effective microplanning and maintenance of health facilities and equipment. It will also involve clear feedback flows on reform implementation, a strong results-orientation in the system, timely financial disbursements according to an agreed budget, service quality assessment and performance-based management of staff. With expanding private sector engagement in health, public private partnerships will need to be introduced to the health sector, but only with proper regulatory systems in place, including inspections of private pharmacies and food and drug inspections.
  - **Improve health service delivery and hospital management.** This will emphasize the provision at village health centre and district level of a Basic Integrated Service Package focused on reproductive, maternal, neonatal and child health that meets national standards, the adoption of quality assurance measures by health centres and district hospitals, and the expansion of the Healthy Village Model to at least 50 percent of villages in the country.
  - **Improve the overall monitoring and evaluation framework and the Health Management Information System (HMIS).** This will involve standardizing and harmonizing the health statistics routine reporting system, strengthening mechanisms for data collection, analysis, and utilisation management, developing baselines for health sector reform, continuing the work on compulsory civil registration and vital statistics system (Section 3.2), and enhancing the capacity of public health facilities to provide timely and accurate statistical reports.



Figure 9.1. Young children from the poorest quintiles are about four times as likely to die before their fifth birthday compared to those from families in the richest quintiles. A child whose mother has no education is 2.8 times more likely to die before her/his fifth birthday than a child whose mother has completed secondary education and above.

Neonatal mortality, however, does not show such a stark difference. Indeed, the first three poverty quintiles have comparable neonatal mortality rates. Only the richest and fourth quintiles see a significant reduction in neonatal mortality.

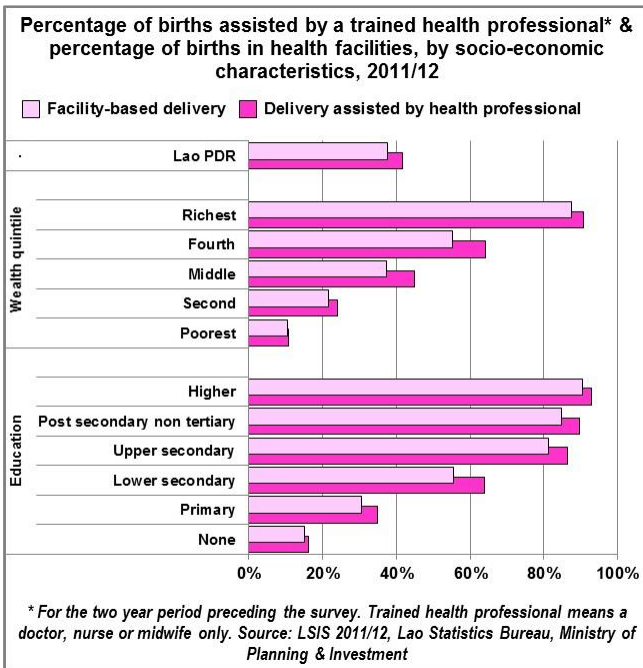
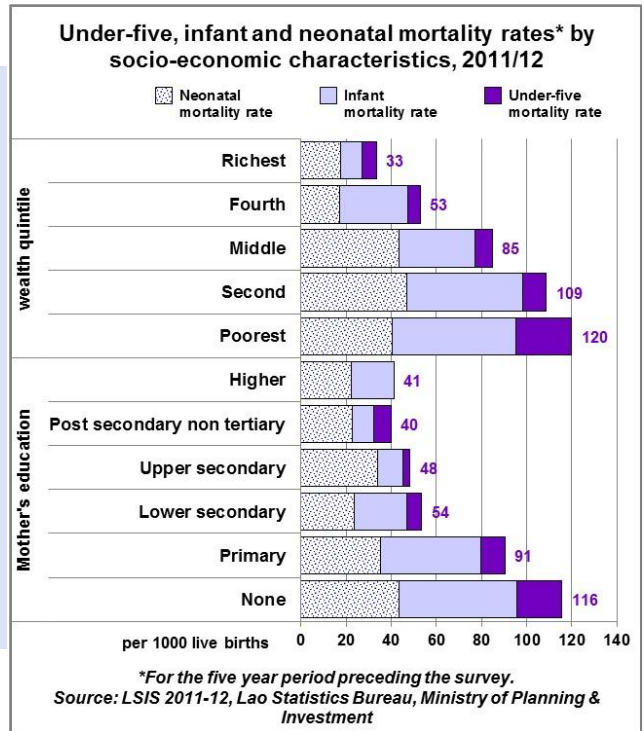
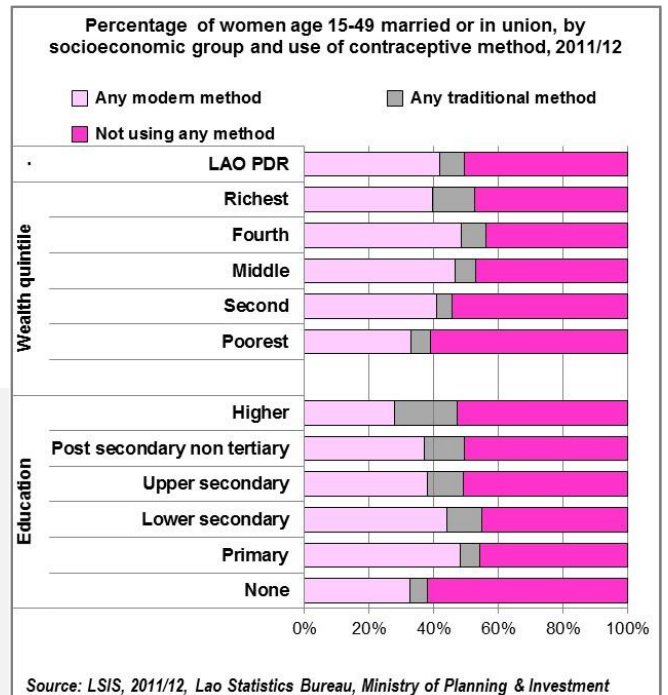


Figure 9.2. Nearly 90 percent of women from the richest quintile have delivery assisted by a health professional, including in hospital. However, the majority of Lao women do not do so. Even in the middle quintile, less than half the births are assisted by a health professional.

Figure 9.3. Less than half the women in Lao PDR who are married or in union use a modern contraceptive method. The usage of modern contraceptives is not as different between the different socio-economic groups as with other indicators. The richest and most educated women seem to use traditional methods the most.



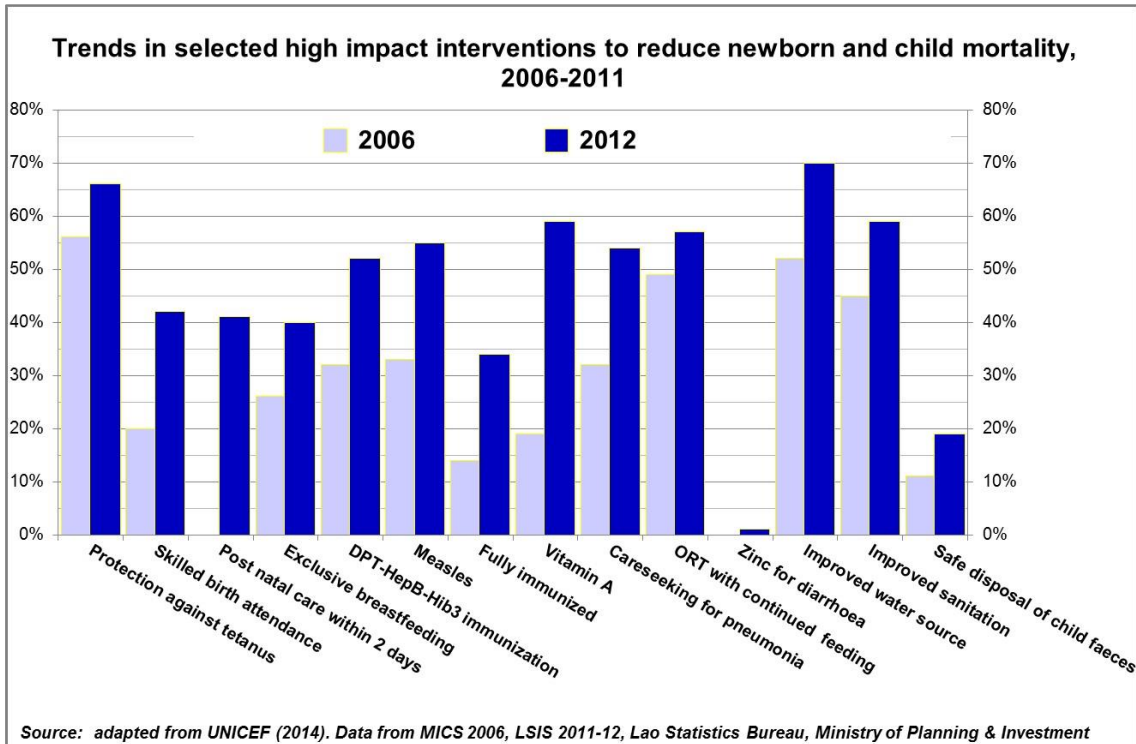


Figure 9.4. Coverage by key interventions for neonatal and child health improved from 2006 to 2011, but nonetheless remains low, with most indicators covering less than 60 percent of the relevant target group



## 10. Accelerate HIV response

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### 10.1. Trends, disparities and determinants

183. **Over the past 15 years, Lao PDR has kept HIV prevalence generally low.** Among the population aged 15-49 years, HIV prevalence is less than 0.5 percent, while among key populations at higher risk, HIV sero-prevalence is less than 5 percent. However, Lao PDR cannot afford to be complacent, as the following trends indicate:

- **HIV incidence is increasing, unlike in some neighbouring countries**, with an estimated 957 cases of new infections in 2014 only, up from 617 new cases in 2012.<sup>266</sup> Out of the new cases reported in 2014, 53 percent were male and 47 percent female; over half the females (54 percent) were under 30 years of age, compared to 35.4 percent of males. Heterosexual contact and men having sex with men (MSM) account for the majority of HIV transmission from 1990 to 2014. Transmission from mother to child and injecting drug use account for only a small proportion of cases. Data on transmission modes are notoriously unreliable, as infected people do not necessarily disclose the probable cause of infection to health workers.
- **HIV prevalence also is increasing in sub-groups of key populations.** HIV surveillance and assessments found HIV prevalence of 12.5 percent among female sex workers in Vientiane Capital who report injecting drug use and 17 percent among people who inject drugs (PWID) in Phongsaly and Houaphan, the two border provinces with Vietnam. Among the subgroup of MSM classified as transgender that reported selling sex, 7 percent were found to be living with HIV.
- **Mobile workers are at higher risk for HIV infection**, as they are more likely to have multiple sexual partnerships, seek services of sex workers or engage in sex work as providers. Around 86 percent of all HIV reported cases from 1990 to 2014 were identified in heavily populated areas in border provinces along the Mekong River: Vientiane Capital (35 percent), Savannakhet (29.3 percent), Champasak (10 percent), Khammouane (4.2 percent), Bokeo (2.9 percent), Luang Prabang (2.6 percent) and Vientiane Province (1.9 percent).<sup>267</sup> The high proportion of cases in these areas are attributed to their large populations.

184. **Difficulties in reaching the key populations at higher risk,<sup>268</sup> notably MSM and PWID, hamper prevention efforts.** In 2014, prevention interventions<sup>269</sup> were able to reach only 27 percent of the targeted MSM population and 38 percent of female sex workers. The reasons include cultural taboos, the illegality of drug use and sex work, the mobility of young migrant populations and the lack of data and information on PWIDs and the clients of sex workers.<sup>270</sup>

185. **Stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV (PLHIV) are still high.** This is largely due to limited understanding about HIV transmission. Only 17 per cent of women and 14 per cent of men expressed accepting views of people with HIV in 2011/12.<sup>271</sup> Discrimination still exists among care providers. HIV treatment and opportunistic treatment drugs are not part of health insurance schemes, which PLHIV regard as discrimination against their right to health. The Law on HIV/AIDS Control and Prevention (2010), which addresses stigma and discrimination, protects most of the rights of PLHIV and most-at-risk populations. Since sex work and drug use are illegal, the country still maintains compulsory detention centres for people who use drugs. These regulations

conflict with principles in the National Strategic and Action Plan (NSAP), which call for harm reduction approaches.<sup>a</sup>

186. **The overall knowledge on HIV remains low, especially among women.** Women's knowledge, even about PMTCT, is less than that of men. Knowledge levels have not increased significantly, as comparison of survey results from 2000 and 2011/12<sup>272</sup> show. In 2011/12, only 24 per cent of women and 28 per cent of men in the age group 15-24 years had comprehensive correct knowledge of HIV/AIDS. The disparities seen in other MDG areas extend to HIV knowledge: knowledge of HIV/AIDS is much lower among those living in rural areas without road access, those with no education, those from the poorest quintile and amongst the ethnic groups living in remote areas. The knowledge differentials between the richest and the poorest, and those between the educated and non-educated are much starker than are those between the men and women.<sup>273</sup>

187. **Condom use rates are reported to be high in commercial sex, but are lower in casual sex.** Amongst a sample of electricity workers in 2008, 91 per cent reported using a condom with female sex workers, but only 50 per cent reported using a condom at the last sexual encounter with casual partners.<sup>274</sup> Nationally representative data on condom use is lacking.

188. **HIV testing and counselling services have improved, but reach only a small part of the key populations at higher risk.** Some 58,745 people were tested in 2014, with 96.8 per cent receiving results of the tests, compared to a low 39,000 in 2013 (due to shortage of test kits). However, this tested population includes only a small segment of the key populations at higher risk. Only about half (54 per cent) the estimated numbers of PLHIV in Lao PDR were diagnosed through HIV testing in 2013. Insufficient demand is an issue, since most are unaware that HIV testing should be done even if they are feeling well.

189. **The intake for treatment is low.** The majority of PLHIV do not understand the risks of not starting treatment early. Over 60 per cent of newly diagnosed cases are already at the advanced stage of HIV infection. A high percentage of PLHIV drop out or are lost (12 per cent) after initiating antiretroviral treatment (ART). In addition, there are only nine sites in Lao PDR providing treatment, mostly located at provincial hospitals.

190. **The country has still some way to go towards two out of three global targets for HIV treatment scale-up beyond 2015.**<sup>b</sup> First, 60 per cent of the estimated number of PLHIV in Lao PDR currently know their HIV status, while the 2020 global target aims for 90 per cent. Second, 57 per cent of PLHIV in Lao PDR who know their status are receiving ART, compared to the 2020 target of 90 per cent. Third, with 94 per cent of those on ART having have suppressed viral load, Lao PDR already meets the third global target of 90 per cent.<sup>275</sup>

191. **PMTCT is expanding through integration with antenatal care services.** However, the integration of HIV testing and treatment into the health care system is constrained by the limited capacity of service providers and limited financial resources. In 2014, provider-initiated counselling and testing covered over 50 per cent of all women attending ANC services, while over 90 per cent of women identified as HIV-positive received antiretroviral (ARV) prophylaxis. Infants are also provided

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<sup>a</sup> The NSAP (National Strategic and Action Plan (NSAP) on HIV/AIDS/STI Control and Prevention) 2016-2020 lists the principles of respect for human rights as one of its guiding principles

<sup>b</sup> The new targets for the HIV treatment scale-up beyond 2015 are (i) by 2020, 90 per cent of all people living with HIV will know their HIV status, (ii) by 2020, 90 per cent of all people with diagnosed HIV infection will receive sustained antiretroviral therapy and (iii) by 2020, 90 per cent of all people receiving antiretroviral therapy will have viral suppression.

with ART. Due to limited resources, the government is following a phased approach in PMTCT scale up, prioritising four provinces in 2014-2015 (Vientiane Capital, Savannakhet, Luang Prabang and Champasack). It aims to cover all provinces by 2020.<sup>276</sup> However, progress in PMTCT will require much higher ANC coverage than that at present.

192. **Girls are more at risk from sexual transmission of HIV.** Some 9 percent of women reported having had first sexual intercourse by age 15, compared to 3 percent of men. At every age until 25, a slightly greater proportion of women have already engaged in sex compared to men. Rural men and women tend to have first sex about two years younger than do urban men and women. The age of first sex varies with residence, education, wealth and ethnic group. The percentages of women and men who reported having sex before age 15 is higher among those with no education, among the Hmong-Lu Mien and Chine-Tibetan, and among those from the poorest quintiles.<sup>277</sup> However, the paucity of data make it impossible to draw any comparisons between the HIV status of young females and males in the general population.

## 10.2. Context

193. **Lao PDR has committed to several international strategies and declarations on HIV/AIDS.** The 2011 Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS is the most recent.<sup>a</sup> The country has also adopted a number of laws and policies that reflect these commitments: the 2010 Law on HIV/AIDS Control and Prevention (“the HIV Law”), and the National Strategic and Action Plan (NSAP) for HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) Prevention and Control (2011-2015 and 2016-2020). The National Committee for the Control of AIDS (NCCA) leads the HIV/AIDS response in Lao PDR, while the Ministry of Health is responsible for coordinating and implementing the national response.<sup>278</sup>

194. **The HIV Law forbids discrimination against people living with HIV.**<sup>279</sup> However, the main barrier in addressing discrimination lies in attitudes and behaviours. Changing these is difficult.

195. **Three key strategic components shape the national priorities for HIV/AIDS response in 2016-2020.** These are (i) strengthening the enabling environment for an effective HIV response (ii) preventing HIV infections by focusing on key populations at higher risk, and (iii) expanding treatment, care and support services for people living with HIV through the integration of services.

## 10.3. Looking forward: recommendations for UN support

196. **Frameworks.** HIV/AIDS response is part of target 3.3 within SDG 3 on healthy lives. Within the framework provided by the NSAP (2016-2020) and SDG 3 (Annex 2), UN support to the Government of Lao PDR is recommended as follows:

- **Strengthen the enabling environment for effective HIV response.** This includes a range of systemic and societal measures: (i) improving management information systems (MIS), (ii) enhancing surveillance and other capacities to collect strategic information, (iii) conducting operational research, (iv) reducing stigma and discrimination, (v) strengthening the institutional and technical capacity of implementers and health care providers, and (f) increasing the mobilization of domestic resources for sustaining the AIDS response.

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<sup>a</sup> Others are the Declaration of Commitment at the 2001 United Nations General Assembly Special Session on AIDS (UNGASS), the adoption of MDG 6 and the Three Zeros Strategy.

- **Prevent HIV infections by focusing on key populations at higher risk.** This entails meeting the global targets on HIV treatment scale-up<sup>a</sup> for people engaging in high-risk behaviour. The challenge of identifying and reaching these key populations will require expanding and sustaining networks of peer educators, which itself is difficult because of issues with recruiting, monitoring, supervising and maintaining new mobile peer educators. The weak coordination between community workers, drop-in centres, voluntary counselling and testing services and ART services requires attention.
- **Integrate HIV treatment into health services, and integrate care for PLHIV into social welfare services.** Difficulties lie in providing a continuum from prevention to treatment, and from diagnosis to treatment. There is a need to simplify processes, make services available and accessible, improve technical and organizational capacity, create demand among most-at-risk groups, including with community-led initiatives, and promote compliance to treatment.
- **Ensure predictable levels of resources for the national HIV Action Plan 2016-2020.** Funding for the HIV/AIDS response is currently not sustainable, being almost 100 percent funded by external sources. Declining external support is having a considerable impact on HIV/AIDS programmes in Lao PDR. Allocations from the national budget are required for HIV response.
- **Mobilize resources from private investors collaborating with the Government on large infrastructure development projects.** Large mining, dam and road construction projects have brought in thousands of mobile workers. The participation of these private investors in the HIV response will lessen the impact of such development projects on the socio-economic fabric of the surrounding areas. Collaboration with neighbouring countries is necessary to address the issue of HIV in border areas.
- **Mainstream HIV concerns into existing work with all development partners.** HIV/AIDS knowledge, prevention and response should be incorporated into programmes for gender equality, human rights, workplace education, health system strengthening, social safety nets, and maternal and child health, sexual and reproductive health.

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<sup>a</sup> See earlier footnote on HIV treatment scale-up global targets for year 2020.

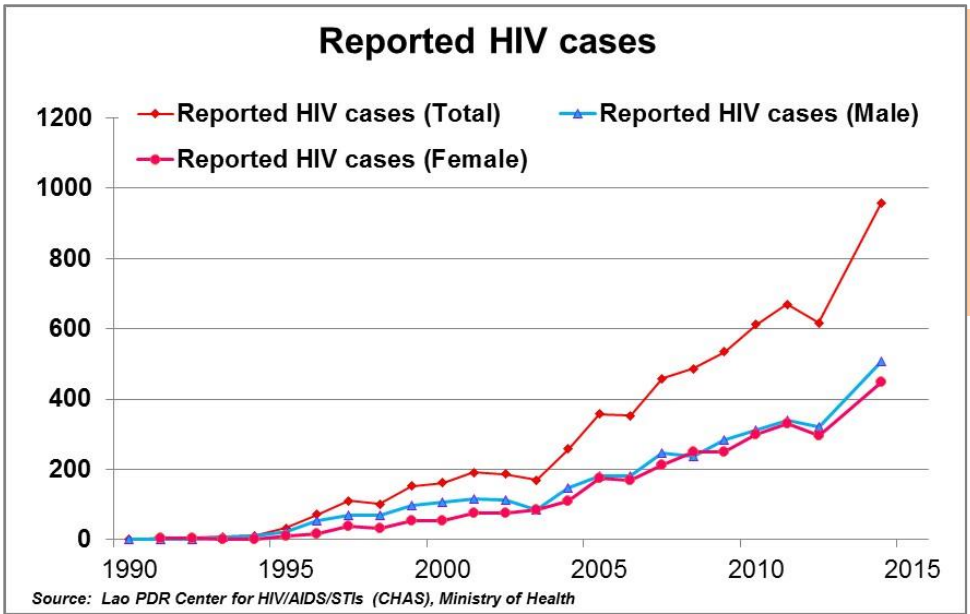


Figure 10.1. Although overall HIV prevalence is still low in the population, this chart shows the rising incidence of HIV in Lao PDR.

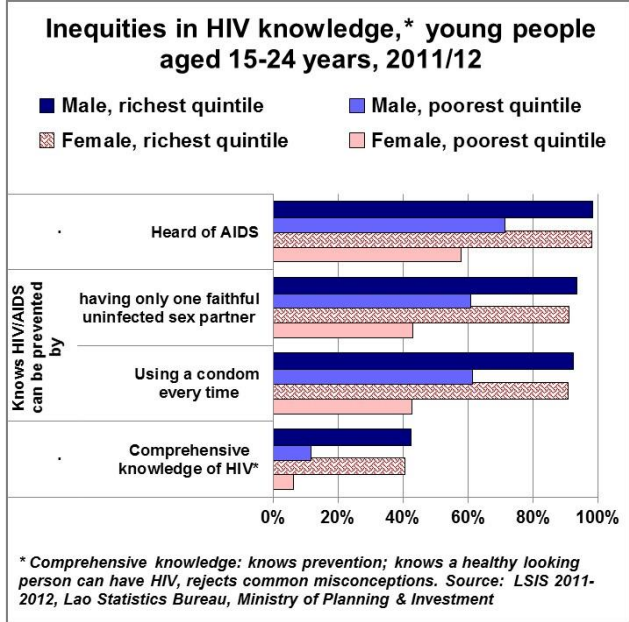
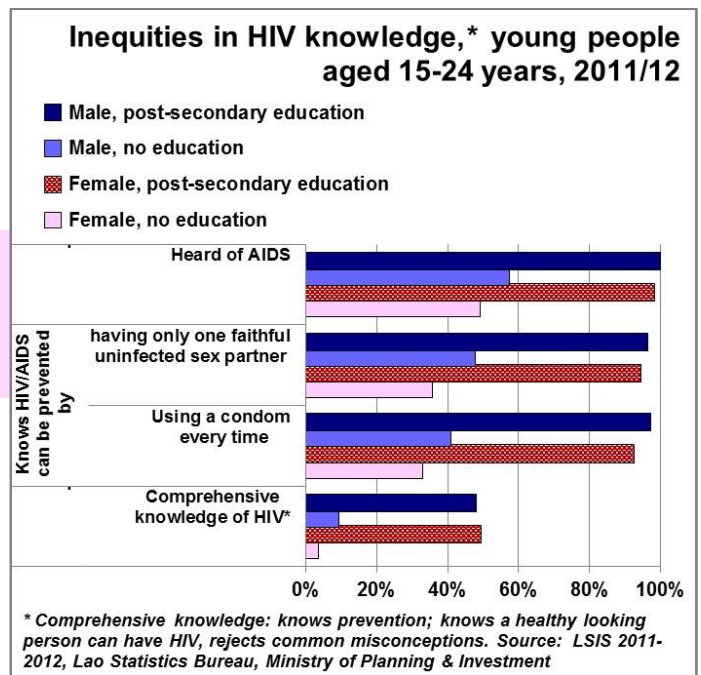


Figure 10.2. Among the poor, young men have better knowledge about HIV/AIDS than young women have. The gender gap in knowledge decreases with wealth quintile..

