



United Nations

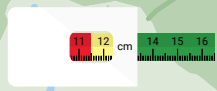


Lao People's Democratic Republic

ANNUAL RESULTS REPORT 2023

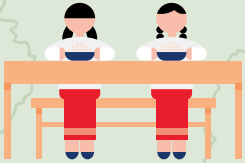
A partnership preventing severe malnourishment

Strengthening village resilience



Young leader takes a stand against child marriage

Nutritious school meals at Naxiengdee School



Heroes in pink: Lao midwives supporting rights and saving lives



Reducing reliance on illicit opium poppy cultivation



How a piped water supply transformed lives



Disability inclusive social protection



Addressing disability inclusion and environmental resilience together



Vientiane

Gov X App



Borikhamxay

Mekong



The front/back covers illustrate the human interest stories in the report and their locations.



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Photo: WHO/Yoshi Shimizu



FOREWORD BY THE UN RESIDENT COORDINATOR

This 2023 Annual Results Report summarizes progress made during the second year of implementation of our Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF, or Cooperation Framework), and my first as UN Resident Coordinator in Lao PDR.

This period saw us reach the mid-way point in the implementation of the 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDP) and to the 2030 deadline for achieving the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Assessments of progress against both frameworks showed that, in the wake of the unprecedented shocks of the past years, reaching many of our key targets risks slipping beyond reach, with an urgent need to accelerate efforts to tackle pressing development concerns.

At this key milestone, and under these challenging circumstances, I am proud to see the UN Country Team (UNCT) and our partners working together more cohesively and effectively than ever, with growing evidence that the reform we began 5 years ago is bearing fruit. Commensurate to the challenges faced by the country, the UN response is a unique blend of policy support across SDGs backed by service delivery for specific high-impact activities such as school feeding and vaccinations.

In particular, we have seen the Country Team come together to deliver integrated and joint responses to these challenges, including in supporting the development of the first Financing Strategy for the NSEDP with contributions from seven UN agencies, as well as many essential partners from beyond the UN. Our

advocacy messages – on investing in education, health, nutrition, social protection – have been sharpened, with broad coalitions of stakeholders called to action.

Recognizing that it takes years of sustained commitment and effort to bring about transformative change, even as we work to improve our effectiveness and respond to the urgent needs of today, we benefit from the solid foundations laid by work in previous years. In 2023 we saw this, for example, in the success in elimination of lymphatic filariasis as a public health concern in Lao PDR after sustained collaborative work.

The reform set out to leverage the strengths of different agencies, funds, and programmes, to deliver more integrated, effective, and efficient support. Practically delivering on the potential of those efforts is central to our commitment to development in Lao PDR, and the 2023 Results Report highlights important progress in the reform efforts that ultimately make the UN development system stronger and more relevant in helping the people we serve.

On behalf of the whole Country Team, I would like to express our continuing gratitude to all our partners in Government, across the development partner community, and amongst the people of Lao PDR, without whom none of these achievements would be possible.

Bakhodir Burkhanov
UN Resident Coordinator



UN COUNTRY TEAM

The United Nations country team (UNCT) in Lao PDR consists of all the 25 UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes serving the country to support the localisation of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as the additional nationally-adopted SDG18 on 'Lives Safe from UXO' and Lao PDR's national development targets through sustainable and equitable socio-economic development.

The UNCT works as one to help the Government and people of Lao PDR fight poverty by ensuring a rights-based approach to development, supporting the sustainable use of natural resources and preservation of cultural heritage, and promoting human rights, gender equality and good governance. The UN focuses its assistance on the most vulnerable and poor, in particular women, children and youth.