Figure 10.3. The gender gap in HIV/AIDS knowledge decreases with education.



# 11. Combat malaria, tuberculosis and other diseases

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## 11.1. Trends, disparities and determinants

197. **Malaria cases and deaths declined steadily from 2000 until 2011, but started rising again from 2012.** Confirmed malaria cases decreased from around 40,000 in 2000 (7.7 cases per 1,000) to around 18,000 in 2011 (2.7 cases per 1,000). The reduction in the number of malaria-related deaths was even more substantial, from 350 deaths in 2000 to just 17 in 2011. However, starting from December 2011, malaria outbreaks in the south of the country led to a sharp rise of confirmed cases (46,202 in 2012) and deaths (44). The increasing trend continues, with 50,663 confirmed cases in 2014, although the number of recorded deaths dropped to four for the entire country in 2014.<sup>280</sup>

198. **Economic activities and large development projects have increased exposure to malaria, including drug resistant malaria.** Economic activities in the south have attracted workers and families from non-immune provinces and migrants from neighbouring countries. Further compounding the complexity of the problem, a confirmed artemisinin-resistant strain has recently emerged in Champasack. This makes it more difficult to contain the spread of Artemisinin resistance and risks compromising the efficacy of artemisinin-based combination therapies (ACTs) in future. The malaria outbreaks are also associated with large development projects. In such cases, infection by malaria will be particularly severe for the population who have been displaced from the highlands to lower altitudes, as they will have lower immunity to the disease.

199. **Malaria diagnosis and treatment are on track, but bednet coverage needs to be increased.** Bednet surveys<sup>281</sup> in 2012 in selected areas found that over 80 percent of children under age 5 slept under a bednet of some kind.<sup>282</sup> Over 90 percent of cases with confirmed malaria were treated.<sup>283</sup> Bednet coverage is likely to improve during the first half of 2016, when a large-scale distribution of nets is planned. Coverage will be measured through a Multi-Indicator Survey scheduled for 2016.

200. **Tuberculosis (TB) prevalence, although declining, is much higher than previously estimated.** Following the results of the first national TB prevalence survey (2010-2011),<sup>284</sup> the WHO re-estimated TB statistics for Lao PDR. The new estimates showed the prevalence of all cases of TB to be 1.9 times higher than previous estimations. This revised WHO trend model<sup>285</sup> indicates that Lao PDR had more than halved the prevalence of all forms of TB from 1490/100,000 in 1990 to 462/100,000 in 2014. TB incidence declined from 492 in 1990 to 197/100,000 in 2013. The mortality due to TB, however, does not seem to have declined (41/100,000 in 1990 and 62/100,000 in 2013).<sup>a</sup>

201. **The national survey findings show the scale of challenges faced by the national TB programme.** The survey and the programme review suggest that many TB cases remain

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<sup>a</sup> The estimates include the deaths from TB of HIV positive patients: 53/100 000 for non-HIV, plus 8.9/100 000 for HIV positive patients.



undiagnosed and untreated, and that only around one-third of all TB cases are detected, although the TB treatment success rate is high.

202. **Communicable diseases are still a major challenge in Lao PDR, despite their reduced share in total deaths.**<sup>a</sup> Combined with maternal, perinatal and nutritional conditions, communicable diseases accounted for around 43 percent of the country's total deaths in 2014.<sup>286</sup> Major efforts in containment and further reduction are still needed. Illness due to common infections among the population contributes to low productivity and poor nutrition. Recent years have seen a high incidence and outbreaks of vaccine preventable diseases, zoonotic diseases, and newly emerging diseases. These emerging diseases, together with endemic infections, the use of counterfeit drugs and rising antimicrobial resistance, pose a serious threat to global public health.

203. **NCDs are estimated to account for 48 percent of total deaths in Lao PDR.**<sup>287</sup> Cases of cardiovascular disease, diabetes and cancer have grown in numbers, particularly in urban areas, and increasingly in rural areas. Among adult risk factors identified by WHO, the rate of tobacco use among both men and women in Lao PDR is slightly higher than the regional<sup>b</sup> average: 48 percent of all men above the age of 15 years use tobacco.<sup>288</sup> The aging of the population will see NCDs grow in importance within the health sector.

204. **Injuries, especially those due to road accidents, have increased in frequency and severity, accounting for 9 percent of total deaths.**<sup>289</sup> Road accident statistics show a three-fold rise of deaths from road accidents, from 5.4 per 100,000<sup>290</sup> in 2005 to 15.6 per 100,000 in 2014. One in ten accidents on average resulted in death in 2005, and by 2014, one in around 5 accidents resulted in death.<sup>291</sup> The increase is largely associated with unsafe road conditions, rapid expansion of roads, the growth of motorbikes and vehicles, and young inexperienced motorists.

## 11.2. Context

205. **National plans for malaria and TB control in the post-2015 period will need to take into account recent developments.** These include the recent malaria outbreaks, the loss in effectiveness of the country's first-line drugs for malaria,<sup>292</sup> the emergence of Artemisinin resistant strains, and the upward revision of the TB burden following the national TB survey. Meanwhile, the National Strategy for Malaria Control and Elimination (2011-15) and National TB Strategic Plan (2011-2015) form the frameworks for intensifying control efforts. Plans for 2016-2020 are being finalized.

206. **The worsening situation of multi-drug resistance malaria in the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) threatens regional and global health security.** The GMS is characterized by difficult terrain and cross-border population movements driven by the work in plantations, large infrastructure projects and forest activities. Health education campaigns to control the 2012–2013 outbreaks had to use multiple languages (including Lao, Vietnamese and Chinese) to reach ethnic communities and migrant workers. In Lao PDR, patients first seek care from private providers in 63 percent of fever cases. Private retail outlets, such as drug shops and kiosks, play an important role in the provision of malaria medicines.<sup>293</sup> Continuing to engage the private sector through the expansion of the Public-Private Mix (PPM) approach will therefore be crucial.

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<sup>a</sup> The reduced share is due to the rise of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and injury as causes of mortality.

<sup>b</sup> "Region" in this case means the WHO Western Pacific Region

### 11.3. Looking forward: recommendations for UN support

207. **Frameworks.** SDG 3 explicitly mentions many communicable diseases (AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases, hepatitis, water-borne diseases and other communicable diseases) as well as non-communicable diseases (NCDs), mental health, death and injury from road traffic accidents (Annex 2). Within the framework provided by the national plans and strategies and SDG 3, UN support to the Government of Lao PDR is recommended as follows

- **Strengthen the implementation of the GMS Malaria Elimination Strategy.** These include (i) updating and revising malaria policies, national strategies and action plans for malaria elimination to be in line with the GMS Regional Strategy, (ii) eliminating malaria caused by *Plasmodium falciparum* in all GMS countries by 2025, and (iii) eliminating malaria in all GMS countries by 2030.
- **Address the weaknesses in TB control services revealed by the survey.** The upward revision of the TB burden has highlighted several issues that need attention.<sup>294</sup> These include stagnating notification rates, weak drug resistance surveillance, the low access to quality TB control services for all types of TB and the missed opportunities for diagnosis and treatment of TB – especially among children and the elderly. These problems are compounded by the lack of awareness on TB, the remoteness of communities, the costs of transportation, limited medical insurance, and a limited capacity for diagnosis and care of TB in the peripheral health system.
- **Step up TB control in border areas and among the migrant population.**<sup>295</sup> The challenges include difficulties in information sharing, a lack of reliable information on migrants' contact details, treatment and follow-up, different treatment regimens in neighbouring countries, and difficulties in follow-up of multidrug resistant cases diagnosed or treated abroad. Tackling these challenges will require the inclusion of migrants in the national TB and health policies, equitable access to TB services for migrants, the improvement of health information systems, cultural and gender sensitivity among health staff, partnerships with the private sector, and the acceleration of cross-border cooperation.
- **Continue to prevent and control infectious diseases and events that endanger public health.** This will involve strengthening capacities in preventing and managing health security risks due to emerging and re-emerging diseases, food safety-related events and other health hazards, preventing and controlling neglected tropical diseases, and strengthening the health preparedness and response capacities to cope with natural and manmade disasters.<sup>296</sup>
- **Support measures to address NCDs, mental illness and disabilities.** This includes preventing and control of NCDs and preventing disability and rehabilitating of victims of injury, and accidents, including UXO. Such strategies will require working with partners outside the health sector, such as the media, private sector and opinion makers to address life style, communication and discrimination issues.<sup>297</sup>



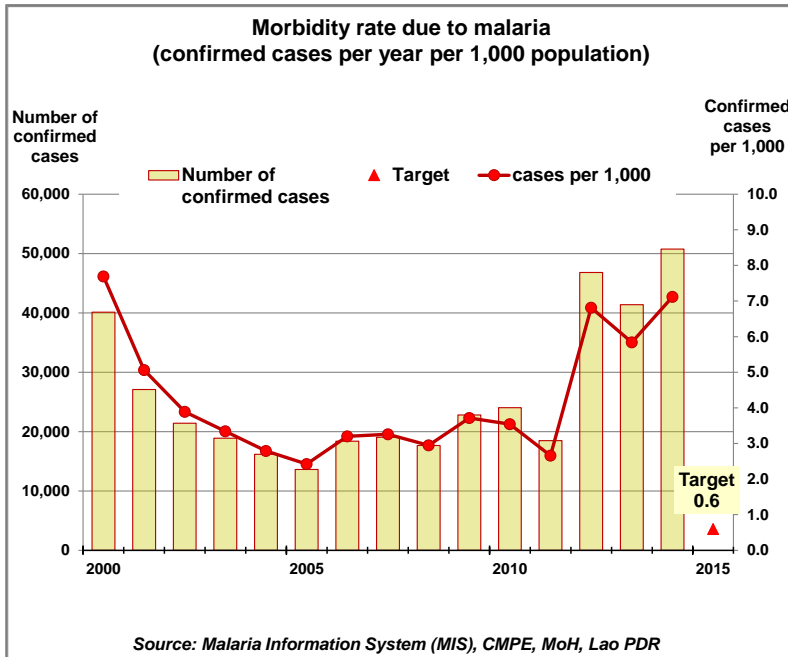
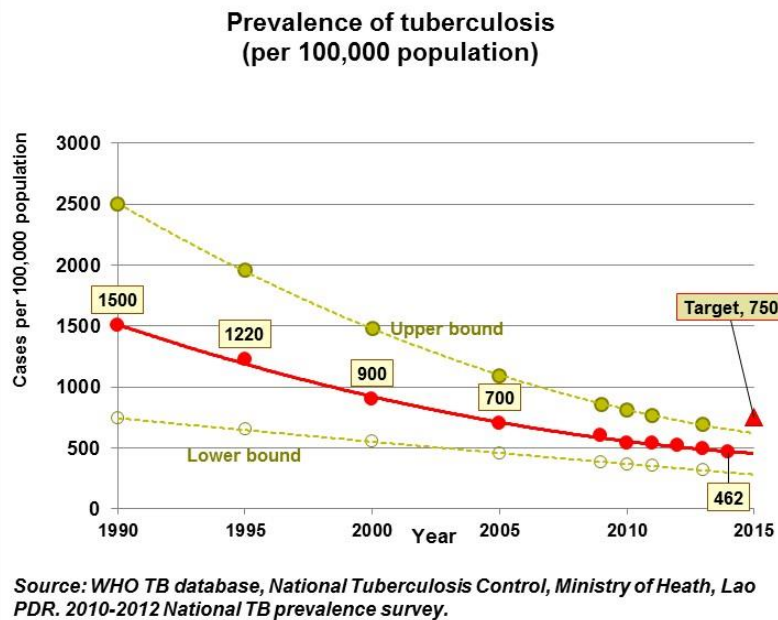


Figure 11.1. With the upsurge of a new strain of malaria from 2012 and the loss in effectiveness of the country's first-line drugs for malaria, some regions of Lao PDR are now at threat from the spread of an Artemisinin-resistant strain of malaria.

Figure 11.2. The first ever TB survey in Lao PDR showed that the prevalence of tuberculosis was much higher than previous estimates.

Only one-third of TB cases are detected. However, the treatment success rate is high.



## 12. Protect environmental resources and promote resilience

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### 12.1. Trends, disparities and determinants

208. **Lao PDR's resource-based economy is driven by forestry, agriculture, hydropower and minerals.**<sup>a</sup> Together, these sectors account for more than half of Lao PDR's total wealth. Lao PDR will need to diversify its economy and increase environmental sustainability through robust management of its natural resources, including land resources. The country also needs to address climate change mitigation and adaptation, while strengthening its resilience to natural disasters.<sup>298</sup>

209. **In going forward, improving environmental monitoring and governance of the mining sector will be increasingly important.** The country's low per capita material and energy consumption, combined with its relatively low population density, leaves Lao PDR considerable room to grow its extractive and production activities without reaching the intensities of deleterious environmental impacts that are seen elsewhere. Nevertheless, the growth of relatively low value per tonne industries, notably mining, has led to a rapid increase in extractive pressures in recent years. The expansion of hydroelectricity also routinely excludes large areas of land and previously productive river systems from their former uses. Both mining and hydroelectricity development have been crucial in greatly increasing the Lao PDR's export income and integration into the global economy in recent years, and so facilitating further human development. It is important, however, that the relative benefits of continuing along this path of development be weighed against the alternative of using the country's mineral and energy supplies as inputs to higher value added products. The environmental impacts of mining, especially in terms of longer-term waste accumulation, can be expected to continue growing commensurately with the growth of that sector, as long as the sector remains focussed on primary material extraction and the early stages of mineral processing. This is not necessarily the case if the sector moves further up the chain of value adding, although increased value adding can come with additional environmental hazards of its own.<sup>299</sup>

210. **Lao PDR is off-track on the national target for forest cover, which has decreased significantly over the past decade.** Forest cover in 2012 stood at 9.5 million hectares or an estimated 40 per cent of the area of the country.<sup>300</sup> The forest cover is declining at an estimated rate of 1.4 per cent per annum.<sup>301</sup> The main drivers of forest degradation are unsustainable wood harvesting, from illegal logging and poorly regulated harvesting, and shifting cultivation. Deforestation is largely due to agricultural expansion (including rubber and sugar cane plantations), hydropower, mining, infrastructure and urban expansion. Weak enforcement of regulations and the lack of public awareness on environmental issues compound the problem. The loss of forested lands affects in particular poor rural and ethnic communities located in and around forest areas.

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<sup>a</sup> Mainly copper, gold, coal, and construction stones (OECD, 2013)

211. **Efforts to reverse deforestation have so far made little progress.** Reforestation has not met the previous Five-Year Plan target of 3.9 million hectares: only 8.5 percent of that target was achieved, amounting to 329,941 hectares.<sup>302</sup> The main obstacles are unclear procedures for plantation establishment and land allocation, limited financial resources and human capacity, and weak enforcement of laws and policies.<sup>303</sup> Changes in institutional responsibility<sup>a</sup> have delayed afforestation and reforestation.

212. **To address deforestation, the government is promoting community participation, sustainable forest management and payment for ecosystems services.** The government is expanding sustainable forest management, which applies Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) standards to all production forest areas. These efforts led to some 50,000 hectares of FSC-certified forests in 2012.<sup>304</sup> The certification process has also contributed to capacity strengthening, clarifications on regulatory issues and awareness raising. Still, the process has a long way to go since the FSC-certified forests to date represent less than 1 percent of all production forest sites in the country. In a promising move, the government is encouraging the private sector to shift to wood-processing and commercial tree plantations such as eucalyptus, teak, agar wood and rubber.<sup>305</sup>

213. **Lao PDR's rich biodiversity is facing serious threats from the degradation and disappearance of habitat, poaching and wildlife trade.** The government has designated 20 national Protected Areas<sup>306</sup> covering 3,390,700 hectares or 14.3 percent of the country as National Protected Areas (also called National Biodiversity Conservation Areas<sup>307</sup>). Additionally, there are two green corridors and various district and province protected areas. Altogether one-fifth of the country's area is under some degree of protection.<sup>308</sup> Notwithstanding these efforts, more and more species are threatened with extinction (115 in 2010, 167 in 2011).<sup>309</sup>

214. **Private sector involvement and community benefit sharing are on the rise.** Projects affecting protection forests are now required to contribute funds for natural resource management.<sup>310</sup> These include hydropower projects, which are required to contribute one per cent of the total value of the sale of the electricity per annum. The Government has also established the Forest Resource Development Fund from various sources.<sup>311</sup> In the long term, a portion of benefits from production forests and private sector investment in forest and infrastructure projects should go towards making this Fund financially sustainable. Equally, the government and development partners will need to continue expanding existing initiatives, such as payment for environmental services and payment from preserving forests for carbon sequestration (e.g., REDD+<sup>312,313</sup>).

215. **A comparison of greenhouse gas (GHG) inventories for 1990 and 2000 shows that GHG emissions had doubled in ten years.** Lao PDR recorded a net sink of CO<sub>2</sub> in 1990 and a net emission by year 2000.<sup>314</sup> Of the total CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, nearly all were emitted by land-use change and forestry. The agriculture sector produced the greatest share of methane (CH<sub>4</sub>) and nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O). Climate change mitigation will depend on reversing the loss of forests and other land use changes.

216. **Lao PDR is highly vulnerable to climate change and will need to plan accordingly.**<sup>315</sup> The country is seeing an increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, such as droughts and floods.<sup>316</sup> The majority of floods occur in the central and southern parts of the country,

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<sup>a</sup> The responsibility for Protection Forests and Conservation Forests was transferred from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forest to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, created in 2012. The Ministry of Agriculture maintains continued responsibility for Production Forests.

along the Mekong plain. From 1990 to 2015, Lao PDR had 21 floods and storms, with the more severe ones affecting over 500,000 people.<sup>317</sup> Reducing the impact of these disasters on the population will require adaptation measures, including effective disaster preparedness and risk reduction.

217. **Lao PDR is on track with the phase-out of ozone-depleting substances (ODS).** These have declined to near-zero in 2014.<sup>318</sup> The remaining ODS, which are hydro chlorofluorocarbons (HCFC), are scheduled to phase out by 2030.<sup>319</sup>

218. **With growing population and ecosystem changes, the country's per-capita volume of freshwater resources shows a declining trend.** Lao PDR's decline in per-capita volume of internal renewable water resources is among the fastest in the region, having decreased by 34 percent from 1990 to 2014.<sup>320</sup> Revenues from the Nam Theun-Hinboun hydropower project are financing integrated water resource management in certain areas; such approaches will need scaling up. An improved and integrated management of water resources will need to extend across many sectors: logging, mining and plantation projects (which affect land and watershed management), energy use and export patterns, water consumption, and factors relating to climate and the hydrological cycle. The quality of water resources is discussed in Chapter 13.

219. **Lao PDR's diverse freshwater ecosystem provides food and livelihood security but is also under threat.** The country's freshwater systems harbour more than 481 fish species, 37 amphibian species, 7 species of crabs and 10 species of shrimp. More species are being discovered regularly.<sup>321</sup> The Lao population rely mainly on subsistence fisheries. While the production of inland aquaculture is increasing, it remains less important than capture fisheries for food security. The fisheries support businesses, ranging from shops and food stalls that supply fishing families to boat builders and fishing gear suppliers. The total area of water resources for capture fisheries in Lao PDR is believed to be more than 1.2 million ha,<sup>322</sup> while the fisheries value is estimated to be around 7 percent of the country's GDP.<sup>323</sup> The main threat to fisheries and aquaculture comes from activities in other sectors, such as irrigated agriculture, domestic water supply, wastewater disposal and industrial use. These affect the aquatic environment and fisheries in many ways. Developments in other sectors will need to take an integrated and responsible approach to fisheries and mitigate and manage the negative impacts as far as possible.

## 12.2. Context

220. **Policy and regulatory frameworks relating to natural resources and the environment have improved,<sup>324</sup> but monitoring and enforcement need strengthening.** MoNRE is preparing the sector's Vision (2030), National Strategy (2016-2025) and Action Plan (2016-2020). The National Strategy on Climate Change and the National Adaptation Programme of Action to Climate Change (2009) have been adapted to the national context by the improvement of regulations and tools.

221. **The links between environmental sustainability, inclusive growth and good governance need strengthening.** Lao PDR's progress towards its national development goals and its goal of graduation from LDC status will depend on inclusive and sustainable economic growth supported by quality investments that do not degrade the natural resource base. A robust and transparent system for conducting environmental and/or social impact assessments, together with reviewing and monitoring mechanisms, will be essential to ensure quality investments. The integration into the ASEAN Economic Community will need to be accompanied by measures to prevent the greater openness and trade from having a negative impact on the country's biodiversity

and other natural resources. In 2015, in response to the UPR recommendations, the Lao PDR Government agreed to step up enforcement of its 2012 moratorium on new mining investments and the granting of concessions for rubber plantations, review new land concessions and existing land concessions, and cancel or sanction those found to be violating the law.

**222. In disaster management, institutional structures and roles need to be better defined.** MoNRE has the mandate for disaster management, which includes preparedness and mitigation. The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, which previously had this mandate, still maintains the aspects related to response and recovery. No legislation is currently in place to define clearly the role and responsibility of each ministry in the disaster management cycle. The government is looking to create stronger policies and legislation by drafting a disaster risk management and climate change law (expected to be passed in 2017). It is also strengthening its Emergency Operations Centre. An overview of structures and institutions is provided by other studies and reports.<sup>325</sup>

**223. The disaster preparedness, risk reduction and management capacity needs strengthening.** Different sectors at the national and provincial levels are incorporating disaster risk management in planning. However, standard operating procedures are weak in certain areas such as early warning systems, the disaster declaration process and management of data and reporting. Other areas for improvement are data interpretation, event forecasting, coordination and planning, and preparedness and resilience at community level.<sup>326</sup>

**224. At community level, structures for disaster risk management have been established over the past decade in an increasing number of villages.** These structures and committees aim to support and strengthen community resilience. Resilience in communities is generally low, due to the prevalence of monoculture in farming and the lack of diversity in livelihoods. The government and development partners have been working to build local capacities, but many root causes have yet to be addressed.

### **12.3. Looking forward: recommendations for UN support**

**225. Frameworks.** The NSEDP's Outcome 3 highlights environmental protection, sustainable natural resources management, disaster risks and climate change. In the SDGs, the issues relevant to UN work in environment and disaster management in Lao PDR are spread out across four goals (Annex 2): climate change mitigation, adaptation and natural disasters (SDG 13), terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems and their services (SDG 15), sustainable human settlements and disasters (SDG 11), and sustainable consumption and production patterns (SDG 12). Within the frameworks provided by the NSEDP and the SDGs, UN support to the Government of Lao PDR is recommended as follows

- **Strengthen legislative and policy frameworks and their implementation.** This will involve ensuring consistency with Lao PDR's international commitments, strengthening monitoring systems for implementation of laws and policies, and promoting best international practices in combatting deforestation, mitigating climate change, halting and reversing the loss of biodiversity and protecting ecosystems, and ensuring sound disaster management. The laws with regard to wildlife trade and land use management will need to be monitored and enforced. Policy frameworks need to be linked up wherever the integrated approaches are called for in implementation (e.g., linked actions to address malaria resurgence related to large infrastructure projects, forest clearing and wood harvesting activities).

- **Improve capacities and systems for collecting and managing environmental data.** This is required to report progress against national/SDG targets and to strengthen environmental decision-making. In contrast to some sectors, where information systems work well, the information systems in the environment and natural resource sectors are poor. Non-standardized statistics make it difficult to report on international goals and to draw meaningful comparisons between Lao PDR and other countries. Options for upgrading the capacity to report these statistics in a standardized fashion should be explored.<sup>a</sup> For example, energy reporting should be commensurate with the international reporting standard of the International Energy Agency (IEA). Improving the capacity to report on environmental performance would also provide a knowledge base necessary for policy-making and the evaluation of policy effectiveness.
- **Conduct advocacy and dialogue with high-level decision makers.** Relevant ministries and agencies will need to work jointly on issues such as climate financing,<sup>327</sup> adaptation and mitigation measures, the sustainable management of land, water and other natural resources, land tenure and equity issues. The UN agencies will need to mainstream agreed action points into agency programming. A sharply focused joint advocacy programme is needed for the more sensitive issues.
- **Promote the expansion of private sector participation in sustainable natural resource management.** The private sector needs to be fully on board to ensure sustainable investments that will not degrade the natural resource base. Such investments should contribute a portion of proceeds towards environmental protection and use cleaner and resource-efficient pathways to production. Incentives also need to be provided for the private sector to invest in ecosystems and the conservation of protected areas and species.
- **Promote payment for ecosystem services (PES) and preparations for REDD+.**<sup>328 329</sup> This will require expanding current PES initiatives in protected forest areas, as well as giving support to the ongoing REDD+ negotiations. National capacities will need to be strengthened in the valuation and management of ecosystems and ecosystem services.
- **Improve sustainable livelihood opportunities, especially in ecologically fragile zones.** This could be done through identifying options that add value to existing livelihoods, providing suitable microfinancing opportunities, enhancing the entrepreneurial and technical skills of those who work in the environment sector, supporting the development of ecotourism and ensuring that local communities can share the benefits generated by sustainable natural resource management.
- **Undertake joint programming in disaster risk reduction and climate resilience across several sectors.** This includes undertaking vulnerability mapping, building community resilience against internal and external shocks and strengthening institutional capacities in disaster prevention, preparedness and management. Other areas for support include the development of the Disaster Management and Climate Change Law, and the strengthening of standard operating procedures for disaster management. Policies and planning frameworks across all sectors will need to align with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030.<sup>330</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> Databases in the social and economic sectors – such as Lao PDR’s Education Management Information System, which has benefited from international cooperation – are worth examining.

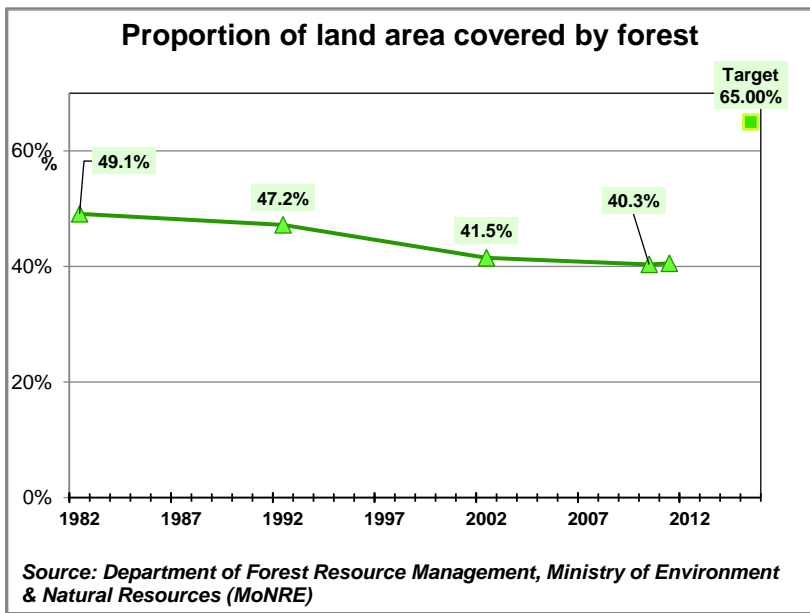


Figure 12.1. The country is losing forest cover at the rate of 1.4 percent a year, according to estimates made in 2013.

## 13. Ensure sustainable water and sanitation

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### 13.1. Trends, disparities and determinants

226. **Projections from 2012 indicate that Lao PDR has achieved the MDG target on safe water and sanitation.**<sup>331</sup> In 2015, 76 percent<sup>332</sup> of the population are estimated to have access to improved sources of drinking water. The estimate of coverage by improved sanitation is 71 percent.<sup>a,333</sup> The high prevalence of open defecation is still a concern (38 per cent in 2011/12, and an estimated 23 percent in 2015).<sup>334</sup>

227. **The rural-urban gap has narrowed regarding the access to safe water but disparities remain significant.** At national level, the gap is now estimated as 17 percentage points in 2015.<sup>335</sup> However, the gap in safe water access between uneducated families and better-educated families, and between the richest and poorest quintiles is estimated to be much larger (over 30 percentage points in 2011/12).<sup>336</sup> The gap is less between ethnic groups and does not follow the pattern in the health and education sectors. The Chine-Tibetan group have the highest access to safe water (83 percent), because they use protected springs and public taps or standpipes. Lowland groups, such as the Lao-Tai, may drink bottled water, but do not necessarily have access to an improved water source.<sup>337</sup>

228. **Inequities are far greater in sanitation than in water coverage.** This may be because having improved sanitation facilities is not a priority amongst the poor, whereas clean water is universally desired. Sanitation coverage in rural areas is an estimated 38 percentage points behind that in urban areas in 2015.<sup>338</sup> The sanitation access rate among families where the household head has secondary education and above is more than twice that among families with uneducated household heads. Sanitation coverage is 8 times better among the rich than among the poor. Sanitation coverage among the Lao-Tai is 2.6 times that of the Chine-Tibetan and the Mon-Khmer. Among these disadvantaged groups, more than half still practice open defecation.<sup>339</sup>

229. **In 79 percent of households without water on the premises, females collect the water.**<sup>340</sup> This trend is more pronounced among poor rural families, families whose heads have little or no education and ethnic groups living in remote mountainous areas.

230. **The health and nutrition outcomes of unsafe water and inadequate sanitation are severe.** Children living in households with safe water and sanitation are less prone to diarrhoea, stunting and underweight (Table 13.1). Children living in rural villages where community members defecate in the open and/or use unimproved latrines are shorter than healthy children living in rural villages where everybody uses improved sanitation.<sup>341</sup> This small difference in height is irreversible and matters a great deal for a child's cognitive development and future productive potential (Section 6.2).

231. **Hygiene practices need improvement.** Only 19 per cent of children from birth to 2 years are in households that dispose of children's faeces hygienically,<sup>342</sup> meaning a lack of health

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<sup>a</sup> The MDG definition of safe sanitation does not include shared toilets.



awareness in the majority of families. Open defecation remains a challenge. To address these risks, the Government is stepping up initiatives to improve the sanitation, hygiene and health of the villages in a holistic way.<sup>a</sup>

**Table 13.1. Prevalence of diarrhoea, underweight, and stunting in children under 5 years of age by access to improved water and sanitation**

Status	Had diarrhoea in previous 2 months	Underweight	Stunting
Access to improved water sources and sanitation	7.6 percent	18.7 percent	33.7 percent
No access to improved water sources and sanitation	11.6 percent	31.6 percent	50.9 percent
Uses only piped water	5.5 percent	15.5 percent	29.2 percent
Uses only surface water	10.9 percent	28.8 percent	47.2 percent

Source: UNICEF calculations from LSIS 2011/12, Lao Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Planning & Investment. UNICEF, 2014: *Children in Lao PDR: Situation Analysis Update*

**232. Schools need better water and sanitation facilities and better hygiene practices.** In 2012, water and sanitation facilities were present in respectively 53 and 45 per cent of the country's primary schools,<sup>343</sup> up from 42 percent (water) and 38 percent (sanitation) in 2009.<sup>344</sup> A 2010 evaluation found inadequate school hygiene. Students rarely washed their hands with soap and rarely used school sanitation facilities. Toilets were generally not well maintained and teachers did not systematically promote hygiene practices. Teachers reported a lack of demand for hygiene promotion amongst communities. On the other hand, the evaluation found that schools implementing the 'Schools of Quality' approach had a much cleaner school environment and daily hygiene routines.<sup>345</sup>

**233. Water safety and water quality need increased attention, more so in towns and cities.** In Lao PDR, surface water is the major water source for urban supply as most towns are located along the rivers. Lao PDR still has acceptable water quality in its rivers, but this is under increasing threat from pollution. The main causes are waste and sewerage from the growing population and urbanization, and run-offs from agricultural, industrial and mineral exploitation activities.<sup>346</sup> Water quality surveillance within Nam Saat and Nam Papa and the application of Water Safety Plans are governed by the Lao Drinking Water Quality Standards. The 2014 update of these standards revised some parameters and their limits, made Water Safety Plans mandatory, set out monitoring and reporting requirements, and added a surveillance component.

**234. Rural water safety needs better monitoring.** Groundwater is the main source of rural water supply.<sup>347</sup> There is little systematic monitoring of groundwater quality, but arsenic contamination is a significant problem, as in other countries of the Mekong subregion. A study in 2010<sup>348</sup> found water samples, especially from the floodplain areas of central and southern Lao PDR, to be significantly contaminated with arsenic. Over half the samples exceeded the WHO-recommended limit of 10 µg/litre.<sup>349</sup> Communities in these areas, therefore, need alternative, arsenic-free water supplies.

**235. Urban sanitation is generally poor.** Vientiane Capital suffers from the lack of adequate drainage and sewerage systems, and the poor design of existing sewerage disposal or septic tanks.<sup>350</sup> From households and industries on the edge of the city, the untreated effluent overflows or runs into low-lying areas, posing a threat to public health and the environment.

<sup>a</sup> For example, the "Developing Model Healthy Villages" approach

## 13.2. Context

236. **Investments in water, sanitation and hygiene are generally inadequate.** To meet 2020 national planning targets, the World Bank calculated that each year, Lao PDR would need to invest US\$ 18 million for urban water supply, US\$ 12 million for urban sanitation, and US\$ 10 million for rural water and sanitation (altogether US\$ 40 million a year). This is well above the current spending levels, which is estimated to be about one-quarter of the needs.<sup>351</sup> Meeting national goals and targets will require steep increases in investments for design and construction, institutional strengthening and human resource development.

237. **Resources need to be used more efficiently for sustainable water supply.** The cost of urban water supply facilities in Lao PDR is significantly higher than that in neighbouring countries. High subsidies from the government and international donors have contributed to this, as well as engineering designs that may be more appropriate for industrialized countries. Weak regulation and limited market competition for water services hinder the enforcement of performance standards among service providers.<sup>352</sup>

238. **Poor sanitation has a negative impact on the health and economic development of Lao PDR, but is not yet a priority on the national agenda.**<sup>353</sup> National economic losses due to poor sanitation totalled USD 193 million per year, equivalent to 5.6 percent of GDP.<sup>354</sup> The National Center for Environmental Health and Water Supply (Nam Saat) within the Ministry of Health (MoH) is responsible for sanitation and does not receive adequate budgetary allocations for rural sanitation. Sector staff capacity is highly constrained in terms of both quantity and quality.

239. **Coordination and information sharing are weak between government and development partners, and within government structures.**<sup>355</sup> Recently introduced Joint Annual Sector Reviews are expected to improve sector coordination. Co-ordination also needs to be improved at provincial level, since responsibility for WASH budgeting and operational planning rests with this tier of government.<sup>356</sup> There is also a need to clarify the roles and responsibilities of line ministries in terms of water and sanitation in rural and urban settings. A new overarching WASH Policy is being developed to provide clear mandate and directions.

240. **National standards for WASH in schools are not yet fully defined or applied.** The 2009 School Construction Guidelines mention school toilets and water systems, but do not include basic criteria such as the ratio of male/female students per toilet. The 2013 Education Quality Standards for Primary and Secondary Schools mention the need for sufficient toilets, but do not set clear criteria.<sup>357</sup>

241. **Urbanization is an emerging issue.** In Lao PDR, urban areas are experiencing higher population growth rates than the national average, signifying rural urban migration.<sup>358</sup> Various studies note the need for better sewerage and waste disposal facilities in urban areas.<sup>359</sup> On-site wastewater disposal and treatment facilities are often poorly designed, constructed and maintained. The generation of municipal solid waste in Lao PDR is on the rise (0.70 kg/capita/day, higher than the Philippines and Indonesia)<sup>360</sup> and poses a threat to the quality of surface and groundwater. Urban areas are also associated with a number of issues discussed in this Report, such as growing inequality, migrant workers, child protection, HIV, child undernutrition among urban families, NCDs, pollution and poor sanitation.

242. **The current level of urbanization in Lao PDR is low compared to the global average** (Chapter 1). Future growth of Lao PDR's cities can be expected. It will, therefore, be important for the country to invest in city and transport infrastructure that, as far as possible, implements design principles and technologies to develop sustainable and liveable cities. If policies and standards are set right, there is the opportunity to achieve good urban outcomes, with a lasting legacy for the attractiveness and competitiveness of Lao PDR's cities. Cities are also the places that lead the way in lifestyles, fashion and consumption. Therefore, embarking on policies and practices that facilitate environmentally sustainable consumption early in the transition process would be beneficial for the country.<sup>361</sup>

### **13.3. Looking forward: recommendations for UN support**

243. **Frameworks.** The draft NSEDP does not specifically prioritize water and sanitation, far less rural sanitation. Both water and sanitation appear as targets only in the health section of the Plan. On the other hand, the NSEDP does highlight issues of urban planning and environment, and town and city development, including the preservation and development of unique national architecture. The SDGs highlight the importance of water and sanitation by establishing a separate goal, SDG 6, which includes a target on ending open defecation. The SDGs also recognize the growing importance of sustainable cities in Goals 11 and 12. Together, these three SDGs relate to the ongoing work of the UN in Lao PDR. Within the framework provided by the NSEDP and SDGs 6, 11, 12 (Annex 2), UN support to the Government of Lao PDR is recommended as follows

- **Strengthen knowledge, institutional and human resource capacities** in sustainable water resource management.
- **Address the issue of water safety and quality.** This will need wide-ranging measures, from providing safe water supply for arsenic-affected areas, to preventing sewerage and other pollutants from entering the river system. Capacity building in the monitoring of water safety and quality also needs attention, especially regarding the arsenic contamination in the southern provinces. The extent of the contamination needs to be mapped and alternative solutions found for the affected communities.
- **Prioritize a national rural sanitation programme.** Currently, rural sanitation is a poorly funded activity under health and hygiene. The establishment of a national rural sanitation programme will require dedicated funding from the government and development partners. A costed National Sanitation Strategy has been prepared.<sup>362</sup> Advocacy is needed for tested approaches to be adopted widely and for provincial programmes to receive the funding they need to go to scale.<sup>363</sup> Such a nationwide programme will also need a dedicated rural sanitation monitoring system. The Government is piloting such an initiative in Champasak and Sekong provinces, which needs to be scaled up.<sup>364</sup> The results from the monitoring system should feed into planning and decision making at provincial and national levels.
- **Promote behaviour change programmes to improve hygiene and stop defecation.** Both social and health reasons are needed to change behaviour, since health messages in themselves may not be persuasive enough.
- **Prevent economic development activities from releasing toxic and chemical contaminants into river systems and associated watersheds.** Many such problems have already been observed

in the northern provinces, due to a lack of management and control by the local administrations and the sectors concerned.

- **Promote “green cities,” inclusive urban growth and sustainable urban development.** This is a relatively new area for Lao PDR, which could learn from experiences elsewhere across Asia. Sustainable urban development could be developed through joint programming or increased coordination in areas such as urban planning, basic services, youth and HIV/AIDS programmes, urban water supply and urban sanitation. Programmes on workplace issues, including employment conditions, gender and health concerns are also increasingly relevant to urban areas. Integrated programmes on injury and violence prevention are well suited for an urban focus, although these programmes have both urban and rural components. The promotion of safe, inclusive and accessible, green public spaces in cities and towns involves many sectors such as urban planning, environment, law enforcement and child protection/safety issues.

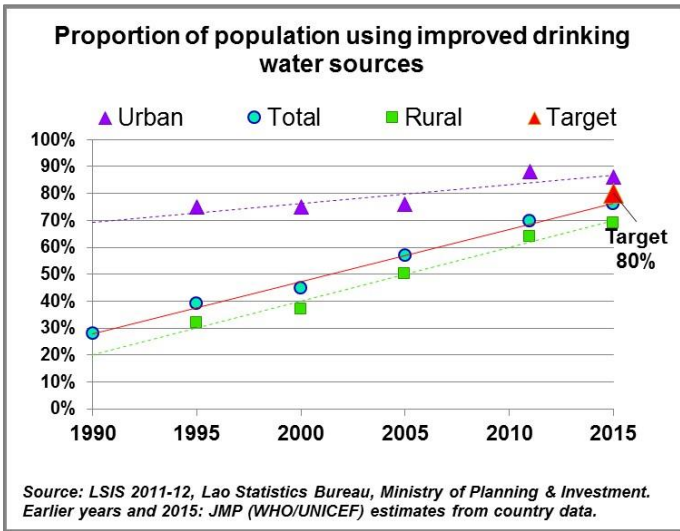


Figure 13.1. Lao PDR has achieved the MDG target for safe drinking water. The rural-urban gap has narrowed.

Figure 13.2. The poorer the community, the greater the burden of water collection for the women and girls.

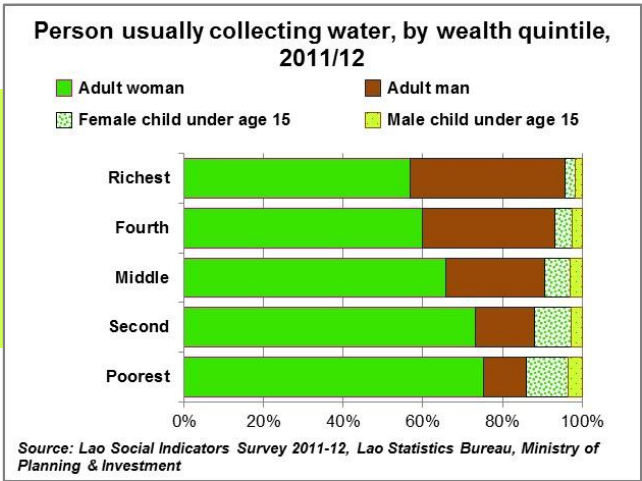


Figure 13.3. Household wealth and the education of the household head are associated with greater access to safe drinking water and improved sanitation facilities.

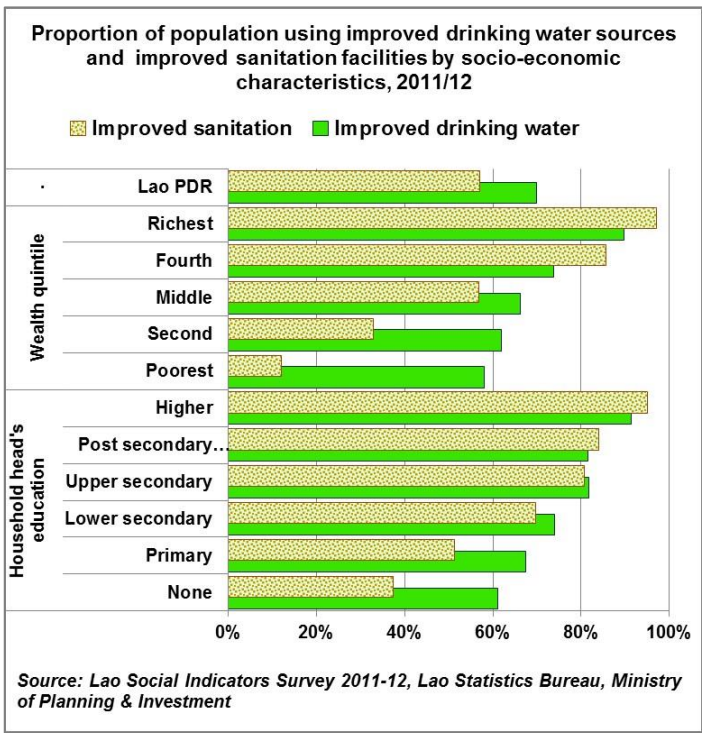


Figure 13.4. Lao PDR has achieved the MDG target on access to improved sanitation facilities. There is a difference of over 30 percentage points in access rates between urban and rural areas.

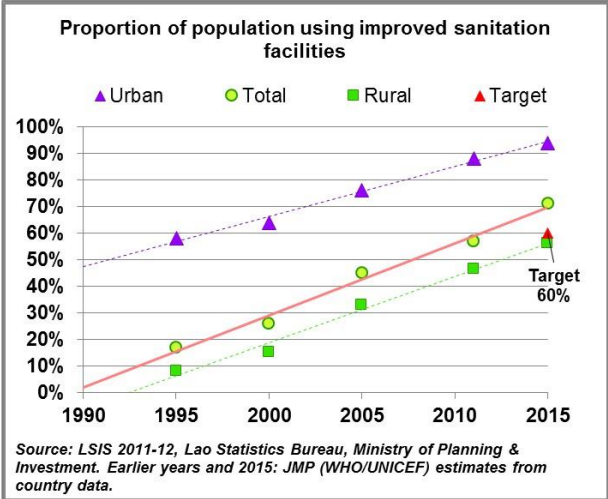
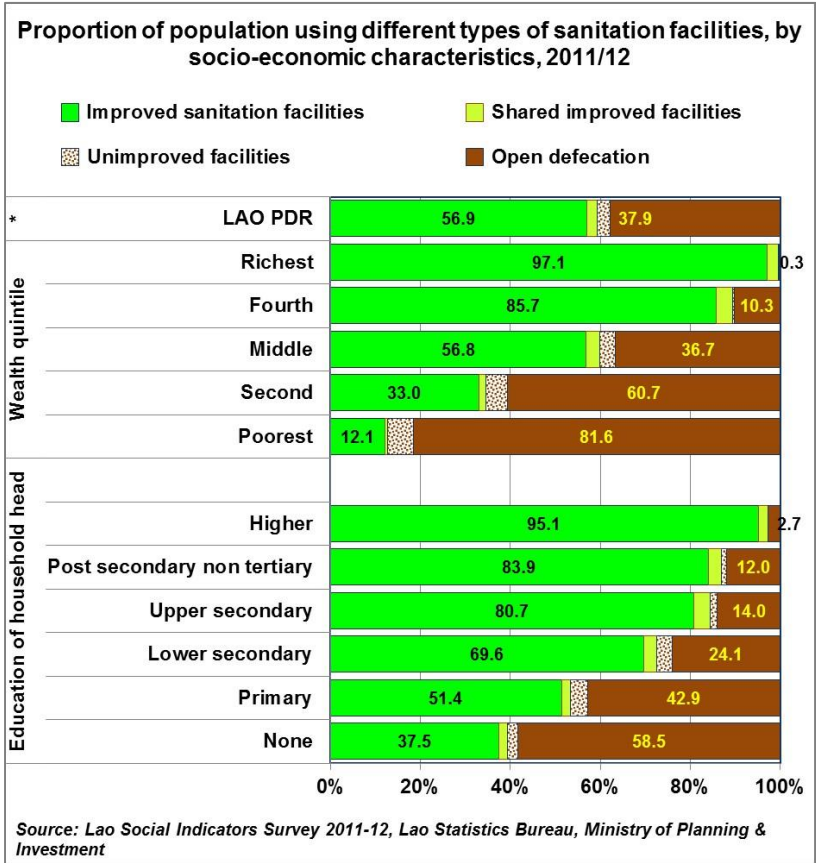


Figure 13.5. In 2011/12, over one-third of the population practiced open defecation. Even richer households and better-educated groups were not free of this practice. Open defecation was recorded among 2.7 percent of people living in households where the household head had higher education and 0.3 percent of people living in the richest quintile of households.



## 14. Protect vulnerable children

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### 14.1. Trends, disparities and determinants

244. **Ensuring the protection of vulnerable children involves addressing all forms of violence, exploitation and discrimination.** As with combatting violence against women, the phenomena are difficult to measure, often hidden within the family or community. Violence and discrimination against children has many manifestations, but the underlying causes are linked. The manifestations may include the following: children who are (i) in conflict with the law, (ii) subject to physical, sexual and other forms of abuse, (iii) trafficked for exploitation, sale and other purposes, (iv) in hazardous labour or in work conditions detrimental to their development, (v) excluded or marginalized on grounds of their disability or orphan status.

245. **In towns and cities, children who come into conflict with the law are usually detained with adults.** This exposes them to risks from adult offenders. Additionally, prison allows few opportunities for education or vocational training.<sup>a</sup> Since 2010, some 684 cases involving children were referred to the courts nationwide.<sup>365</sup> In rural settings, such children may be referred to traditional Village Mediation Units.

246. **The outcomes of traditional mediation processes are not always positive.** From October 2013 to September 2014, 763 children (including 76 girls) were reported to have committed an offence, of which 442 children were referred to the Village Mediation Units for mediation.<sup>366</sup> In traditional mediation, poor families may be forced to pay compensation for the child's deeds, which can push them into debt. Such measures also do not contribute to the child's rehabilitation.<sup>367</sup>

247. **Physical violence against children appears to be more prevalent in poorer or uneducated households.** Eight per cent of all children in Lao PDR experience "severe physical punishment."<sup>b</sup> The prevalence is 1.8 to 2.6 times higher in poorer households, households headed by an uneducated person, and households in remote areas without road access.<sup>368</sup> However, all data on issues that are socially frowned on need to be approached with reservations, as mentioned in Section 8.3 under violence against women.

248. **Cases of trafficked, exploited and sexually abused children may increase with increasingly open borders.** Adolescents make up a significant proportion of female sex workers in Lao PDR: 27 per cent of female sex workers reported selling sex at their first sexual experience at a mean age of 17 years.<sup>369</sup> Young sex workers who previously operated out of beer bars and karaoke shops are increasingly contacting clients by cell phone, which makes it harder to reach them with services. Transgender and young boys also turn to sex work with men.<sup>370</sup> The increasing openness of the country exposes children to heightened risks, such as paedophiles and child sex offenders who are usually more affluent than local equivalents and can operate with relative freedom outside

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<sup>a</sup> Although the 2007 Children's Law stipulates that child offenders sentenced to imprisonment should be sent to a vocational training centre to receive training and education, this is seldom followed in practice.

<sup>b</sup> Severe physical punishment includes hitting the face, head or ears, or beating the child repeatedly and as hard as possible. (LSIS, 2011/12)



the bounds of close-knit traditional communities, which tend to protect children. Cases involving foreign paedophiles (some of whom had records before entering the country) have been highly publicized in neighbouring Cambodia. Statistics on sexual abuse of children are not reliable, as this is often a hidden issue in society.

249. **Young girls form the majority of trafficking victims.** Between 2012 and 2014, of the 455 victims of trafficking repatriated from Thailand to Lao PDR, 82 per cent were girls and boys under 18 years of age.<sup>371</sup> Many more cases go unreported and undetected. Domestic trafficking serves clients in large infrastructure project sites, economic free zones and casinos. Trafficking networks are well financed and well organized, with connections to organized crime networks in neighbouring countries. Trafficked victims are forced into work such as prostitution (35 per cent), domestic labour (32 per cent), factory work (17 per cent) and fishing boats (4 per cent).<sup>372</sup>

250. **A significant proportion of children are working.**<sup>373</sup> An estimated 15 per cent of all children aged 5 to 17 are “working children.” Some 10 per cent of the same age group (or two thirds of all working children) are then classified as “child labour,” meaning they work under conditions hazardous to their health and well-being, even though this is illegal.<sup>374</sup> Some 28 per cent of working children are below the legal age for employment (14 years). In the 14 to 17 year age group, 35 per cent of children work. While this is legal employment in the context of national laws, it also means that these working children are not in school. Child labour is primarily a rural phenomenon. Some 89 per cent of all working children live in rural areas and 90 per cent are employed in the agriculture, forestry and fishing sectors. Some 67 per cent are in unpaid family work.<sup>375</sup>

251. **Child labour has an inverse relationship with education.** Some 94 per cent of children in child labour had dropped out of school or college or had never attended school or college. At the time of the child labour survey, only 6 percent of working children reported currently attending school or college.<sup>376</sup>

252. **Half the working children work in conditions that are hazardous to their health and well-being.** Two per cent of all working children received work-related injuries or illnesses attributed to work. The law does not allow children aged between 14 and 18 to work under hazardous working conditions or for longer than 48 hours per week.<sup>377</sup> The exposure to adverse working conditions is more common amongst child labourers aged 14 to 17. Most child workers (89 per cent of boys and 93 per cent of girls) spend an additional nine hours a week at household chores: mainly laundry, cleaning and cooking.<sup>378</sup>

253. **Children without primary caregivers are more vulnerable.** The Government recognizes the need to protect Lao children from potential abuses in the context of international and domestic adoption. Five per cent of all children below the age of 18 living in households are classified as ‘orphans,’ with one or both parents deceased.<sup>379</sup>

254. **Child disability rates are higher amongst poorer populations.** While 8 percent of children aged 2 to 9 years have at least one reported disability, those living in rural areas without road access, children of uneducated mothers and children from the poorest quintile households all have higher disability rates.<sup>380,381</sup> This is because most causes of child disability are preventable if the family has the knowledge and means. The causes of child disability in Lao PDR are mostly injury, pregnancy and birth outcomes, childhood illnesses and UXOs. Children with disabilities have less access to education. In 2007- 2008, only 4 per cent of all school-aged children with disabilities were



enrolled in any type of school or educational programme.<sup>382</sup> Children with severe disabilities are usually kept at home, and may be more vulnerable to neglect and abuse.

**255. The underlying causes of child vulnerabilities are multiple:**

- **The lack of birth registration and other records.** Such children are far harder to trace in trafficking cases; only 17 per cent of all children under age five actually had a birth certificate in 2011/12. Birth registration increases with mothers' education and household wealth quintile,<sup>383</sup> and the lack of such registration itself is an indication of poor, disadvantaged families.
- **Weak institutional capacities.** In Lao PDR, the profession and role of social workers is only just emerging. The number of social workers remains low, and follow up support to children and families is limited. The Government is taking measures to increase the number of professional social workers in the country.
- **Violence and poverty.** 'Push' factors underlying child trafficking include the lack of education, poverty, family dysfunction, substance abuse, sexual abuse, domestic violence and gender discrimination. 'Pull' factors include the perceptions of a better life with more money and greater freedom. Trafficking rings often recruit relatives and other familiar persons to persuade the child to leave home, initially voluntarily. The children are mainly from predominantly lowland rural areas.<sup>384</sup>
- **Resettlement or relocation of villages** can lead to limited opportunities and livelihood options in these communities. The number of trafficked victims from resettled or relocated villages is disproportionately high.
- **Loss of traditional patterns of extended family support** makes children without parental care more vulnerable.

## **14.2. Context**

**256. Lao PDR has adopted several international instruments on child rights and protection.**<sup>385</sup> As in other countries, the process of incorporation of these principles into national law and policies is an ongoing one. In particular, the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) are reflected in Lao PDR's Law on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of Children ('the 2007 Children's Law'). Following Lao PDR's ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2009, it is developing a National Plan of Action on Persons with Disabilities. The 2011-2015 National Policy on Inclusive Education and a National Strategy and Action Plan on Inclusive Education makes the education system more equitable with regard to children with disabilities. In May 2013, the Government also adopted the National Plan of Action to Prevent and Combat Trafficking in Persons (2013-2015), although the law on this has not yet been finalized. Lao PDR passed the National Law on Preventing and Combatting Violence against Women and Children in 2014 and adopted the 2014-2020 National Action Plan on Eliminating Violence Women and Children the same year. In addition, the Government accepted a number of UPR recommendations in 2015, relating to child protection and the rights of the child.

**257. The Government has taken the first steps to increase the number of professional social workers in the country.** In 2011, the National University of Lao PDR began offering a full four-year Bachelor of Arts Degree in Social Work. The curriculum for this course is still in its infancy and continues to be improved. A para-professional social work training course is also being developed.

258. **The Government approved a new Adoption Decree in 2014.** At the time of this Report, only national adoptions are allowed as the Government is maintaining its suspension of all inter-country adoptions until the new Adoption Decree can be adequately enforced. The government has appointed the Ministry of Justice as the ‘focal point agency’ for all inter-country adoptions. Alternative care guidelines for children without parental care are under development.

259. **The new Juvenile Criminal Procedure Law was adopted in April 2014.** This new law represents a significant step forward in complying with international standards on child justice. It introduces more child-friendly and gender-sensitive provisions for handling cases involving child offenders, victims and witnesses.

260. **The amended Labour Law<sup>386</sup> shows improvements but raises other concerns.** Children between 12 and 14 years of age can now do “light work.” The amended Law shows improvement with regard to the protection of children, by laying out definitions for light work permissible for children under 14 and prohibiting the worst forms of child labour for all children under 18 years of age. ‘Light work’ is defined as ‘*work that is not dangerous to health, both physically and mentally, and which does not affect the development of the body, mind or psychology, or the studies*’ of the child employee.<sup>387</sup> The definitions, however, are incomplete in some instances, and fall short of the requirements under ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention. Light work, as defined, would be difficult to monitor in the Lao context and may lead to more children dropping out of school early. On the other hand, the revised Education Law, approved in June 2015, makes primary and secondary education compulsory, effectively raising the age of compulsory education to at least 14 years of age. Since compulsory education should be completed first, the legal age for employment (also 14 years) should be raised.

261. **Challenges remain, relating to budget allocation, policy gaps, enforcement and human resources.** The insufficiency of budget allocations undermines the effectiveness of child protection structures and institutions and the implementation of plans and policies. The enforcement of laws remain weak. For example, existing laws on working children are not monitored or enforced adequately. Existing child protection services in Lao PDR consist of community volunteers, rather than full-time paid child protection professionals or social workers. This should change in the near future, with the graduation of professional social workers from the National University of Lao PDR.

### **14.3. Looking forward: recommendations for UN support**

262. **Frameworks.** The Eighth NSEDP contains different components on child protection under various sectors. SDG 16, 10 and 8 contain target areas specifically related to children (Annex 2). SDG 16 has targets on ending abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against children, and on providing birth registration. The targets also include those dealing with underlying causes such as rule of law, and effective and accountable institutions. SDG 10 mentions disability. SDG 8 addresses child labour. Within this broad framework of the NSEDP, other national laws and policies and SDGs 16, 10 and 8, UN support to the Government of Lao PDR is recommended as follows

- **Develop a comprehensive national policy and plan of action for a child protection system.** The policy should define institutional roles and responsibilities and establish coordination mechanisms across sectors. It should address the gaps in the current systems and mechanisms. Prevention and response mechanisms should extend down to community level to identify, report, stop and refer cases of abuse as needed. The system should have professionally trained staff

who can provide quality services in line with nationally agreed norms and standards, handle complex cases and referral to other services. The system should prevent family separation by providing community-based services, with family support if needed, especially for children without parental care and children with disabilities.

- **Strengthen the enforcement of laws and policies.** This would require political commitment, adequate budget and effective monitoring systems.
- **Develop costing estimates and a sustainable funding plan for the institutions mandated by new laws and policies.** Costing exercises for this sector would be new for the country and would require international support. Mapping the functions required, ensuring efficient coordination and integrating certain functions into existing systems and networks – such as health networks<sup>a</sup> and parent-teacher associations – could achieve significant cost savings.
- **Develop and establish the social work profession in Lao PDR.** The Government's programme to produce qualified and trained professional social workers from tertiary education institutes will need to be backed up by institutional measures. The role of social workers should be defined at every level. Laws and regulations need to empower social workers with the budget, competencies and legal authority to intervene at community and household level if the child's safety and well-being is threatened, and in cases of domestic violence against women.
- **Strengthen existing institutions and establish an entity to monitor child labour issues.** Procedures and mechanisms need to be developed for dealing with employers who violate the labour law. Conversely, incentives need to be provided to employers who adhere to the law and take initiative to protect the well-being of child workers.

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<sup>a</sup> For example, the identification and referral of abuse or disability.

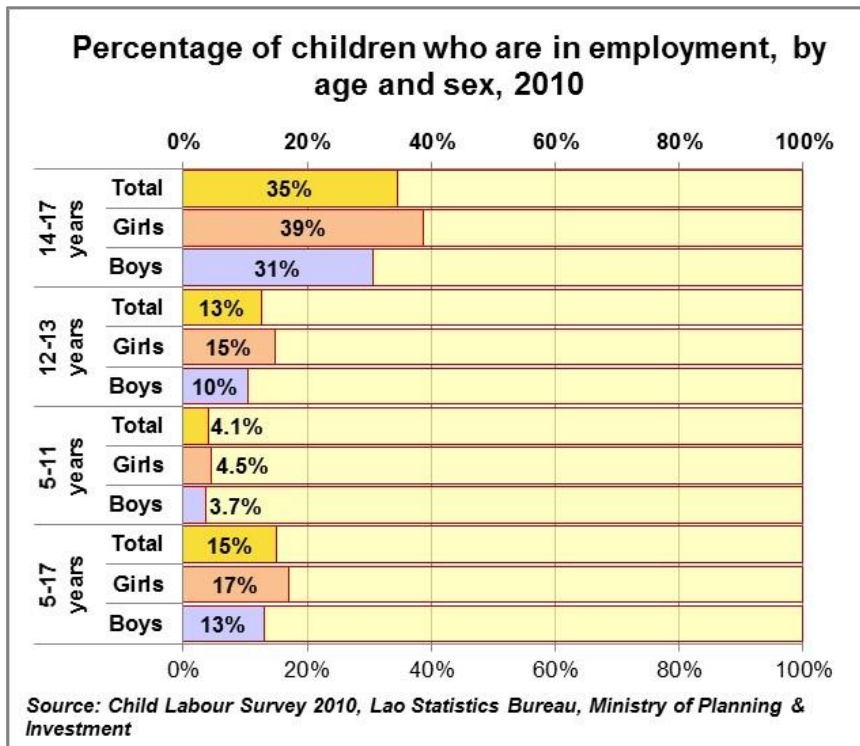


Figure 14.1. In every age group, a slightly higher proportion of girls are in employment, perhaps because they are not in school. For instance, at the age of 12-13 years, 15 percent of girls of that age group are working compared to 10 percent of boys from the same age

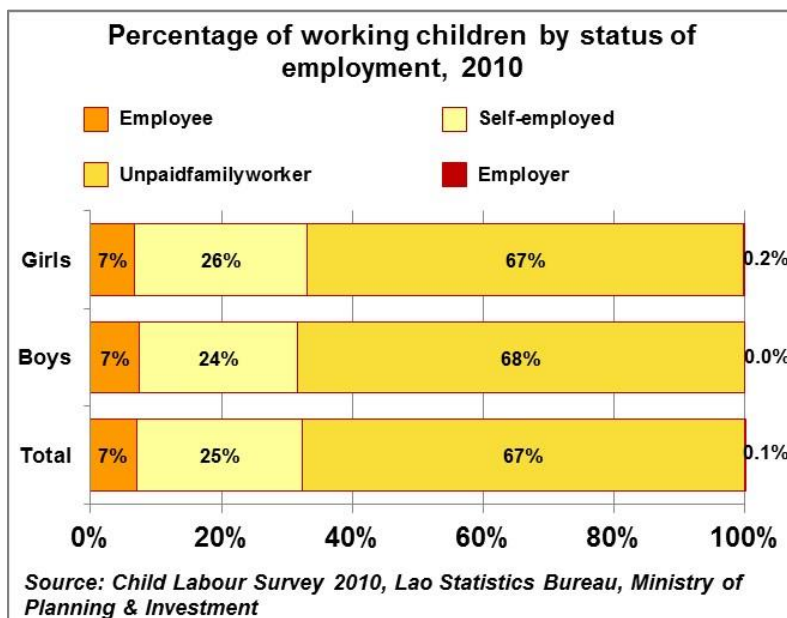


Figure 14.2. Working children are a vulnerable group. Most of them are unpaid family workers or self-employed.

## 15. Reduce UXO impact

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### 15.1. Trends, disparities and determinants

263. **UXO<sup>a</sup> remains a challenge for the progress of development in Lao PDR.** An estimated 80 million cluster sub-munitions remain unexploded. UXO limits safe access to agricultural and land for development projects and makes construction of transport and power infrastructure, schools, hospitals and water supply facilities much more costly and dangerous.

264. **UXO is also a major humanitarian threat.** Over 50,000 casualties<sup>388</sup> were reported from 1964 to 2012, meaning an average of 997 people a year killed, injured or maimed by UXOs. The bulk of victims were of active working age between ages 15 and 35 years. In more recent years, effective mine risk education and the clearance of high risk areas have seen the number of casualties dropping from 300 casualties in 2008 and 119 casualties in 2010 to 45 casualties in 2014.<sup>b</sup> More men and boys are affected compared to women and girls, as the men and boys are more likely to venture further outside village limits into the forest. A significant proportion of UXO casualties are children. Children represented 62 per cent of all reported UXO victims (dead and injured) in 2014, 61 percent in 2013, 41 percent in 2012 and 57 percent in 2011. The needs of survivors are great: the 2010 survey found that among the several thousands of injuries sustained by survivors that required a prosthesis, only 583 survivors claimed to have received one.<sup>389</sup>

265. **Despite the challenges, the past few years have seen a number of achievements:**

- The number of UXO casualties has been reduced by 85 per cent over the last decade. In recent years, with less than 50 casualties reported annually, the national target of less than 75 casualties a year has been met.
- Risk awareness on mines and explosive remnants of war have been integrated into school curricula.
- The Government has adopted a new methodology (see Section 15.2) for finding and clearing bombs that is expected to enhance the effectiveness of UXO clearance operations, which has also resulted in a sharp increase in the land area being released. This has led to an improved focus of resources on areas with confirmed contamination, as shown by an increase of over 460 per cent in the number of explosive remnants of war removed per hectare. The methodology is more results-oriented and future reporting will reflect this focus.
- Data collection and analysis are crucial aspects of victim assistance. A survivor tracking system has been developed as an essential step towards ensuring the rights of cluster munition survivors, in compliance with the national strategy, Lao PDR's own MDG 9 and article 5 of the Convention on Cluster Munitions.
- Progress has been made towards the transfer of mine action tasks to national actors. As the transfer of mine action functions progresses, regular assessments and strategy adjustments are necessary to ensure sustainable results. A capacity assessment of both the national authority and the United Nations was conducted in 2014, and medium-and long-term strategies for both organizations agreed on.

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<sup>a</sup> The term UXO is used generically for both unexploded ordnance (UXO) and abandoned explosive ordnance (AXO).

<sup>b</sup> Figures from the NRA provided for MDG Review Report, 2015

## 15.2. Context

266. **Lao PDR signed the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) on 3 December 2008 and ratified it on 18 March 2009.** This made Lao PDR amongst the first 30 ratifications that triggered the entry into force of the CCM on 1 August 2010. Lao PDR is not a signatory to the Mine Ban Treaty.

267. **The UXO sector has a ten-year national strategy to achieve its UXO clearance and development objectives.** The National Strategic Plan for the UXO Sector (2011 – 2020) “The Safe Path Forward II” (SPF II) provides the guiding framework. Together with this Plan, the recommendations from the review of the SPF II and the 2014 Capacity Assessment of the NRA<sup>a</sup> and the Lao National Unexploded Ordnance Programme (UXO Lao) will guide UXO work beyond 2015. Some challenges that impede the effective implementation of the SPF II are set out below.

268. **Resources are one of the constraints to expanding UXO clearance.**<sup>390</sup> Line Ministries and development partners are required to ensure UXO survey and clearance as necessary for all development projects they undertake in contaminated areas, and to build the cost into their budgets.<sup>391</sup> In 2014, the total costs of the UXO sector amounted to US\$ 32.7 million, of which the Government provided around US\$ 1 million in kind, with the rest provided by external sources.<sup>392</sup> Some reports mention that donors would like the Government contributions to increase, given the country’s economic growth.<sup>393,394</sup>

269. **The UXO sector needs to be better integrated into the overall national development goal.** The Eighth NSEDP has made a start in this regard, in an attempt to integrate UXO into a national development framework. Even so, UXO continues to be a standalone area.

270. **An important step was taken with the new Lao PDR UXO Survey Procedures, adopted on 15 January 2015.** The objective is to conduct non-technical surveys (NTS) of all villages in the nine most contaminated provinces and conduct technical surveys of all Focal Development Areas in these nine provinces by 2020. The purpose is to progress towards the establishment of a national baseline and to fill the gaps identified by reviews and evaluations in terms of data collection, information management and reporting. The focus on hectares cleared has therefore shifted to efficiency of clearance.

## 15.3. Looking forward: recommendations for UN support

271. **Frameworks.** Within the Eighth NSEDP (2016-2020), the clearance of UXOs and victim assistance fall under the Outcome of “Improved Living Standards through Poverty Reduction.” The NSEDP, the SPF II (2011 – 2020) and the recommendations from its review, and the 2014 Capacity Assessment of the NRA and UXO Lao provide the national framework for the UXO sector. The SDGs do not have a specific target that focuses on mines and UXOs, or on conflict and post-conflict issues. Goal 11 (making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable) appears to be the best fit for Lao PDR’s UXO goal and targets. The sector will require two broad types of support from UN and other development partners. The first type of support relates to the

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<sup>a</sup> National Regulatory Authority (NRA) for the UXO/Mine Action sector in Lao PDR, set up in 2006, regulates, coordinates, and conducts quality assurance of all UXO activities undertaken in the country.

technical and managerial issues and the second relates to the financial sustainability of the UXO programme. Long-term strategies will need to strengthen national capacities as well as provide institutional support to the UXO sector, given the scale and scope of the issue, which lies well beyond the national capacity to cope.

272. **Technical and management issues.** The UN support to the Government of Lao PDR is recommended as follows:

- **Continue establishing a nationwide baseline of UXO contamination with better quality control.** Over 5,000 villages in nine heavily contaminated provinces are being surveyed with NTS methods. The exercise should be based on sound and transparent technical principles and on remapping as needed. Having this baseline would improve operational planning and the effective and efficient use of assets. In moving forward with the new survey methodology, the monitoring, assessment and reporting capacities of operators, including UXO Lao and NRA as the coordinating agency, will need to be significantly improved.
- **Establish clarity and agreement on implementation plans for SPF II.** The ten-year work plan that is being developed should have input from all stakeholders. Multi-year and annual sector work planning will need to be supported by strong coordination and agreement with international operators on the planning principles.
- **Strengthen information management and feedback loops.** This goes beyond operating an information system, and relates to how the information is used, whether lessons are learned and corrective actions are taken from the information. It would require data collection that is based on information requirements, rigorous validation and analysis of data, consistent information sharing with stakeholders, and the capacity to change and improve from the lessons highlighted by the data analysis.<sup>395</sup>
- **Improve reporting on development outcomes.** The principles of results-based planning and monitoring should guide annual planning exercises, and inform the collection and analysis of different types of data. More specifically, data that shows the impact on people's lives, pre- and post-clearance data are needed to report on development outcomes.
- **Develop domestic legislation to remain compliant with the country's obligations under the CCM.**<sup>396</sup> The drafting of this legislation will require technical support from the international community.
- **Improve the quality of clearance.** Technical and other support are required to equip quality control and management structures in NRA with skills and resources to assure the quality of UXO clearance activities.
- **Sharpen the focus and targeting of mine risk education.** Behaviour change interventions, to be effective, require location-specific and interpersonal communication strategies and need to be complemented (but not replaced) by public education activities. Mine risk education needs to be gender and age-specific, focus on the specific local threats (for instance, with the help of village maps) and the specific risk-taking behaviours of the groups at risk.



273. **Sustainability of the UXO programme.** The UN support to the Government of Lao PDR is recommended as follows:

- **Develop a long-term transition strategy to reduce the UXO sector’s financial dependence on international sources.** The long-term strategy should include an outlook for the sector with a 10 to 20 years’ timeframe, the scope of work and capacities needed to undertake this work, and the role of national and international partners in the transition period. It should incorporate the technical and managerial issues identified above, notably the changes to improve efficiency and cost-effectiveness, which would enhance the use of donor resources in the transitional period.
- **Implement measures to increase national contributions to the UXO sector as a first step.** The UN could support the Government in new and innovative ways of resource mobilization. One evaluation<sup>397</sup> suggests a “tourist tax” for UXO with accompanying communication activities to target the reported 4 million tourists<sup>398</sup> visiting Lao PDR annually.
- **Integrate the victim assistance programme into mainstream social services and mainstream mine risk education further into school curricula.** Victim assistance requires long-term support and longitudinal tracking systems, which the current UXO Survivor Tracking System cannot do by itself. The support of national programmes for disability, health and social welfare will therefore be needed. Mechanisms need to be developed for UXO accident and incident surveillance reports (currently under the UXO programme) to feed into the information systems in health, social welfare and disability programmes.



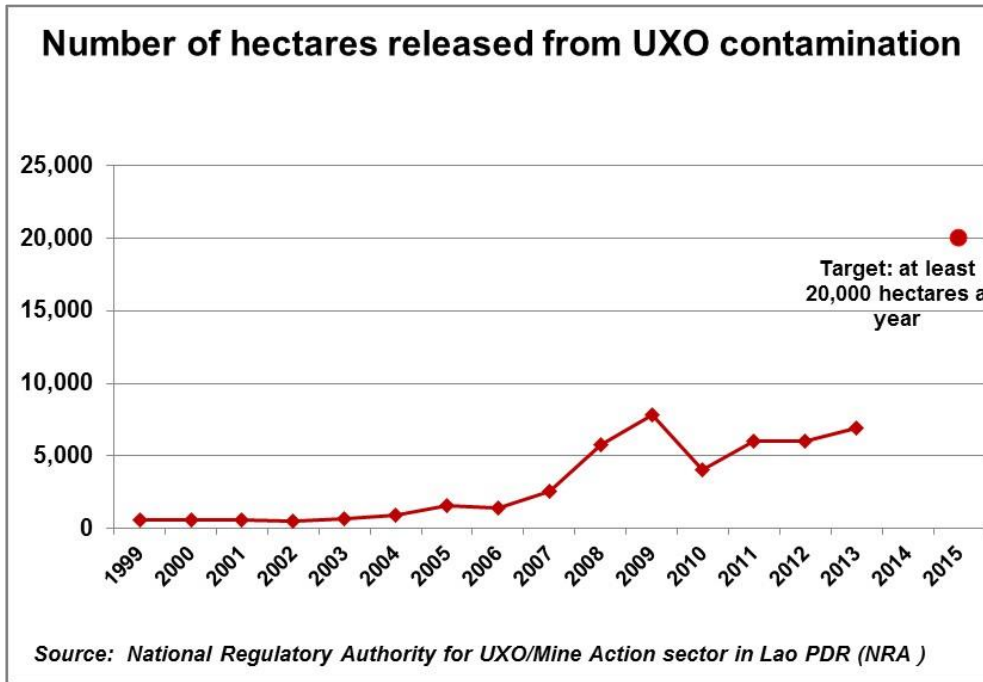


Figure 15.1. The number of hectares cleared each year is well below target, but the new survey methodology offers hope.

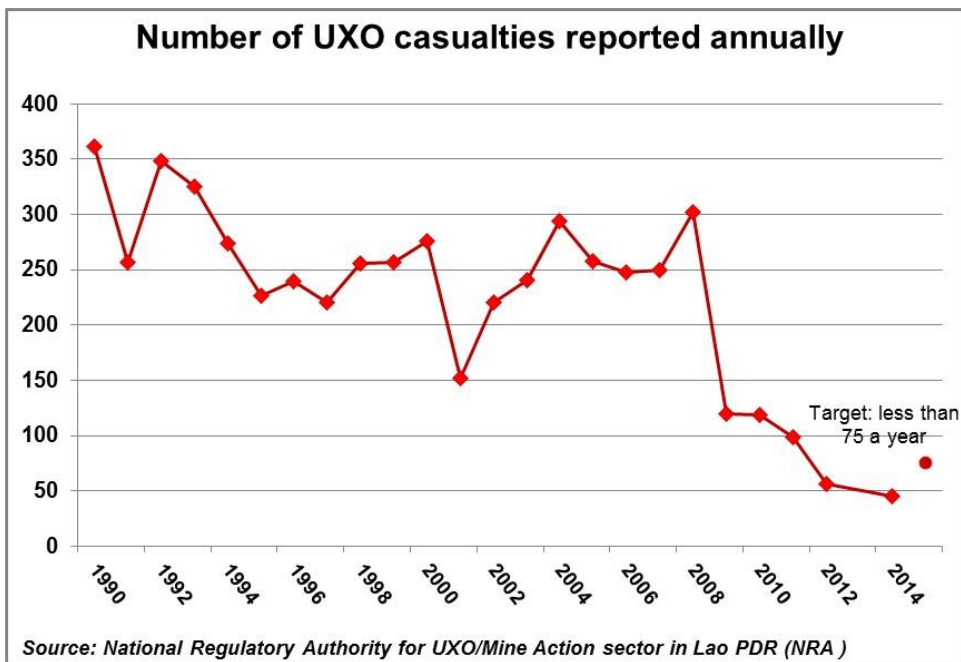


Figure 15.2. The number of UXO casualties has dropped steadily across the years. .

## 16. Expand partnerships for development

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274. **Lao PDR still relies on official development assistance (ODA) for a significant share of its socio-economic development investments.** ODA accounted for about 14 percent of total investment for the fiscal year 2012-13 and 10 percent for 2013-14.<sup>399</sup> The alignment of external support with national priorities and goals is discussed between the Government and development partners in the Round Table Process, which forms an important national forum for meaningful dialogue on strategic development planning, aid effectiveness and ownership issues.

275. **The *Vientiane Declaration on Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (2016-2025)* will be adopted during the November 2015 high-level Round Table Meeting.** This meeting will renew the commitments from both the government and development partners to ensure effective development cooperation. The Declaration will align Lao PDR's cooperation principles with the global agenda on effective development cooperation, including the 2012 Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation, the 2014 Mexico High Level Meeting Communiqué, the 2015 Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the SDGs.

276. **Two lessons were learned from the experience of development cooperation during the past decade.** The first is that the support by development partners to Lao PDR's progress towards global goals could be better coordinated, more results-oriented, and avoid duplication. This will require development partners to align individual programmes and agency priorities behind the country's plans, policies and goals. It will also require the Government to exert a strong coordinating role with all externally funded initiatives projects and programmes. The second lesson is that Lao PDR needs to identify alternative development financing sources, such as South-South cooperation, public-private partnerships and philanthropic organisations, to reduce the heavy reliance of many social programmes on external funding. Funding predictability and sustainability need to be guaranteed for core services such as provision of basic health and nutrition commodities, health outreach services, HIV/AIDS response interventions, UXO activities and important components of education and sanitation programmes.

277. **SDG 17 captures the most important crosscutting elements of development cooperation in Lao PDR.** The goal's 19 targets cover the issues of development finance, sharing of technology and knowledge resources, trade, policy and institutional coherence, multi-stakeholder partnerships, capacity building for national plans to implement SDGs, and data, monitoring and accountability. Addressing these issues and resolving bottlenecks will be crucial in all SDG areas. The SDG 17 is a good starting point for a development cooperation framework that will form the basis for the Vientiane Declaration on Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation.

## 17. Conclusions

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278. **The picture of progress over the past decade or so is rather mixed.** Lao PDR has made much progress towards several national goals. The country has already achieved or will achieve in 2015 the MDG targets on poverty and hunger reduction, primary education enrolment, gender equity in primary education, maternal and child mortality reduction, TB reduction, and access to safe water and sanitation. The country still has some way to go in achieving full and productive employment, reducing undernutrition (notably stunting), achieving primary education completion, achieving secondary and tertiary education, achieving gender equity at higher levels of education as well as in employment and political participation, controlling HIV and malaria, improving environmental sustainability, and clearing UXO contaminated land.

279. **The identification of major challenges and opportunities indicate areas for actions.** The Country Analysis identifies the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups left behind in the country's development, and analyzes the determinants of such vulnerabilities. Based on the review, the Country Analysis provides a set of forward-looking recommendations to guide the UN Country Team's planning for the next cycle. In newer areas examined in this report, such as disaster management, violence and discrimination against children and women, the progress is encouraging but by its very nature, not easily measurable. The process consulted closely with the concerned UN agencies and took into account the findings of several participatory consultations conducted at various times, including during the preparation of the 2013 MDG Progress Report.

280. **The post-2015 agenda will be a far broader one than the development agenda of the past two decades.** As with all international goals, the SDGs will need to be adapted to Lao PDR's context, and quantitative targets formulated in line with national goals and priorities. The SDG adaptation exercise should accommodate the outcomes and outputs of the NSEDP and other national plans, policies and laws, allow work to continue on the "unfinished business" of certain MDGs, and define the emerging areas of priority for the post-2015 period.

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# Technical Notes and References

## 1. Introduction

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<sup>2</sup> Pimhidzai, et al., 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE), 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, 2014.

<sup>5</sup> Pimhidzai, et al., 2014.

<sup>6</sup> Lao People's Revolutionary Youth Union (LYU) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), 2015

<sup>7</sup> World Bank, 2015a.

<sup>8</sup> World Bank World Databank.

<sup>9</sup> World Bank:  
<http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/lao/overview>

<sup>10</sup> World Bank, 2014a.

<sup>11</sup> Mineral rents are the difference between the value of production for a stock of minerals at world prices and their total costs of production. Minerals included in the calculation are tin, gold, lead, zinc, iron, copper, nickel, silver, bauxite, and phosphate. Statistics from <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MINR.RT.ZS>

<sup>12</sup> UN Committee for Development Policy (UN-CDP) and United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA) 2008 and 2012

<sup>13</sup> Hayes, G., 2015.

<sup>14</sup> Matrilineal descent is a kinship system where a descent group traces their ancestral lineages via the maternal side. Matrilocal residence is a societal system in which a married couple resides with or near the wife's parents. Matrilineal inheritance is a form of hereditary succession or other inheritance through which the subject's female relatives are traced back in a matrilineal line. Bilineal descent is a system where an individual is both a member of his mother's matrilineage and his father's patrilineage. Patrilineal descent follows the male line. Both males and females inherit a patrilineal family membership but only males can pass it on to their descendants.

<sup>15</sup> Schenk-Sandbergen, L., 2012.

<sup>16</sup> Hayes, G., 2015.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> All data related to UXO are from the National Regulatory Authority (NRA) for the UXO/Mine Action sector in Lao PDR.

<sup>21</sup> ILO's eight "fundamental" conventions cover subjects considered to be fundamental principles and rights at

work, while "governance" or "priority" instruments represent standards that are the most significant from the viewpoint of governance and are high priority because of their importance for the functioning of the international labour standards system.

<sup>22</sup> United Nations, 2015a. *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Lao People's Democratic Republic*. A/HRC/29/7, prepared for the Human Rights Council, Twenty-ninth session, Universal Periodic Review. 23 March 2015

<sup>23</sup> United Nations, 2015b. Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Lao People's Democratic Republic. Addendum: *Views on conclusions and/or recommendations, voluntary commitments and replies presented by the State under review*. A/HRC/29/7/Add.1, 23 June 2015

<sup>24</sup> United Nations, 2014. *Compilation prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in accordance with paragraph 15 (b) of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 5/1 and paragraph 5 of the annex to Council resolution 16/21: Lao People's Democratic Republic*. A/HRC/WG.6/21/LAO/2. Prepared for the Human Rights Council Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, Twenty-first session, 19–30 January 2015

<sup>25</sup> United Nations, 2015a.

<sup>26</sup> United Nations, 2015b

## 2. Enhance competitiveness

<sup>27</sup> ASEAN, 2015

<sup>28</sup> ASEAN statistics

<sup>29</sup> United Nations in Lao PDR, 2014.

<sup>30</sup> In June 2012, the Decree PMO No 13/PM was issued, which suspends approvals for all investment proposals for the exploration and survey of a range of mineral ores (Article 1.1.) and the export of raw minerals (Article 1.2.) and rubber and eucalyptus plantations (Article 2) until the end of 2015. Some organizations have criticized the "loophole" in the ban, which allows concessions with official written approval by the Government. See Saunders et al., 2014.

<sup>31</sup> World Bank, 2015a.

<sup>32</sup> Asian Development Bank and International Labour Organization, 2015.

<sup>33</sup> Hayes, G., 2015.

<sup>34</sup> World Bank, 2014d.

<sup>35</sup> World Bank: Economy rankings for Doing Business Measuring Business Regulations, rankings benchmarked June 2015. Available from:

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<sup>36</sup> World Bank: *Lao PDR Second Trade Development Facility Project*. Available from:

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<sup>37</sup> The World Trade Organization led Aid-for-Trade initiative seeks to mobilize resources to address the trade-related constraints identified by developing and least-developed countries.

<sup>38</sup> Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 2015.

<sup>39</sup> Asian Development Bank, 2011a.

<sup>40</sup> Department for Small and Medium Enterprise Promotion (DOSMEP), Government of Lao PDR.

<sup>41</sup> World Bank, 2014d.

<sup>42</sup> World Bank, 2014c.

<sup>43</sup> ADB, 2011b.

<sup>44</sup> ADB and World Bank, 2012

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> World Bank, 2014d

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> Asian Development Bank, 2011a.

<sup>49</sup> Laungaramsri, P., 2013

<sup>50</sup> United Nations, 2015a.

<sup>51</sup> Green growth means fostering economic growth and development while ensuring that natural assets continue to provide the resources and environmental services on which our well-being relies. To do this it must catalyse investment and innovation which will underpin sustained growth and give rise to new economic opportunities. Source: OECD  
<http://www.oecd.org/greengrowth/whatisgreengrowthandhowcanithelpdeliverustainabledevelopment.htm>

<sup>52</sup> Green Industry means economies striving for a more sustainable pathway of growth, by undertaking green public investments and implementing public policy initiatives that encourage environmentally responsible private investments. (Source: UNIDO,  
<http://www.unido.org/en/what-we-do/environment/safeguarding-the-environment/industrial-resource-efficiency/greenindustry/green-industry-initiative.html> )

<sup>53</sup> Asian Development Bank and International Labour Organization, 2014.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Corben, R. 2015.

<sup>56</sup> U.S. Department of State Trafficking in Persons Report 2015, 2014 and 2013. Available from (for 2015):  
<http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/2015/243366.htm>

(for 2014)  
<http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/2014/226649.htm> and  
for 2013:  
<http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/2013/210548.htm>

<sup>57</sup> Government of the Lao PDR and United Nations, 2013.

<sup>58</sup> Prime Minister's Instruction No.24/PM, dated 7/5/2014, regarding the formulation of 2030 Vision, Ten-Year Socio-

economic Development Strategy (2016-2025), and the National Socio-Economic Development Plan VIII (2016-2025)

### 3. Promote good governance

<sup>59</sup> Slater R. and Keoka, K., 2012.

<sup>60</sup> Larrabure, J.L., et al., 2014.

<sup>61</sup> District Development Report for 2013-2015, Vientiane: United Nations Development Programme

<sup>62</sup> See the following:

a) European Development Partners' Statement at Lao PDR's Round Table Meeting, Vientiane, 19<sup>th</sup> November 2013 at  
[http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/laos/document/s/presse\\_corner/2013/20131119\\_01\\_en.pdf](http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/laos/document/s/presse_corner/2013/20131119_01_en.pdf)  
Accessed September 1, 2015. Vientiane: Ministry of Planning and Investment, 2013 Round Table Meeting

b) Ministry of Planning and Investment, 2014.

c) Statement of Madam Pany Yathortou, during the 4<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the Seventh Legislature (2014) at  
[http://www.na.gov.la/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=616\\_percent3Athere-are-no-translations-available0302&catid=64\\_percent3Athe-association-of-lao-parliamentarians&lang=en](http://www.na.gov.la/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=616_percent3Athere-are-no-translations-available0302&catid=64_percent3Athe-association-of-lao-parliamentarians&lang=en). Accessed September 1, 2015.

<sup>63</sup> *Public opinions sought on constitutional amendments, Vientiane Times*, April 21, 2015. Available from:  
<http://www.laolandissues.org/2015/04/21/public-opinions-sought-on-constitutional-amendments/> Accessed September 1, 2015.

<sup>64</sup> United Nations, 2014.

<sup>65</sup> United Nations, 2015a.

<sup>66</sup> Schönweger, et al., 2012.

<sup>67</sup> United Nations, 2015a.

<sup>68</sup> Conducted in November 2014 covering 90 villages encompassing 1443 respondents in Oudomxay, Xiengkhuang and Champasak provinces

<sup>69</sup> There is no established freedom of information right in the Lao legal framework. However, provisions related to availability of some government information to the public are present in a few laws. These include the following: (a) the Law on Local Administration (2003) provides that local administrations have the obligation to provide information; (b) the Law on the National Assembly (2006) regulates the Cabinet of the National assembly to provide information to mass media and "concerned organizations"; (c) the Law on State Budget (2006) provides that information related to budget must be made accessible to the public; (d) the Anti-Corruption Law (2005) contains a prohibition to disclose state secrets and other secret information. Source: World Bank, 2013b.

<sup>70</sup> Slater R. and Keoka, K., 2012.

<sup>71</sup> United Nations, 2015b.

<sup>72</sup> Center for Health Market Innovations, 2009a and Rwanda Ministry of Health

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<sup>73</sup> UNICEF, 2015.

<sup>74</sup> Center for Health Market Innovations, 2009b.

<sup>75</sup> GUO Yan and SU Xue Mei, 2012.

#### 4. End poverty and reduce inequalities

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<sup>76</sup> Pimhidzai, et al., 2014. LECS 5, 2012/13

<sup>77</sup> The poverty gap ratio is the mean shortfall of the total population from the poverty line (counting the non-poor as having zero shortfall), expressed as a percentage of the poverty line. It measures the “poverty deficit” of the entire population, where the poverty deficit is the per capita amount of resources needed to bring all poor people above the poverty line through perfectly targeted cash transfers. The poverty severity index applies an increasing weight to greater distances below the poverty line and is therefore sensitive to the severity of poverty.

<sup>78</sup> Pimhidzai, et al., 2014 and Lindelow et al., 2010.

<sup>79</sup> Pimhidzai, et al., 2014.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> Pimhidzai, et al., 2014 and Lindelow et al., 2010.

<sup>82</sup> Pimhidzai, et al., 2014

<sup>83</sup> Pimhidzai, et al., 2014 and Lindelow et al., 2010.

<sup>84</sup> Pimhidzai, et al., 2014

<sup>85</sup> Pimhidzai, et al., 2014

<sup>86</sup> Pimhidzai, et al., 2014

<sup>87</sup> Pimhidzai, et al., 2014 and Lindelow et al., 2010.

<sup>88</sup> Pimhidzai, et al., 2014

<sup>89</sup> Pimhidzai, et al., 2014

<sup>90</sup> Pimhidzai, et al., 2014

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> Warr, P., et al., 2015.

<sup>93</sup> Warr, P., et al., 2015.

<sup>94</sup> United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) et al., FinScope Survey

<sup>95</sup> Warr, P., et al., 2015.

<sup>96</sup> Pimhidzai, et al., 2014.

<sup>97</sup> Oraboune, 2008.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

#### 5. Achieve productive employment and decent work

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<sup>99</sup> ADB and ILO, 2015.

<sup>100</sup> United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA), 2005.

<sup>101</sup> Labour productivity is defined by the International Labour Organization (ILO) as GDP per person employed

<sup>102</sup> The 2010 Labour Force Survey classified occupations according to the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO 2008) of the ILO.

<sup>103</sup> International Labour Organization, 2010.

<sup>104</sup> The official MDG indicator is the proportion of employed people living below the national poverty line or below the international poverty line. Since data was not available, the MDG Report used a proxy indicator: the percentage of employed population from households in the two poorest quintiles, as defined by the Labour Force Survey’s wealth index.

<sup>105</sup> Out-of-pocket payments for health care that would disrupt the material living standards of the household to such an extent that it would push the household into poverty. See WHO, [http://www.who.int/health\\_financing/catastrophic/en/](http://www.who.int/health_financing/catastrophic/en/) and World Bank <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPAH/Resources/Publications/459843-1195594469249/HealthEquityCh18.pdf>

<sup>106</sup> Elementary occupations involve the performance of simple and routine tasks which may require the use of hand-held tools and considerable physical effort. Most occupations in this major group require skills at the first ISCO skill level. Tasks performed by workers in elementary occupations usually include: cleaning, restocking supplies and performing basic maintenance in apartments, houses, kitchens, hotels, offices and other buildings; washing cars and windows, helping in kitchens, delivering messages or goods, carrying luggage and handling baggage and freight, collecting and sorting refuse, sweeping streets and similar places, performing various simple farming, fishing or trapping tasks; performing simple tasks connected with mining, construction and manufacturing, etc. (Extract from ILO: International Standard Classification of Occupations ISCO 08, 2012). Available from: [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms\\_172572.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_172572.pdf)

<sup>107</sup> There are an estimated 200,000 Lao men and women working in Thailand, mostly in construction, plantations, domestic work and services. MTR of ILO’s DWP

International Labour Organization, 2014.

<sup>108</sup> Southichack, M.2014.

<sup>109</sup> FinScope Laos 2014: Sample of 2048 respondents in 255 villages.

United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) et al., 2015.

<sup>110</sup> Lao Statistics Bureau 2010

<sup>111</sup> Estimate from FAO, Vientiane

<sup>112</sup> Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, 2012.

<sup>113</sup> World Bank, 2014a

<sup>114</sup> National Assembly, 24 December 2013

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> Edited extracts from 2013 Amended Labour Law: clauses for women and children:

- a) An employer cannot require a pregnant woman or woman with a child under 1 year of age to carry heavy loads, stand for long periods, undertake dangerous work or work at night, work overtime or on a day of rest. If necessary, the employer shall temporarily assign the employee to more suitable work during this period, but pay her the normal salary.



- b) A woman is entitled to at least 105 calendar days of fully paid maternity leave, at least 45 days of which must be after the birth. During the year after birth, the woman is entitled to have one hour a day of rest in order to feed and take care of the child. If a woman suffers a miscarriage, she is entitled to leave on full pay for a period as determined by a doctor. On the birth of a baby, a woman is entitled to an allowance as specified in the Social Security Law.
- c) Employment of children: Children of the ages of 14-17 years may be employed provided they do not work overtime. Children of ages 12 and 13 may be employed for “light work” provided the work is “not dangerous to health, both physically and mentally, and which does not affect the development of the body, mind or psychology, or the studies of the youth employee”

<sup>117</sup> Asian Development Bank and International Labour Organization, 2015.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> Government of Lao PDR, 2015.

<sup>122</sup> Asian Development Bank and International Labour Organization, 2015.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

## 6. End hunger and improve nutrition

<sup>124</sup> The FAO prevalence of undernourishment (PoU) indicator measures the probability that a randomly selected individual from the reference population is found to consume less than his/her calorie requirement for an active and healthy life.

<sup>125</sup> FAO projection for 2014-2016.

<sup>126</sup> FAO, 2015.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> The GHI combines three equally weighted indicators in one index. These are (i) the proportion of undernourished people as a percentage of the population, (ii) the proportion of children under five who are underweight, and (iii) the mortality rate of children under five. By using a range of indicators, the GHI reflects the multi-faceted nature of hunger. The GHI is measured only if data are available and measuring hunger is relevant for the country.

<sup>129</sup> von Grebmer et al., 2014.

<sup>130</sup> Specifically, the HAI (one of three criteria required to graduate from LDC status) is a composite index comprising four equally weighted indicators: adult literacy rate, under-five mortality rate, secondary education gross enrolment ratio and the percentage of population that is malnourished. Source: Committee for Development Policy and United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs UN-CDP and UN-DESA (2008/ 2012).

<sup>131</sup> Lao Statistics Bureau 2012.

<sup>132</sup> Scaling Up Nutrition, 2014.

<sup>133</sup> The average annual reduction rate worldwide is 2.1 per cent (UNICEF, WHO and World Bank, 2012).

<sup>134</sup> Lao Statistics Bureau 2006

<sup>135</sup> Lao Statistics Bureau 2012

<sup>136</sup> Humphrey, 2009.

<sup>137</sup> Black et al., 2013.

<sup>138</sup> Lao Statistics Bureau 2012

<sup>139</sup> Barennes, et al., 2007.

<sup>140</sup> Lao Statistics Bureau 2006

<sup>141</sup> Ministry of Health, 2000.

<sup>142</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization and Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, 2013.

<sup>143</sup> Victora, et al., 2010.

<sup>144</sup> Ministry of Planning and Investment, Ministry of Health and UNICEF, 2006

<sup>145</sup> Lao Statistics Bureau, 2012.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>147</sup> WHO, 2014a.

<sup>148</sup> Lao Statistics Bureau, 2012.

<sup>149</sup> Barennes, H., et al., 2007

<sup>150</sup> Holmes, et al., 2007

<sup>151</sup> Barennes, et al., 2007

<sup>152</sup> Sayasone et al., 2004.

<sup>153</sup> Holmes, W., et al, 2007

<sup>154</sup> Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, 2013

<sup>155</sup> Pimhidzai, et al., 2014.

<sup>156</sup> The cost of 2100 calories per day per person defines the food poverty line, based on the consumption basket of a reference poor population (Pimhidzai, et al., 2014)

<sup>157</sup> Pimhidzai, et al., 2014.

<sup>158</sup> Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, 2012.

<sup>159</sup> World Bank, 2010a.

<sup>160</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization and Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, 2013.

<sup>161</sup> Black et al., 2013.

<sup>162</sup> Black et al., 2008

<sup>163</sup> Horton S. and Ross J., 2003.

<sup>164</sup> UNICEF and National Economic Research Institute (NERI), 2013

<sup>165</sup> World Bank, 2006.

<sup>166</sup> Government of Lao PDR, 2010.

<sup>167</sup> Scaling Up Nutrition: Lao PDR. Available from: <http://scalingupnutrition.org/sun-countries/lao-pdr>

<sup>168</sup> Scaling Up Nutrition 2012.

<sup>169</sup> Lao Statistics Bureau, 2012.

<sup>170</sup> Scaling Up Nutrition 2012.

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## 7. Ensure inclusive and quality education

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- <sup>171</sup> Ministry of Education and Sports, Education Management Information System (EMIS)
- <sup>172</sup> Survival rate: Percentage of a cohort of students enrolled in the first grade of a given level or cycle of education in a given school year who are expected to reach a given grade, regardless of repetition.
- <sup>173</sup> Ministry of Education and Sports: Education Management Information System (EMIS)
- <sup>174</sup> Information from Ministry of Education and Sports, 2013
- <sup>175</sup> Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, 2014.
- <sup>176</sup> Lao People's Democratic Republic, 2014. *Education for All 2015 National Review Report*
- <sup>177</sup> Ministry of Education and Sports: Education Management Information System (EMIS)
- <sup>178</sup> Ministry of Education and Sports: Education Management Information System (EMIS), September 2015
- <sup>179</sup> This indicator was adopted by Lao PDR as an MDG because of its importance and relevance for Lao PDR, not least because of its role in LDC graduation.
- <sup>180</sup> Ministry of Education and Sports, Education Management Information System (EMIS), September 2015
- <sup>181</sup> Gross graduation rates provided by UNICEF-Lao PDR, as EMIS data on these were not available at the time of this Report.
- <sup>182</sup> UNESCO definition: Number of graduates regardless of age in a given level or programme, expressed as a percentage of the population at the theoretical graduation age for that level or programme.
- <sup>183</sup> Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, 2014.
- <sup>184</sup> Government of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, 2014.
- <sup>185</sup> Primary adjusted net attendance ratio (ANAR): Percentage of children of primary school age attending primary or secondary school. Secondary ANAR: Percentage of children of secondary school age attending secondary school or higher (adjusted net attendance ratio)
- <sup>186</sup> Lao Statistics Bureau, 2012
- <sup>187</sup> Ministry of Education and Sports: provincial data updates provided for this Report.
- <sup>188</sup> Fearnley-Sander, 2015.
- <sup>189</sup> Ministry of Education and Sports, Research Institute for Education Sciences (RIES), 2010
- <sup>190</sup> World Bank, 2014a.
- <sup>191</sup> TVET is specified as a sub-sector of the education system in the revised 2007 Education Law.
- <sup>192</sup> TVET schools: 22 under MoES, 2 under Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, 4 under Ministry of Information

& Culture, 5 under Ministry of Public Health, 2 under Ministry of Justice and 2 private schools (EFA report 2015)

- <sup>193</sup> Government of the Lao PDR, 2014.
- <sup>194</sup> Government of the Lao PDR, 2014.
- <sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>196</sup> Benveniste et al., 2007.
- <sup>197</sup> Education Sector Development Plan 2013 Mid-Term Review Evaluation
- <sup>198</sup> Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2014
- <sup>199</sup> National review of primary school textbook availability, 2011
- <sup>200</sup> Government of the Lao PDR, 2014.
- <sup>201</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization-Institute for Statistics (UIS).
- <sup>202</sup> Government of the Lao PDR, 2014.
- <sup>203</sup> Mid Term Review, Education Sector Development Plan, 2011-15. Lao PDR. May 2013.
- <sup>204</sup> Mid Term Review, Education Sector Development Plan, Lao PDR. May 2013.
- <sup>205</sup> Benveniste, et al. 2007

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## 8. Achieve gender equality and empower women and girls

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- <sup>206</sup> Lao Statistics Bureau, 2012.
- <sup>207</sup> Both were tested literacy rate in surveys, rather than self-reported literacy.
- <sup>208</sup> 37 percent of women aged 20-49 were married before age 18, while 9.3 percent of women aged 15-49 were married before age 15 (Lao Statistics Bureau, 2012)
- <sup>209</sup> Lao Statistics Bureau, 2012.
- <sup>210</sup> All the employment indicators in this chapter, unless stated otherwise, are based on the 2010 Labour Force Survey (Lao Statistics Bureau, 2010).
- <sup>211</sup> The MDG indicator, *the share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sectors* is expressed as a percentage of female workers within the total wage employment in the non-agricultural sector. Wage employment refers only to wage earners and salaried employees, or persons in paid employment jobs. It does not include employers. (ILO definition for the MDGs). In Lao PDR this is 34 percent. However, this is not appreciably different from *the share of women in wage employment in all sectors*, which is calculated to be around 35 percent. Although this last is not an MDG, it is just as relevant to this analysis.
- <sup>212</sup> Elementary occupations involve the performance of simple and routine tasks which may require the use of hand-held tools and considerable physical effort. Most occupations in this major group require skills at the first ISCO skill level. Tasks performed by workers in elementary occupations usually include: cleaning, restocking supplies and performing basic maintenance in apartments, houses, kitchens, hotels, offices and other buildings; washing cars and windows, helping in kitchens, delivering messages or goods, carrying luggage and



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handling baggage and freight, collecting and sorting refuse, sweeping streets and similar places, performing various simple farming, fishing or trapping tasks; performing simple tasks connected with mining, construction and manufacturing, etc. (Extract from ILO: International Standard Classification of Occupations ISCO 08, 2012). Available from: [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms\\_172572.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_172572.pdf)

<sup>213</sup> ADB and World Bank, 2012

<sup>214</sup> Lao Statistics Bureau 2010.

<sup>215</sup> International Labour Organization, 2010.

<sup>216</sup> Government of the Lao PDR, 2009b

<sup>217</sup> ADB and World Bank, 2012

<sup>218</sup> ADB and World Bank, 2012

<sup>219</sup> Care International, 2012.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>221</sup> CEDAW Committee, 2009

<sup>222</sup> UNIAP and UNICEF. 2004.

<sup>223</sup> ADB and World Bank, 2012

<sup>224</sup> UNIAP, 2008.

<sup>225</sup> Ministry of Home Affairs and Central Party Bureau, July 2012, provided for the 2013 MDG Report

<sup>226</sup> Preliminary results from the 2014 National Study on Women's Health and Life Experience (provided by UN Women, Vientiane)

<sup>227</sup> The pilot project involved one secondary school in Vientiane Capital, 10 teachers and 60 students in the 13-15 year age bracket.

<sup>228</sup> CEDAW Committee, 2009.

<sup>229</sup> Domestic Violence Research in 5 provinces, Lao PDR Gender and Development Group (GDG) Vientiane Capital November 2011

<sup>230</sup> CEDAW Committee, 2009.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>232</sup> International Labour Organization, 2003.

<sup>233</sup> Vanphanom et al., 2014.

<sup>234</sup> CARE International and Lao Women's Union, 2002.

<sup>235</sup> Care International, 2012.

<sup>236</sup> United Nations Capital Development Fund, 2015.

## 9. Achieve maternal and child health

<sup>237</sup> United Nations Children's Fund et al., 2015

<sup>238</sup> Amongst others, these include early initiation and exclusive breastfeeding, immunization, Vitamin A, deworming, antibiotics for pneumonia, oral rehydration salts and zinc for diarrhoea. Neonatal interventions include immediate newborn care, antibiotics for preterm premature rupture of membranes and antenatal corticosteroids for preterm labour. Neonatal interventions are closely linked to maternal health interventions. Global evidence shows that high-impact child survival interventions can reduce two-thirds of child deaths

(Lancet Child Survival Series, 2003 and Lancet Neonatal Survival Series, 2005).

<sup>239</sup> Lao Statistics Bureau, 2012.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>241</sup> United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), 2011.

<sup>242</sup> Ministry of Health Medical Products Supply Centre, Vientiane and the 16 Provincial Food and Drug Departments, 2012.

<sup>243</sup> Lao Statistics Bureau, 2012.

<sup>244</sup> United Nations Children's Fund, 2014.

<sup>245</sup> Lao Statistics Bureau, 2012.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>247</sup> WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, World Bank, and the United Nations Population Division, 2014

<sup>248</sup> WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, The World Bank, and the United Nations Population Division, 2014.

<sup>249</sup> WHO recommends a minimum of four antenatal visits. Available from:

[http://www.who.int/gho/maternal\\_health/reproductive\\_health/antenatal\\_care\\_text/en/](http://www.who.int/gho/maternal_health/reproductive_health/antenatal_care_text/en/)

<sup>250</sup> The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends a standard model of four antenatal visits based on a review of the effectiveness of different models of antenatal care. WHO guidelines are specific on the content of antenatal care visits, which should include: a clinical examination; blood testing to detect syphilis and severe anaemia (and others such as Human Immunodeficiency Virus and malaria as necessary according to epidemiological context); estimations of gestational age and uterine height; taking blood pressure; recording maternal weight/height; performing a detection of symptomatic Sexually Transmitted Infections Urine test (multiple dipstick); requesting blood type and Rh; giving tetanus toxoid; providing iron/folic acid supplementation; and providing recommendations for emergencies/hotlines for emergencies. (Source: Indicators for monitoring the Millennium Development Goals. Millennium Development Goal Indicators Database. Available from: <http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mi/wiki/5-5-Antenatal-care-coverage-at-least-one-visit-and-at-least-four-visits.ashx>)

<sup>251</sup> Government of the Lao PDR and United Nations, 2013.

<sup>252</sup> Trained health professional means a doctor, nurse or midwife only, as determined by LSIS 2011/12. (Lao Statistics Bureau, 2012)

<sup>253</sup> Lao Statistics Bureau, 2012.

<sup>254</sup> Ministry of Planning and Investment, Ministry of Health, National University of Laos and Lao Women's Union, 2014.

<sup>255</sup> Lao Statistics Bureau, 2012.

<sup>256</sup> Burnet Institute, 2008.

<sup>257</sup> Vanphanom et al., 2014.

<sup>258</sup> Indochina Research Limited, 2014.

<sup>259</sup> Lao Statistics Bureau, 2012.

<sup>260</sup> Clark, S. and Niramonth Chanlivong, 2014.

<sup>261</sup> From the WHO Global Health Expenditure Database. Available from:

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<http://apps.who.int/nha/database/ViewData/Indicators/en>  
Accessed 10 November 2015

<sup>262</sup> Ministry of Health, 2013.

<sup>263</sup> Indochina Research Limited, 2014.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>265</sup> Indochina Research Limited, 2014.

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## 10. Accelerate HIV response

<sup>266</sup> National Committee for the Control of AIDS (NCCA), 2015. GARP Report

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>268</sup> This term is recommended by the UNAIDS Terminology Guidelines (October 2011) rather than “key affected populations”

<sup>269</sup> Preventive measures include peer and life skills education on sexual and reproductive health, condom provision and treatment for sexually transmitted infections.

<sup>270</sup> National Committee for the Control of AIDS (NCCA), 2015. GARP Report

<sup>271</sup> Lao Statistics Bureau, 2012.

<sup>272</sup> Lao Statistics Bureau, 2012.

<sup>273</sup> Lao Statistics Bureau, 2000 (MICS). Lao Statistics Bureau, 2012 (LSIS).

<sup>274</sup> Ministry of Health, 2008-2014. Integrated Behavioural Biological Surveillance

<sup>275</sup> National Committee for the Control of AIDS (NCCA), 2015. GARP Report

<sup>276</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>277</sup> Lao Statistics Bureau, 2012.

<sup>278</sup> The Centre for HIV/AIDS and STI (CHAS) is under the Department of Communicable Disease Control, Ministry of Health.

<sup>279</sup> Government of Lao People's Democratic Republic, 2010. Law on HIV/AIDS Control and Prevention.

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## 11. Combat malaria, tuberculosis and other diseases

<sup>280</sup> All malaria data are from the Ministry of Health's Center for Malariology, Parasitology and Entomology (CMPE)

<sup>281</sup> Comparisons of Bed Net Survey data with those from the LSIS or MICS surveys are not valid because the National Bed Net Survey used a sampling design stratified according to the malaria risk and disease burden. This was to avoid the weakness of most national surveys with regard to malaria-related data, since the sampling frame for most national surveys does not consider the malaria burden.

<sup>282</sup> The survey covered five provinces across the country: Luangnamtha, Savannakhet, Saravan, Sekong and

Attapeu) and 11 districts in total. (Ministry of Health CMPE, 2012).

<sup>283</sup> Source: CPME

<sup>284</sup> National TB Programme, 2011. National TB prevalence survey 2010-2011.

<sup>285</sup> World Health Organization (WHO), 2012b.

<sup>286</sup> World Health Organization (WHO), 2014c.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>288</sup> World Health Organization (WHO), 2015.

<sup>289</sup> World Health Organization (WHO), 2014c.

<sup>290</sup> Population data provided by the Lao Statistics Bureau (LSB) in 2015 for 2013, other years are LSB data provided for the 2013 MDG report.

<sup>291</sup> Ministry of Public Works and Transportation cited by the ASEAN-Japan Transport Partnership. Available from: <http://www.ajtpweb.org/statistics/Laos/LaoPDR2015/road-transport-of-lao-pdr>

<sup>292</sup> World Health Organization (WHO), 2014b.

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>294</sup> National TB Centre (NTC), 2013.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>296</sup> Ministry of Health and World Health Organization, 2011.

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.*

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## 12. Protect environmental resources and promote resilience

<sup>298</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2013.

<sup>299</sup> Inputs from the UNEP Regional Office for Asia Pacific

<sup>300</sup> “The current forest area which has more than 20 percent of canopy density, according to national definition, is 9.5 million hectares, about 40 percent of total land area compared to 47 percent in 1992. However, all forest covered areas that have more than 10 percent canopy density, based on the criteria of Global Forest Resources Assessment, remain at 68 per cent, of which forest, including evergreen, mixed deciduous, dry dipterocarp and plantation forests, accounted for 41.5 percent.” (MoNRE, 2012. Environmental Outlook).

<sup>301</sup> Estimate from the Government for the 2013 MDG report

<sup>302</sup> Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI), 2015.

<sup>303</sup> World Bank, Lao PDR Environment. Available from: <http://go.worldbank.org/5Q6L6W8010>

<sup>304</sup> Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MoNRE), 2012b.

<sup>305</sup> OECD, 2013

<sup>306</sup> Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MoNRE), 2012a.

<sup>307</sup> International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), 2011.

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<sup>308</sup> Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, 2012b.

<sup>309</sup> Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI), 2015

<sup>310</sup> The Prime Ministerial Decree on Protection Forests, 2010

<sup>311</sup> The Forest Resource Development Fund is funded by the Government's annual budget with added contributions from timber revenues from harvesting of Production Forests; the fees obtained for forest, forest land and forest resources; a share of the sale of illegal timber seized by the Department of Forest Inspection; and contributions from businesses and organizations engaged in forestry, forest products and wildlife.

<sup>312</sup> UN-REDD: The United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries. Whilst the final phase of REDD involves developed countries paying developing countries carbon offsets for their standing forests, REDD+ strategies go beyond deforestation and forest degradation, and include the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in reducing emissions.

<sup>313</sup> Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MoNRE), 2012a. ‘

<sup>314</sup> Government of Lao PDR, 2000, and 2013

<sup>315</sup> Government of the Lao PDR 2009a.

<sup>316</sup> World Bank, UNISDR et al., 2013.

<sup>317</sup> Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED), Emergency Events Database EM-DAT. <http://www.emdat.be/>

<sup>318</sup> UNEP Ozone Secretariat

<sup>319</sup> Decision XIX/6, List of Parties categorized as operating under Article 5 paragraph 1 of the Montreal Protocol (considered as developing countries).

<sup>320</sup> FAO Aquastat online database.

<sup>321</sup> Phonvisay Singkham, 2013.

<sup>322</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>323</sup> Mekong River Commission, <http://www.mrcmekong.org/topics/fisheries/>

<sup>324</sup> A review of laws, decrees and policies on environmental protection is outside the scope of this report. Relevant laws, decrees and policies include (but may not be limited to) the following: Forestry Law (1996 and revised 2007), Land Law (1997 and revised in 2007), Environment Protection Law (1999 and revised in 2013), Prime Ministerial Decree on Forest Resource Development Fund (2005), Prime Ministerial Decree on the Sustainable Management of Production Forests (2002), Prime Ministerial Decree on Protection Forests (2010), Prime Ministerial Decree on Protected Areas (2013), Presidential Decree on Benefit Sharing of Timber harvested from Production Forests (2012), Wildlife and Aquatic Law (2007), Ministerial Regulation on Village Forest Management (2001), Prime Minister's order No. 17/PM 2008 on strengthening the governance, protection of forests and collaboration in governing forests and timber business, Prime Ministerial Decree on Environmental Impact Assessment (2010), Forestry Strategy to the Year (2020), National Biodiversity Strategy

and Action Plan (2011-2020), Climate change strategy (2009).

<sup>325</sup> For example, Center for Excellence in Disaster Management & Humanitarian Assistance (CFE-DM), 2015 provides an overview.

<sup>326</sup> World Bank, UNISDR et al., 2013.

<sup>327</sup> Climate finance refers to local, national or transnational financing, which may be drawn from public, private and alternative sources of financing. Climate finance is critical to addressing climate change because large-scale investments are required to significantly reduce emissions, notably in sectors that emit large quantities of greenhouse gases. Climate finance is equally important for adaptation, for which significant financial resources will be similarly required to allow countries to adapt to the adverse effects and reduce the impacts of climate change. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Available from: [http://unfccc.int/focus/climate\\_finance/items/7001.php](http://unfccc.int/focus/climate_finance/items/7001.php)

<sup>328</sup> UN-REDD: The United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries. Whilst the final phase of REDD involves developed countries paying developing countries carbon offsets for their standing forests, REDD+ strategies go beyond deforestation and forest degradation, and include the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in reducing emissions.

<sup>329</sup> Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MoNRE), 2012a.

<sup>330</sup> See United Nations Office for Disaster risk Reduction (UNISDR), 2015. The Sendai Framework is the successor instrument to the Hyogo Framework

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### 13. Ensure sustainable water and sanitation

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<sup>331</sup> Lao Statistics Bureau, 2012 (LSIS2011/12) and UNICEF/WHO Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP, update June 2015). Note that LECS 5 (2012/13) is not strictly comparable since it calculates the percentage of households rather than percentage of population. (Pimhidzai et al., 2014)

<sup>332</sup> UNICEF/WHO Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP, update June 2015).

<sup>333</sup> The proportion of the population using an improved sanitation facility, total, urban, rural, is the percentage of the population with access to facilities that hygienically separate human excreta from human contact. Improved facilities include flush/pour flush toilets or latrines connected to a sewer, -septic tank, or -pit, ventilated improved pit latrines, pit latrines with a slab or platform of any material which covers the pit entirely, except for the drop hole and composting toilets/latrines. **Unimproved facilities include public or shared facilities of an otherwise acceptable type**, flush/pour-flush toilets or latrines which discharge directly into an open sewer or ditch, pit latrines without a slab, bucket latrines, hanging toilets or latrines which directly discharge in water bodies or in the open and the practice of open defecation in the bush, field or bodies or water. Available from:

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<http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Metadata.aspx?IndicatorId=31>

<sup>334</sup> UNICEF/WHO Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP, update June 2015).

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>336</sup> LSIS, 2011/12

<sup>337</sup> The WHO/UNICEF standards do not recognize bottled water as an improved source for the family, since bottled water does not indicate the entire household environment; nor does it necessarily indicate sustainable access. Consequently, households using bottled water for drinking are classified into improved or unimproved drinking water users according to the water source used for other purposes, such as cooking and hand washing.

<sup>338</sup> UNICEF/WHO Joint Monitoring Programme

<sup>339</sup> Lao Statistics Bureau, 2012

<sup>340</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>341</sup> World Bank, 2014b.

<sup>342</sup> Lao Statistics Bureau, 2012

<sup>343</sup> UNICEF, 2013.

<sup>344</sup> McLaughlin, R., 2010

<sup>345</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>346</sup> Phonvisai, 2006.

<sup>347</sup> Water Environment Partnership in Asia (WEPA).

<sup>348</sup> Chanpiwat, et al., 2010

<sup>349</sup> World Health Organization (WHO) 2012a.

<sup>350</sup> Phonvisai, 2006

<sup>351</sup> World Bank, 2010b.

<sup>352</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>353</sup> World Bank, 2015b.

<sup>354</sup> World Bank, 2013a and Hutton, et al., 2009.

<sup>355</sup> World Bank, 2015b.

<sup>356</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>357</sup> United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 2014.

<sup>358</sup> Hayes, 2015

<sup>359</sup> World Bank, 2005.

<sup>360</sup> Hoorweg and Bhada-Tata, 2012

<sup>361</sup> United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), 2015

<sup>362</sup> World Bank, 2015b

<sup>363</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*

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## 14. Protect vulnerable children

<sup>365</sup> Source: Information obtained by UNICEF from the People's Supreme Court.

<sup>366</sup> Source: Information obtained by UNICEF from the Ministry of Justice

<sup>367</sup> Ministry of Justice, 2013

<sup>368</sup> Lao Statistics Bureau, 2012

<sup>369</sup> Ministry of Health, (IBBS), 2008-2014.

<sup>370</sup> United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 2011

<sup>371</sup> Reply of Lao People's Democratic Republic to the list of issues [in relation to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography], Lao PDR, 2015, (CRC/C/OPSC/LAO/Q/1), para. 3.

<sup>372</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and United Nations Children's Fund, 2004

<sup>373</sup> Lao Statistics Bureau 2010

<sup>374</sup> The 2010 Labour Force and Child Labour survey applied the term "child labour" to the following: a) all children of aged 5-17 years who are working for more than 48 hours in a week, whatever the sector or type of work; b) all children aged 5-17 years working in the mining and construction industries; c) all children aged 5-17 years working in specified hazardous occupations and d) children aged 5-13 years who are working for any number of hours.

Other working children are not considered "child labour." They are called "working children other than child labour." Child labour is thus one component of working children.

<sup>375</sup> Lao Statistics Bureau 2010

<sup>376</sup> Lao Statistics Bureau 2010

<sup>377</sup> For the survey, hazardous child labour was defined as children engaged in hazardous industries or hazardous occupations, or children who work for more than 48 hours per week. Lao PDR's Labour Law 2006 does not allow children between 14 and 18 years to work under hazardous working conditions or for longer than 48 hours per week. The Labour Law provides a detailed specification of hazardous working conditions (activities harmful to children's physical and psychological health, which include, for example, all types of mining work and direct exposure to dangerous chemicals, such as explosives or to constantly vibrating equipment.

<sup>378</sup> Lao Statistics Bureau 2010.

<sup>379</sup> Lao Statistics Bureau 2012

<sup>380</sup> UNICEF uses the term disability in line with the definition provided by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD): "Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others", Article 1, CRPD.

<sup>381</sup> Lao Statistics Bureau 2006

<sup>382</sup> Ministry of Education and Sports 2011

<sup>383</sup> Lao Statistics Bureau 2012

<sup>384</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and United Nations Children's Fund, 2004

<sup>385</sup> Lao PDR acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) without reservations on 8 May 1991 and its two Optional Protocols: the First Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (accession 20 September 2006), the Second Optional



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Protocol to the CRC on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (accession 20 September 2006). Lao PDR has also ratified a number of international instruments relating to child protection, including the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (ratified on 14 August 1981), ILO Convention 138 concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment (ratified 13 June 2005), ILO Convention 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (ratified 13 June 2005). (Table 1.1 and 1.2).

Additionally, Lao is member to the Optional Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (accession 26 September 2003), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ratified 13 February 2007), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ratified 25 September 2009), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (ratified 25 September 2009) and the Convention on Cluster Munitions (ratified 18 March 2009). In terms of regional instruments, Lao PDR has adopted the 2012 ASEAN Declaration on Human Rights, the 2001 Declaration on Commitments for Children in ASEAN, and has two representatives on the ASEAN Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children.

<sup>386</sup> The amended Labour Law was endorsed by the National Assembly in 2013. See National Assembly, 2013

<sup>387</sup> Lao National Assembly, 2013: Labor Law (Amended), No. 43/NA. Vientiane Capital, 24 December 2013. Available from: [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/MONOGRAPH/96369/113864/F1488869173/LAO96369\\_percent20Eng.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/MONOGRAPH/96369/113864/F1488869173/LAO96369_percent20Eng.pdf)

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## 15. Reduce UXO impact

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<sup>388</sup> National Regulatory Authority (NRA) 2010, and updates from the NRA for the 2013 MDG Report.

<sup>389</sup> Source: National Regulatory Authority on UXO, 25 August 2014.

<sup>390</sup> Lao PDR's report to the CCM, January to December 2013. <http://www.clusterconvention.org/files/2011/01/Lao-PDR.pdf>

<sup>391</sup> Notification No. 093/NRA, dated 19/11/2012 on UXO Clearance for socio-economic development projects in Lao PDR. See National Regulatory Authority, 2013.

<sup>392</sup> Lao PDR's report to the CCM, January to December 2013.

<sup>393</sup> Sekkenes and Palmer, 2012.

<sup>394</sup> Massleberg, A., 2014.

<sup>395</sup> Massleberg, A., 2014.

<sup>396</sup> National Regulatory Authority, 2013.

<sup>397</sup> Sekkenes and Palmer, 2012.

<sup>398</sup> Vientiane Times. Tourist arrivals in 2014 exceed 4.1 million, February 12, 2015. Available from: [http://www.vientianetimes.com/Headlines\\_Jan-Mar\\_2015.html](http://www.vientianetimes.com/Headlines_Jan-Mar_2015.html)

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## 16. Expand partnerships for development

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<sup>399</sup> Ministry of Planning and Investment, 2015. NSEDP

# **Lao PDR Country Analysis**

## **Annex 1: MDG Review**

## MDG Goals and Targets

<b>Goal 1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger</b>						<b>2015 Target</b>
<b>Target 1A: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day</b>						
	<b>1992</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>2002/03</b>	<b>2007/08</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	
1.1. Proportion of population below national poverty line	46.0%	39.1%	33.5%	27.6%	23.2%	<b>24%</b>
	<b>1992</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>2002/03</b>	<b>2007/08</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	
1.2. Poverty gap ratio (% of poverty line)	11.2%	10.3%	8.0%	6.5%	5.5%	<b>6%</b>
	<b>1992/93</b>	<b>1997/98</b>	<b>2002/03</b>	<b>2007/08</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	
1.3. Share of poorest quintile in national consumption	8.8%	7.7%	8.5%	7.9%	7.2%	
<b>Target 1B: Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people</b>						<b>2015 Target</b>
				<b>1995-2005</b>	<b>2005-2010</b>	
1.4. Average annual growth rate of GDP per person employed				3.8%	5.9%	
		<b>1995</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2010</b>		
1.5. Employment-to-population ratio		84.9%	80.4%	77.7%		
				<b>2010</b>		
1.6. Proportion of employed people in two poorest quintiles[a]				37%		
				<b>2005</b>	<b>2010</b>	
1.7. Proportion of own-account and contributing family workers in total employment		91%		84%		
<b>Target 1C: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger</b>						<b>2015 target</b>
	<b>1993</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2011/12</b>	
1.8. Prevalence of underweight children under-five years of age						
Calculated with NCHS reference data:	44%	40%	40%	37%	32%	<b>22%</b>
Calculated with WHO 2006 reference data:				31%	27%	
	<b>1993</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2011/12</b>	
1.9. Prevalence of stunting in children under-five years of age						
Calculated with NCHS Standards:	48%	47%	41%	40%	38%	<b>34%[b]</b>
Calculated with WHO Standards:				48%	44%	
	<b>1990-92</b>	<b>2000-02</b>	<b>2005-07</b>	<b>2010-12</b>	<b>2013-15</b>	<b>2014-16</b>
1.10. Percentage of undernourished population	42.8%	37.9%	26.9%	21.4%	18.9%	
		<b>1997/98</b>	<b>2002/03</b>	<b>2007/08</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	
1.11. Proportion of population below food poverty line[c]		32.5%	19.8%	24.6%	20.1%	
<b>Goal 2. Achieve universal primary education</b>						
<b>Target 2A: Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling</b>						<b>2015 Target</b>
	<b>1992</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2014</b>
2.1. Net enrolment ratio, primary education	58.8%	65.2%	77.3%	84.0%	95.2%	98.7%
	<b>1992</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2013</b>
	20.6%	29.6%	44.1%	45.7%	45.8%	50.5%

Notes and data sources are at the end.

2.2. Gross enrolment ratio, secondary education <sup>[d]</sup>								<b>2014</b>	
	<b>1992</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2012</b>				
Lower secondary education	28.9%	39.3%	53.3%	62.7%	64.7%	74.4%			75%
Upper secondary education	11.0%	17.4%	34.6%	36.8%	34.7%	41.3%			43%
	<b>1992</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2014</b>			
2.3. Proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach last grade of primary	47.7%	52.3%	62.0%	68.4%	70.0%	77.5%			95%
		<b>1995</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2011/12</b>			
2.4. Literacy rate of 15-24 year-olds, women and men		71.1%	80.6%	78.5%	83.9%	73.1%			99%
<b>Goal 3. Promote gender equality and empower women</b>									
<b>Target 3A: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015</b>									<b>2015 Target</b>
	<b>1990</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>		
3.1. Ratios of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education <sup>[e]</sup>									
Primary	0.79	0.81	0.85	0.88	0.91		0.96		1.00
	<b>1998</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>		
Lower Secondary	0.70	0.72	0.79	0.84	0.89		0.94		
Upper Secondary	0.67	0.67	0.71	0.78	0.83	0.86			
Tertiary	0.42	0.52	0.7	0.71	0.77	0.88			
		<b>1995</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2010</b>				
3.2. Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector <sup>[f]</sup>		38%	44%		34%				
	<b>1990</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>		
3.3. Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament	6.3%	9.4%	21.2%	22.9%	25.0%				
<b>Goal 4. Reduce child mortality</b>									
<b>Target 4A: Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate</b>									<b>2015 Target [g]</b>
	<b>1993</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2011</b>				
4.1. Under-five mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	170	150	131	106	79				70
	<b>1993</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2011</b>				
4.2. Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	114	118	104	87	68				45
				<b>2006</b>	<b>2012</b>				
4.3 (a) Proportion of 1 year-old children immunised against measles (%) (survey data)					33%	55%			90%
	<b>1997</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>		
4.3 (b) Proportion of 1 year-old children immunised against measles (%) (administrative data)	67%	71%	43%	52%	54.7%	58.5	64.3		90%
<b>Goal 5. Improve Maternal Health</b>									
<b>Target 5A: Reduce by three-quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio</b>									<b>2015 Target</b>
	<b>1995</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2013</b>			
5.1. Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births)	796	530	433	405	357	220*			<b>260</b>
	<b>1994</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>		
5.2. Proportion of births attended by trained health personnel	14%	17%	23%	42%	36%*	39%*	48%*		<b>50%</b>



**Target 5B: Achieve, by 2015, universal access to reproductive health**

	1990	1994	2000	2005	2011			
5.3. Contraceptive prevalence rate,								
(a) any method	13%	20%	32%	38%	50%	55%		
(b) modern methods			29%	35%	42%			
		1992	1997	2005	2011			
5.4. Adolescent birth rate (per 1000)		115	102	110	94			
	2000	2005	2006	2011	2012	2013	2014	
5.5. Antenatal care coverage [i]								
• (a) at least one visit by trained health personnel (ANC1)	21%	29%	35%	54%	64% [h]	68% [h]	69% [h]	60%
• (b) at least four visits by trained health personnel (ANC4)				NA				
			2000	2005	2011			
5.6. Unmet need for family planning			40%	27%	20%			

**Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases**

**Target 6A: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS\***

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015 Target*	
b) HIV prevalence in general population aged 15-49 years	0.27%	0.28%	0.28%	0.29%	0.29%	<1%	
	2000	2005	2009	2010	2012	2014	
c) HIV prevalence in female sex workers (FSWs) aged 15-49 years	0.03%	1.83%		1.4%	1.20%	1.4%	<5%
d) HIV prevalence in men having sex with men (MSM) aged 15-49 years	0.38%	1.26%		2.1%	2.44%		<5%
	2000	2005		2010	2012	2014	
6.2 Condom use at last high-risk sex: Percentage of female sex workers aged 15-49 years reporting the use of a condom with their most recent client	91.4%	78%		95%	92.5%	92.7%	95%
				2012			
6.3 Proportion of population aged 15-24 years with comprehensive correct knowledge of HIV/AIDS							
Young women aged 15-24				24%			
Young men aged 15-24				28%			
Women aged 15-49				23%			
Men aged 15-49				30%			

**Target 6B: Achieve, by 2010, universal access to treatment for HIV/AIDS for all those who need it**

	2005	2010	2012	2013	2014	
6.4 Percentage of adults and children with advanced HIV infection receiving ARV	40.8%	50.8%	55.4%	58.2%	60.6%	>90%

**Target 6C: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases**

	1995	2000	2003	2005	2010	2011	2013	2014	2015 Target
6.5 Incidence and death rates associated with malaria									
Malaria incidence (per 1,000) [j]	11.3	7.69	3.34	2.42	3.54	2.66	5.84	7.12	0.6
Death rate associated with malaria (per 100,000)	13.5	7.16	3.31	1.37		0.3	0.4	0.06	0.2
					0.37				
		2000	2006	2011	2012				
6.6 Proportion of children under 5 sleeping under:									90%
Insecticide-treated bed nets		18%	41%	81.2%	NA				
Any bed net		82%	87%	97.9%	83%				
	2009	2010	2011						

6.7 Proportion of children under age 5 testing positive for malaria who are treated with appropriate anti-malarial drugs	98%	95%	93%						
	<b>1990</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2011</b>		<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	
6.8 Incidence, prevalence and death rates associated with tuberculosis (per 100,000) [k]									
Tuberculosis incidence	492	403	330	270	213		197		<b>240</b>
Tuberculosis prevalence	1500	1200	900	700	540		488	462	<b>750</b>
Mortality due to tuberculosis (rate/100,000)	41	29	21	16	11		62	-	<b>22.5</b>
	<b>1990</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	
6.9 a Proportion of tuberculosis cases detected under directly observed treatment (DOTS) short course	8.7%	4.2%	13%	24%	29%	31%	30%	31%	<b>70%</b>
	<b>1994</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	
6.9 b Proportion of tuberculosis cases cured under directly observed treatment (DOTS) short course	48%	77%	90%	92%	91%	90% +	90% +	90% +	<b>85%</b>
<b>MDG 7. Ensure environmental sustainability</b>									<b>2015 Target</b>
<b>Target 7A: Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources</b>									
		<b>1982</b>	<b>1992</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2010</b>				
7.1. Proportion of land area covered by forest		49.10%	47.20%	41.50%	40.34%				<b>65%</b>
	<b>1990</b>						<b>2000</b>		
7.2 a Net CO2 emissions in gigagram (Gg)							+41,764 Gg		
7.2 b CO2 emissions (Gg)							+43,811 Gg		
7.2 c CO2 emissions removal /sink (Gg)							-2,047 Gg		
	<b>1995</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2010</b>				
7.3 Consumption of ozone-depleting substances (in Ozone-depleting potential-weighted metric tons)	43.3	23.1	23.3	19.4	2.5				<b>0</b>
<b>Target 7B: Reduce biodiversity loss, achieving, by 2010, a significant reduction in the rate of loss</b>									
							<b>2011</b>		
7.4. Number of fish conservation zones							197		
							<b>2011</b>		
7.5 Proportion of renewable internal freshwater resources used							1.3%		
							<b>2011</b>		
7.6 Proportion of land area under protection:									
a) Conservation forests (national, provincial, district), of which:							20.18%		
b) Protected Areas							14.2%		
<b>Target 7C: Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation</b>									<b>2015 target</b>
	<b>1990</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2015</b>			
7.8 Proportion of population using an improved drinking water source	28%	39%	45%	57%	70%	76%			<b>80%</b>
	<b>1995</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2015</b>				
7.9 Proportion of population using an improved sanitation facility	17%	26%	45%	57%	71%				<b>60%</b>
<b>Target 7D: By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers</b>									
							<b>2011</b>		
7.10 <sup>[1]</sup> Proportion of urban population living in inadequate housing							20%		-

**Goal 9: Reduce the Impact of UXO in Lao PDR in accordance with the National Strategic Plan for the UXO sector “The Safe Path Forward II”**

<b>Target 9A: Ensure the complete clearance of UXO from priority / high value agricultural land by 2020</b>								<b>2015 Target</b>	
	<b>1999</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	
9.1. Number of hectares released from UXO contamination (hectares per year)	581	1,576.	2,557.	7,834	6,034	6,040	6,927		<b>20,000</b>
<b>Target 9B: Reduce substantially the number of casualties as a result of UXO incidents</b>									
	<b>1999</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>		<b>2014</b>	
9.2. Number of casualties reported as result of UXO incidents (casualties per year)	257	258	302	119	99	56		45	<b>&lt;75</b>
<b>Target 9C: Ensure that the medical and rehabilitation needs of all UXO survivors are met in line with treaty obligations under the Convention on Cluster Munitions</b>						<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	
9.3. Provision of proper assistance to UXO survivors [m]:									
- Percentage of UXO survivors having received immediate medical treatment						NA			<b>100%</b>

## Notes and Data Sources

<p><b>MDG 1A: Poverty reduction</b></p>
<p><b>Data Sources</b> Indicators 1.1 to 1.3: Lao Expenditure &amp; Consumption Surveys, 1992/93, 1997/98, 2002/03, 2007/08, 2012/13 (LECS 1-5), Lao Statistics Bureau (LSB), Ministry of Planning &amp; Investment (MPI)</p>
<p><b>MDG 1B: Employment</b></p>
<p><b>Notes:</b> [a] Indicator 1.6 is a proxy for the international MDG indicator “Proportion of employed people living below \$1 (PPP) per day” as consumption data for this indicator is not available at the time of this report.</p> <p><b>Data Sources:</b> Indicator 1.4: 1995 and 2005 Population and Housing Censuses, LSB; Labour Force Survey (LFS 2010), LSB; and LSB estimates of GDP Indicator 1.5: LFS 2010, LSB; Censuses 1995 and 2005, LSB; and LSB estimates of population Indicator 1.6: LFS 2010, LSB Indicator 1.7: 2005 Census and LFS 2010, LSB</p>
<p><b>MDG 1C: Food security &amp; Nutrition</b></p>
<p><b>Notes:</b> [b] National target set by the Government [c] Not an international MDG indicator</p> <p><b>Data Sources:</b> Indicators 1.8 and 1.9: Lao Social Indicators Surveys (LSIS 1993, 2011/12), and Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS 1994, 2000, 2006), Lao Statistics Bureau (LSB), Ministry of Planning &amp; Investment (MPI) Indicator 1.10: Lao Expenditure &amp; Consumption Surveys, 1997/98, 2002/03, 2007/08, 2012/13 (LECS 1-5), LSB, MPI Indicator 1.11: FAO, IFAD and WFP. 2015. The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2015. Meeting the 2015 international hunger targets: taking stock of uneven progress. Rome, FAO.</p>
<p><b>MDG 2: Education</b></p>
<p><b>Notes:</b> [d] Indicator 2 was adopted by the Ministry of Education and UN partners at the MDG Workshop on 17 December 2012, Vientiane, in view of the importance of secondary education to the goal of graduating from LDC status by 2020.</p> <p><b>Data sources:</b> Indicators 2.1 and 2.2: Ministry of Education and Sports, Education Management Information System (MoES-EMIS) and UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UNESCO-UIS). 2013 and 2014 data from National EFA 2015 Review Report: Country Report of Lao PDR, August 2014 Indicator 2.3: MoES-EMIS. 2014 data from National EFA 2015 Review Report: Country Report of Lao PDR, August 2014 Indicator 2.4: Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS 2000), Lao Statistics Bureau (LSB), Ministry of Planning &amp; Investment (MPI); Population and Housing Censuses, 1995 &amp; 2005, LSB; and Lao Social Indicators Survey (LSIS 2011/12), LSB. Lao National Literacy Survey (LNLS 2001), MoES.</p>
<p><b>MDG 3: Gender</b></p>
<p><b>Notes:</b> [e] Indicator 3.1: Gross enrolment data for tertiary level was unavailable, so MoES calculated the tertiary gender parity index by dividing the number of female students by male students. [f] Indicator 3.2: Data from the Economic Census (2006) was dropped as this Census related only to the formal sector.</p> <p><b>Data sources:</b> Indicator 3.1: Ministry of Education &amp; Sports, Education Management Information System (MoES-EMIS) and UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UNESCO-UIS), and Education for All 2015 National Review Report: Lao People’s Democratic Republic (2014) (for 2014 data) Indicator 3.2: Labour Force Survey (LFS 2010), Lao Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Planning &amp; Investment and Population and Housing Censuses, 1995 &amp; 2005, Lao Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Planning &amp; Investment. Indicator 3.3: Inter-Parliamentary Union, based on reports from the National Assembly of Lao PDR</p>
<p><b>MDG 4: Child health</b></p>
<p><b>Notes:</b> [g] 2015 Targets are cited from the Joint MDG Progress Report 2008 by Lao Government and the United Nations.</p>

**Data sources:**

Indicators 4.1 and 4.2. Lao Social Indicators Survey (LSIS 2011/12), Lao Statistics Bureau (LSB), Ministry of Planning & Investment.  
 Indicator 4.3 a: LSIS 2011/12 and Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS 2006), LSB.  
 Indicator 4.3 b: Ministry of Health (MoH), HMIS reports

**MDG 5: Maternal Health****Notes:**

[h] From administrative data, which is not comparable with survey data.

[i] Indicator 5.5. The definition of "Trained health personnel" does not include traditional birth attendants. The Ministry of Health and the UN adapted these process indicators to the Lao PDR context (to distinguish between "trained" and "skilled" health workers) at the MDG Report Workshop in Vientiane, 17 December 2012.

**Data sources:**

Indicator 5.1. Population and Housing Census, 1995 & 2005, Lao Statistics Bureau (LSB), Ministry of Planning & Investment (MPI); Lao Reproductive Health Survey (LRHS 2000), LSB; Lao Health Survey (LHS 2003), LSB; Lao Social Indicators Survey (LSIS 2011/12), LSB (for the seven years preceding the survey).  
 Indicator 5.2. Lao Fertility and Birth Spacing Survey (LFBSS 1994), LSB; LRHS 2000 & 2005, LSB; LSIS 2011/12, LSB for the two-year period preceding the survey; Ministry of Health/ DHIS2 Core Indicators 2014 (for the years 2012, 2013, 2014)  
 Indicator 5.3. Round Table Implementation Meeting (RTIM 2012) for 1990; LFBSS 1994, LSB; LRHS 2000 & 2005, LSB; LSIS 2011/12, LSB  
 Indicator 5.4. UN Statistical Division for earlier years; LSIS 2011/12, LSB;  
 Indicator 5.5. LRHS 2000 & 2005, LSB; Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS 2006), LSB; LSIS 2011/12, LSB; (survey data)  
 \*Ministry of Health / DHIS2 Core Indicators 2014 (for the years 2012, 2013, 2014) (administrative data)  
 Indicator 5.6. LRHS 2000 & 2005, LSB; LSIS 2011/12, LSB.

**MDG 6: Combat HIV/AIDS****Data sources:**

Indicator 6.1 a) WHO/UNAIDS: EPP (estimation and projection package)  
 Indicators 6.1 b) and c) Lao PDR Integrated Behavioural Biological Surveillance (IBBS, 2014)  
 Indicator 6.2. Lao PDR Integrated Behavioural Biological Surveillance (IBBS 2014), Ministry of Health, 6 programme provinces.  
 Indicator 6.3. Lao Social Indicators Survey (LSIS 2011/12), Lao Statistics Bureau (LSB), Ministry of Planning & Investment  
 Indicator 6.4. Programme Report & projection of country data, UNAIDS. 2014 data from Lao PDR Country Progress Report, Global AIDS Response Progress, 2015

**MDG 6: Combat Malaria and TB****Notes**

[j] Malaria data has been revised following data updates by the Center of Malaria Parasitology and Entomology (CMPE). These figures may vary from those in the 2013 MDG Progress Report.

[k] The case detection rate (for TB all forms) has been revised following the national TB survey (2010), which measured higher prevalence and incidence than estimated previously. (Additionally, the MDG indicator was the case detection rate of smear microscopy positive pulmonary TB only, whereas WHO GTB is now reporting the case detection rate for all forms of TB).

NA: Non-applicable

**Sources:**

Indicator 6.5. Malaria Information System (MIS), Centre for Malaria Parasitology and Entomology, Ministry of Health (CMPE-MoH)  
 Indicator 6.6. National Bed Net Survey, December 2010, CMPE-MoH. Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS 2000 & 2006), LSB. Second Malaria Community Survey of Ethnic Minority Groups in Selected Areas in Lao PDR, CMPE-MoH, 2012 (Luangnamtha, Savannakhet, Saravan, Sekong and Attapeu, and covering 11 districts).  
 Indicator 6.7. Malaria Information System (MIS), CMPE-MoH  
 Indicator 6.8. TB mortality, prevalence and incidence:: WHO Global TB report 2013 and country profile 2014  
 Indicator 6.9 a and b: National Tuberculosis Control, Ministry of Health, Lao PDR.

**MDG 7: Environmental sustainability****Notes:**

Indicator 7.4 replaces "*Proportion of fish stocks within safe biological limits*" to adapt to the Lao PDR context as agreed by Government and UN representatives at the MDG Report workshop, 17 December 2012.

Indicator 7.5: Data on total (external + internal) water resources is not available; the calculation includes only internal water resources.

Indicator 7.6 replaces "*Proportion of terrestrial and marine areas protected*" as agreed by participants at the MDG Report workshop, 17 December 2012, to adapt to the Lao PDR context.

Indicator 7.7 "*Number of species threatened with extinction*" not available.

**Data sources:**

Indicator 7.1. Department of Forest Resource Management, Ministry of Environment & Natural Resources (MoNRE)

Indicator 7.2. Lao PDR First Communication Report & Second Communication Report to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

Indicator 7.3. UNEP Ozone Secretariat, based on country reports

Indicator 7.4. Department of Livestock and Fishery, Ministry of Agriculture and Forests (MoAF)

Indicator 7.5. FAO AQUASTAT, based on 2005 withdrawal data. [http://www.fao.org/nr/water/aquastat/countries\\_regions/LAO/CP\\_LAO.pdf](http://www.fao.org/nr/water/aquastat/countries_regions/LAO/CP_LAO.pdf)

Indicator 7.6. Department of Forest Resource Management, MoNRE

**MDG 7: Water and Sanitation****Notes:**

[i] Indicator 7.10 replaces the global indicator "*Proportion of people living in slums*" and is measured by the proportion of urban population living in households lacking one or more of the following: an improved drinking water source; improved sanitation facilities; a roof and proper flooring.

**Data sources:**

Indicator 7.8. 2011 data from Lao Social Indicator Survey (LSIS 2011/12), LSB. 2015 data and earlier years' data from estimations by Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) of UNICEF and WHO, based on country reports

Indicator 7.9. 2011 data from LSIS 2011/12, LSB. Earlier years' data from estimations by JMP (UNICEF. & WHO) based on country reports

Indicator 7.10. LSIS 2011/12, recalculated by LSB.

**MDG 9: Reduce UXO impact****Notes:**

On 20 October 2010, the Vientiane High Level Round Table Meeting adopted the goal of reducing the impact of UXO on communities in Lao PDR. This became the ninth Millennium Development Goal, specific to Lao PDR.

[m] Indicator 9.3. requires other indicators, which are still being developed.

**Data sources:**

Indicators 9.1 to 9.3. National Regulatory Authority for UXO/Mine Action sector in Lao PDR (NRA )

# Lao PDR Country Analysis

## Annex 2



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## **Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere**

### **SDG 1: Targets set by the UN**

- |     |   |
|-----|---|
| 1.1 | By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day   |
| 1.2 | By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions  |
| 1.3 | Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable  |
| 1.4 | By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance |
| 1.5 | By 2030, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters  |
| 1.a | Ensure significant mobilization of resources from a variety of sources, including through enhanced development cooperation, in order to provide adequate and predictable means for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, to implement programmes and policies to end poverty in all its dimensions             |
| 1.b | Create sound policy frameworks at the national, regional and international levels, based on pro-poor and gender-sensitive development strategies, to support accelerated investment in poverty eradication actions  |

UN General Assembly, 2015. 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.' A/70/L.1, 18 September 2015. New York: United Nations

## **Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture**

### **SDG 2: Targets set by the UN**

- |     |   |
|-----|---|
| 2.1 | By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round  |
| 2.2 | By 2030, end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under 5 years of age, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons  |
| 2.3 | By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment   |
| 2.4 | By 2030, ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters and that progressively improve land and soil quality   |
| 2.5 | By 2020, maintain the genetic diversity of seeds, cultivated plants and farmed and domesticated animals and their related wild species, including through soundly managed and diversified seed and plant banks at the national, regional and international levels, and promote access to and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge, as internationally agreed |
| 2.a | Increase investment, including through enhanced international cooperation, in rural infrastructure, agricultural research and extension services, technology development and plant and livestock gene banks in order to enhance agricultural productive capacity in developing countries, in particular least developed countries   |
| 2.b | Correct and prevent trade restrictions and distortions in world agricultural markets, including through the parallel elimination of all forms of agricultural export subsidies and all export measures with equivalent effect, in accordance with the mandate of the Doha Development Round   |
| 2.c | Adopt measures to ensure the proper functioning of food commodity markets and their derivatives and facilitate timely access to market information, including on food reserves, in order to help limit extreme food price volatility  |

UN General Assembly, 2015. 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.' A/70/L.1, 18 September 2015. New York: United Nations

**Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages**

**SDG 3: Targets set by the UN**

3.1	By 2030, reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births
3.2	By 2030, end preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age, with all countries aiming to reduce neonatal mortality to at least as low as 12 per 1,000 live births and under-5 mortality to at least as low as 25 per 1,000 live births
3.3	By 2030, end the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases and combat hepatitis, water-borne diseases and other communicable diseases
3.4	By 2030, reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being
3.5	Strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol
3.6	By 2020, halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents
3.7	By 2030, ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes
3.8	Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all
3.9	By 2030, substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination
3.a	Strengthen the implementation of the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in all countries, as appropriate
3.b	Support the research and development of vaccines and medicines for the communicable and non-communicable diseases that primarily affect developing countries, provide access to affordable essential medicines and vaccines, in accordance with the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health, which affirms the right of developing countries to use to the full the provisions in the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights regarding flexibilities to protect public health, and, in particular, provide access to medicines for all
3.c	Substantially increase health financing and the recruitment, development, training and retention of the health workforce in developing countries, especially in least developed countries and small island developing States
3.d	Strengthen the capacity of all countries, in particular developing countries, for early warning, risk reduction and management of national and global health risks

UN General Assembly, 2015. 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.' A/70/L.1, 18 September 2015. New York: United Nations

**Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning**

**SDG 4: Targets set by the UN**

4.1	By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes
4.2	By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education
4.3	By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university
4.4	By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship
4.5	By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations
4.6	By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy
4.7	By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development
4.a	Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all
4.b	By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries
4.c	By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States

UN General Assembly, 2015. 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.' A/70/L.1, 18 September 2015. New York: United Nations

## **Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls**

### **SDG 5: Targets set by the UN**

- |     |  |
|-----|--|
| 5.1 | End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere   |
| 5.2 | Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation  |
| 5.3 | Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation  |
| 5.4 | Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate   |
| 5.5 | Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life   |
| 5.6 | Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences |
| 5.a | Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws  |
| 5.b | Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women   |
| 5.c | Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels  |

UN General Assembly, 2015. 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.' A/70/L.1, 18 September 2015. New York: United Nations

## **Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all**

### **SDG 6: Targets set by the UN**

- |     |  |
|-----|--|
| 6.1 | By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all  |
| 6.2 | By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations  |
| 6.3 | By 2030, improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimizing release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally                           |
| 6.4 | By 2030, substantially increase water-use efficiency across all sectors and ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of freshwater to address water scarcity and substantially reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity                                      |
| 6.5 | By 2030, implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate   |
| 6.6 | By 2020, protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes  |
| 6.a | By 2030, expand international cooperation and capacity-building support to developing countries in water- and sanitation-related activities and programmes, including water harvesting, desalination, water efficiency, wastewater treatment, recycling and reuse technologies |
| 6.b | Support and strengthen the participation of local communities in improving water and sanitation management   |

UN General Assembly, 2015. 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.' A/70/L.1, 18 September 2015. New York: United Nations

## **Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all**

### **SDG 7: Targets set by the UN**

- |     |  |
|-----|--|
| 7.1 | By 2030, ensure universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services  |
| 7.2 | By 2030, increase substantially the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix   |
| 7.3 | By 2030, double the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency  |
| 7.a | By 2030, enhance international cooperation to facilitate access to clean energy research and technology, including renewable energy, energy efficiency and advanced and cleaner fossil-fuel technology, and promote investment in energy infrastructure and clean energy technology                                |
| 7.b | By 2030, expand infrastructure and upgrade technology for supplying modern and sustainable energy services for all in developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and landlocked developing countries, in accordance with their respective programmes of support |

UN General Assembly, 2015. 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.' A/70/L.1, 18 September 2015. New York: United Nations

**Goal 8: Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all**

<b>SDG 8: Targets set by the UN</b>	
8.1	Sustain per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances and, in particular, at least 7 per cent gross domestic product growth per annum in the least developed countries
8.2	Achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation, including through a focus on high-value added and labour-intensive sectors
8.3	Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalization and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services
8.4	Improve progressively, through 2030, global resource efficiency in consumption and production and endeavour to decouple economic growth from environmental degradation, in accordance with the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production, with developed countries taking the lead
8.5	By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value
8.6	By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training
8.7	Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms
8.8	Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment
8.9	By 2030, devise and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products
8.10	Strengthen the capacity of domestic financial institutions to encourage and expand access to banking, insurance and financial services for all
8.a	Increase Aid for Trade support for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, including through the Enhanced Integrated Framework for Trade-related Technical Assistance to Least Developed Countries
8.b	By 2020, develop and operationalize a global strategy for youth employment and implement the Global Jobs Pact of the International Labour Organization

UN General Assembly, 2015. 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.' A/70/L.1, 18 September 2015. New York: United Nations

**Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization**

<b>SDG 9: Targets set by the UN</b>	
9.1	Develop quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including regional and transborder infrastructure, to support economic development and human well-being, with a focus on affordable and equitable access for all
9.2	Promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and, by 2030, significantly raise industry's share of employment and gross domestic product, in line with national circumstances, and double its share in least developed countries
9.3	Increase the access of small-scale industrial and other enterprises, in particular in developing countries, to financial services, including affordable credit, and their integration into value chains and markets
9.4	By 2030, upgrade infrastructure and retrofit industries to make them sustainable, with increased resource-use efficiency and greater adoption of clean and environmentally sound technologies and industrial processes, with all countries taking action in accordance with their respective capabilities
9.5	Enhance scientific research, upgrade the technological capabilities of industrial sectors in all countries, in particular developing countries, including, by 2030, encouraging innovation and substantially increasing the number of research and development workers per 1 million people and public and private research and development spending
9.a	Facilitate sustainable and resilient infrastructure development in developing countries through enhanced financial, technological and technical support to African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States
9.b	Support domestic technology development, research and innovation in developing countries, including by ensuring a conducive policy environment for, inter alia, industrial diversification and value addition to commodities
9.c	Significantly increase access to information and communications technology and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020

UN General Assembly, 2015. 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.' A/70/L.1, 18 September 2015. New York: United Nations

## **Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries**

### **SDG 10: Targets set by the UN**

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|-------|--|
| 10.1. | By 2030, progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40 per cent of the population at a rate higher than the national average  |
| 10.2. | By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status  |
| 10.3. | Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard  |
| 10.4. | Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality   |
| 10.5. | Improve the regulation and monitoring of global financial markets and institutions and strengthen the implementation of such regulations   |
| 10.6. | Ensure enhanced representation and voice for developing countries in decision-making in global international economic and financial institutions in order to deliver more effective, credible, accountable and legitimate institutions   |
| 10.7. | Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies  |
| 10.a  | Implement the principle of special and differential treatment for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, in accordance with World Trade Organization agreements  |
| 10.b. | Encourage official development assistance and financial flows, including foreign direct investment, to States where the need is greatest, in particular least developed countries, African countries, small island developing States and landlocked developing countries, in accordance with their national plans and programmes |
| 10.c. | By 2030, reduce to less than 3 per cent the transaction costs of migrant remittances and eliminate remittance corridors with costs higher than 5 per cent  |

*UN General Assembly, 2015. 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.' A/70/L.1, 18 September 2015. New York: United Nations*

## **Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable**

### **SDG 11: Targets set by the UN**

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|------|--|
| 11.1 | By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums   |
| 11.2 | By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons   |
| 11.3 | By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries   |
| 11.4 | Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage  |
| 11.5 | By 2030, significantly reduce the number of deaths and the number of people affected and substantially decrease the direct economic losses relative to global gross domestic product caused by disasters, including water-related disasters, with a focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations   |
| 11.6 | By 2030, reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management   |
| 11.7 | By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities  |
| 11.a | Support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning  |
| 11.b | By 2020, substantially increase the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters, and develop and implement, in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, holistic disaster risk management at all levels |
| 11.c | Support least developed countries, including through financial and technical assistance, in building sustainable and resilient buildings utilizing local materials   |

*UN General Assembly, 2015. 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.' A/70/L.1, 18 September 2015. New York: United Nations*

## **Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns**

### **SDG 12: Targets set by the UN**

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|------|--|
| 12.1 | Implement the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns, all countries taking action, with developed countries taking the lead, taking into account the development and capabilities of developing countries  |
| 12.2 | By 2030, achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources   |
| 12.3 | By 2030, halve per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reduce food losses along production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses   |
| 12.4 | By 2020, achieve the environmentally sound management of chemicals and all wastes throughout their life cycle, in accordance with agreed international frameworks, and significantly reduce their release to air, water and soil in order to minimize their adverse impacts on human health and the environment  |
| 12.5 | By 2030, substantially reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse  |
| 12.6 | Encourage companies, especially large and transnational companies, to adopt sustainable practices and to integrate sustainability information into their reporting cycle   |
| 12.7 | Promote public procurement practices that are sustainable, in accordance with national policies and priorities   |
| 12.8 | By 2030, ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature   |
| 12.a | Support developing countries to strengthen their scientific and technological capacity to move towards more sustainable patterns of consumption and production   |
| 12.b | Develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products   |
| 12.c | Rationalize inefficient fossil-fuel subsidies that encourage wasteful consumption by removing market distortions, in accordance with national circumstances, including by restructuring taxation and phasing out those harmful subsidies, where they exist, to reflect their environmental impacts, taking fully into account the specific needs and conditions of developing countries and minimizing the possible adverse impacts on their development in a manner that protects the poor and the affected communities |

UN General Assembly, 2015. 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.' A/70/L.1, 18 September 2015. New York: United Nations

## **Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts<sup>a</sup>**

### **SDG 13: Targets set by the UN**

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|------|--|
| 13.1 | Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries  |
| 13.2 | Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning  |
| 13.3 | Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning   |
| 13.a | Implement the commitment undertaken by developed-country parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to a goal of mobilizing jointly \$100 billion annually by 2020 from all sources to address the needs of developing countries in the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency on implementation and fully operationalize the Green Climate Fund through its capitalization as soon as possible |
| 13.b | Promote mechanisms for raising capacity for effective climate change-related planning and management in least developed countries and small island developing States, including focusing on women, youth and local and marginalized communities  |

UN General Assembly, 2015. 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.' A/70/L.1, 18 September 2015. New York: United Nations

<sup>a</sup> Acknowledging that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is the primary international, intergovernmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change.



**Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development**

**SDG 14: Targets set by the UN**

14.1	By 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution
14.2	By 2020, sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems to avoid significant adverse impacts, including by strengthening their resilience, and take action for their restoration in order to achieve healthy and productive oceans
14.3	Minimize and address the impacts of ocean acidification, including through enhanced scientific cooperation at all levels
14.4	By 2020, effectively regulate harvesting and end overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and destructive fishing practices and implement science-based management plans, in order to restore fish stocks in the shortest time feasible, at least to levels that can produce maximum sustainable yield as determined by their biological characteristics
14.5	By 2020, conserve at least 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, consistent with national and international law and based on the best available scientific information
14.6	By 2020, prohibit certain forms of fisheries subsidies which contribute to overcapacity and overfishing, eliminate subsidies that contribute to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and refrain from introducing new such subsidies, recognizing that appropriate and effective special and differential treatment for developing and least developed countries should be an integral part of the World Trade Organization fisheries subsidies negotiation
14.7	By 2030, increase the economic benefits to small island developing States and least developed countries from the sustainable use of marine resources, including through sustainable management of fisheries, aquaculture and tourism
14.a	Increase scientific knowledge, develop research capacity and transfer marine technology, taking into account the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission Criteria and Guidelines on the Transfer of Marine Technology, in order to improve ocean health and to enhance the contribution of marine biodiversity to the development of developing countries, in particular small island developing States and least developed countries
14.b	Provide access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets
14.c	Enhance the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which provides the legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources, as recalled in paragraph 158 of "The future we want"

*UN General Assembly, 2015. 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.' A/70/L.1, 18 September 2015. New York: United Nations*

**Goal 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss**

<b>SDG 15: Targets set by the UN</b>	
15.1	By 2020, ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, in particular forests, wetlands, mountains and drylands, in line with obligations under international agreements
15.2	By 2020, promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests and substantially increase afforestation and reforestation globally
15.3	By 2030, combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world
15.4	By 2030, ensure the conservation of mountain ecosystems, including their biodiversity, in order to enhance their capacity to provide benefits that are essential for sustainable development
15.5	Take urgent and significant action to reduce the degradation of natural habitats, halt the loss of biodiversity and, by 2020, protect and prevent the extinction of threatened species
15.6	Promote fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources and promote appropriate access to such resources, as internationally agreed
15.7	Take urgent action to end poaching and trafficking of protected species of flora and fauna and address both demand and supply of illegal wildlife products
15.8	By 2020, introduce measures to prevent the introduction and significantly reduce the impact of invasive alien species on land and water ecosystems and control or eradicate the priority species
15.9	By 2020, integrate ecosystem and biodiversity values into national and local planning, development processes, poverty reduction strategies and accounts
15.a	Mobilize and significantly increase financial resources from all sources to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity and ecosystems
15.b	Mobilize significant resources from all sources and at all levels to finance sustainable forest management and provide adequate incentives to developing countries to advance such management, including for conservation and reforestation
15.c	Enhance global support for efforts to combat poaching and trafficking of protected species, including by increasing the capacity of local communities to pursue sustainable livelihood opportunities

UN General Assembly, 2015. 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.' A/70/L.1, 18 September 2015. New York: United Nations

**Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels**

<b>SDG 16: Targets set by the UN</b>	
16.1	Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere
16.2	End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children
16.3	Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all
16.4	By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime
16.5	Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms
16.6	Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels
16.7	Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels
16.8	Broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance
16.9	By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration
16.10	Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements
16.a	Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime
16.b	Promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development

UN General Assembly, 2015. 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.' A/70/L.1, 18 September 2015. New York: United Nations

**Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development**

**SDG 17: Targets set by the UN**

**Finance**

- 17.1 Strengthen domestic resource mobilization, including through international support to developing countries, to improve domestic capacity for tax and other revenue collection
- 17.2 Developed countries to implement fully their official development assistance commitments, including the commitment by many developed countries to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income for official development assistance (ODA/GNI) to developing countries and 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of ODA/GNI to least developed countries; ODA providers are encouraged to consider setting a target to provide at least 0.20 per cent of ODA/GNI to least developed countries
- 17.3 Mobilize additional financial resources for developing countries from multiple sources
- 17.4 Assist developing countries in attaining long-term debt sustainability through coordinated policies aimed at fostering debt financing, debt relief and debt restructuring, as appropriate, and address the external debt of highly indebted poor countries to reduce debt distress
- 17.5 Adopt and implement investment promotion regimes for least developed countries

**Technology**

- 17.6 Enhance North-South, South-South and triangular regional and international cooperation on and access to science, technology and innovation and enhance knowledge sharing on mutually agreed terms, including through improved coordination among existing mechanisms, in particular at the United Nations level, and through a global technology facilitation mechanism
- 17.7 Promote the development, transfer, dissemination and diffusion of environmentally sound technologies to developing countries on favourable terms, including on concessional and preferential terms, as mutually agreed
- 17.8 Fully operationalize the technology bank and science, technology and innovation capacity-building mechanism for least developed countries by 2017 and enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology

**Capacity-building**

- 17.9 Enhance international support for implementing effective and targeted capacity-building in developing countries to support national plans to implement all the Sustainable Development Goals, including through North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation

**Trade**

- 17.10 Promote a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system under the World Trade Organization, including through the conclusion of negotiations under its Doha Development Agenda
- 17.11 Significantly increase the exports of developing countries, in particular with a view to doubling the least developed countries' share of global exports by 2020
- 17.12 Realize timely implementation of duty-free and quota-free market access on a lasting basis for all least developed countries, consistent with World Trade Organization decisions, including by ensuring that preferential rules of origin applicable to imports from least developed countries are transparent and simple, and contribute to facilitating market access

**Systemic issues**

**Policy and institutional coherence**

- 17.13 Enhance global macroeconomic stability, including through policy coordination and policy coherence
- 17.14 Enhance policy coherence for sustainable development
- 17.15 Respect each country's policy space and leadership to establish and implement policies for poverty eradication and sustainable development

**Multi-stakeholder partnerships**

- 17.16 Enhance the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in all countries, in particular developing countries
- 17.17 Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships

**Data, monitoring and accountability**

- 17.18 By 2020, enhance capacity-building support to developing countries, including for least developed countries and small island developing States, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts
- 17.19 By 2030, build on existing initiatives to develop measurements of progress on sustainable development that complement gross domestic product, and support statistical capacity-building in developing countries

UN General Assembly, 2015. 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.' A/70/L.1, 18 September 2015. New York: United Nations





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