**UN AGENCIES THAT
ARE SIGNATORIES
TO COOPERATION
FRAMEWORK 2022-2026**

25

**UN AGENCIES PHYSICALLY
PRESENT IN COUNTRY**

62%

Photo: Pongpat Sensouphone

LAO PDR UNCT ORGANIZATIONS



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



International
Labour
Organization



IOM
UN MIGRATION



International
Trade
Centre



UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER



UNAIDS



UN
CDF
Microfinance • Capital Development



United Nations
UNCITRAL



UNITED NATIONS
UNCTAD



DESA



UN
DP



UNDRR
UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction



UN
environment
programme



UNESCO



UNFPA



UN-HABITAT



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency



unicef
ເພື່ອເດັກທຸກໆຄົນ



UNIDO



UNODC
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime



UNOPS



UN
VOLUNTEERS



WFP



















World Health
Organization

KEY PARTNERS

| |  Outcome 1: People's well-being |  Outcome 2: Inclusive prosperity |  Outcome 3: Governance and Rule of Law |  Outcome 4: Environment, Climate Change, and Resilience |
|--|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|--|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

| |  Outcome 1: People's well-being |  Outcome 2: Inclusive prosperity |  Outcome 3: Governance and Rule of Law |  Outcome 4: Environment, Climate Change, and Resilience |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  Australia | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
|  Canada | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
|  China | ✓ | ✓ | | |
|  Finland | ✓ | | ✓ | |
|  France | ✓ | | ✓ | |
|  Germany | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
|  Ireland | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |
|  Japan | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
|  Korea | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
|  Luxembourg | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
|  New Zealand | | ✓ | | |
|  Norway | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
|  Philippines | ✓ | | | |
|  Russia | ✓ | ✓ | | |
|  Sweden | | | ✓ | |
|  Switzerland | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
|  Thailand | | ✓ | ✓ | |
|  UK | ✓ | | | |
|  USA | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
|  European Union | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |

| |  Outcome 1: People's well-being |  Outcome 2: Inclusive prosperity |  Outcome 3: Governance and Rule of Law |  Outcome 4: Environment, Climate Change, and Resilience |
|--|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|--|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

| |  Outcome 1: People's well-being |  Outcome 2: Inclusive prosperity |  Outcome 3: Governance and Rule of Law |  Outcome 4: Environment, Climate Change, and Resilience |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  Asian Development Bank | ✓ | | | |
|  World Bank | | | | ✓ |
|  Adaptation Fund | | | | ✓ |
|  Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation | ✓ | | | |
|  Climate Risk and Early Warning Systems | | | | ✓ |
|  Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance | ✓ | | | |
|  Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme Fund | ✓ | | | |
|  Global Environment Facility | ✓ | | | ✓ |
|  Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria | ✓ | | | |
|  Green Climate Fund (GCF) | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |
|  Joint SDG Fund | | ✓ | | |
|  Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol | | | | ✓ |

The UN Country Team in Lao PDR wishes to express heartfelt thanks to our donor development partners. Without their crucial support, our work across the four strategic priorities of the UNSDCF would not be possible.



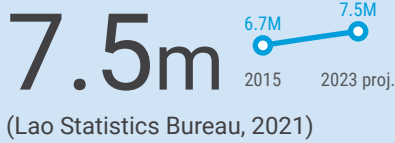
CHAPTER 1

Key developments in the country

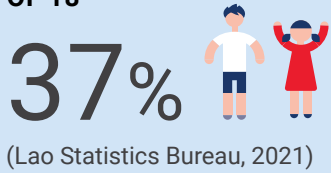
Photo: UNICEF

POPULATION

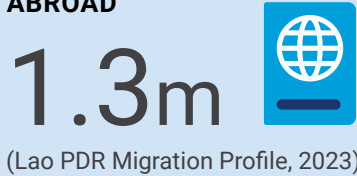
TOTAL POPULATION



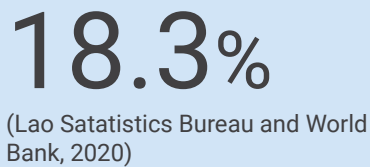
POPULATION BELOW THE AGE OF 18



LAO NATIONALS RESIDING ABROAD



PEOPLE LIVING BELOW THE POVERTY LINE



SDG

Lao PDR classified as among the top countries in Asia and the Pacific making progress since 2015 on:

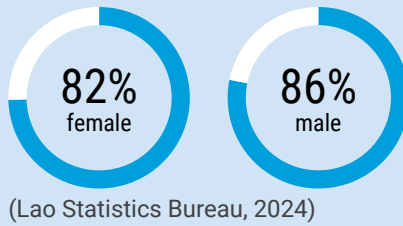


(UNESCAP, 2023)

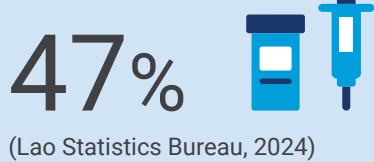


SOCIAL

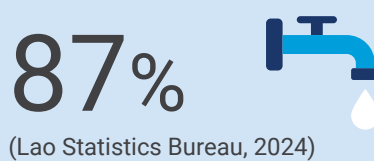
LITERACY RATE



CHILDREN AGED 12-23 MONTHS WHO RECEIVED ALL BASIC VACCINATIONS

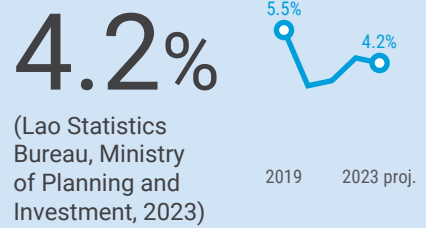


USE OF IMPROVED DRINKING WATER SOURCES

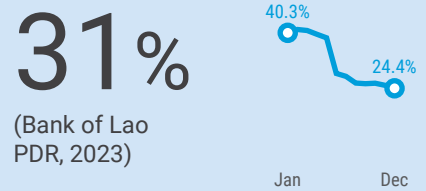


ECONOMIC

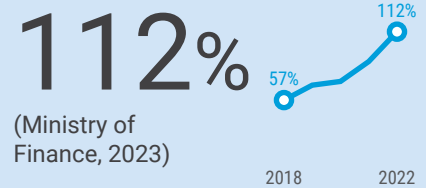
ECONOMIC GROWTH



INFLATION (2023 AVERAGE)

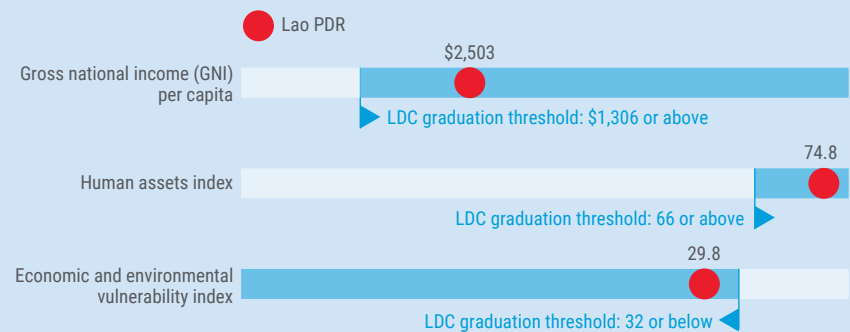


NATIONAL DEBT (% OF GDP)



LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRY (LDC) GRADUATION

GRADUATION CRITERIA



(UN Committee for Development Policy, 2024)



The 2023 round of the 5-yearly Lao Social Indicator Survey (LSIS III) showed that Lao PDR had continued to make significant progress in key areas including reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, and increasing access to improved water sources. However Lao PDR is faced with a multitude of challenges that have slowed progress towards key national development priorities.

The 9th NSEDP Mid-Term Review, concluded that whilst there has been substantial progress in many areas, the combination of substantial repeated shocks and underlying vulnerabilities has meant that many targets are not on track, including many related to crucial investments in human development.

In particular, Lao PDR continued to grapple with economic and financial difficulties including with the cost of sovereign debt repayments (predominantly denominated in US dollars) increasing substantially, squeezing resources available for crucial investments in the social sectors necessary to protect and maintain progress.

The Government accorded top priority to efforts to address the economic situation, including establishing a Task Force chaired by the Prime Minister on tackling inflation and exchange rate pressures; issuing Prime Minister's Order 13 on tackling inflation and exchange rate issues; and the endorsement by the Prime Minister of the Financing Strategy for the 9th NSEDP. Reviewing the situation in November, the National Assembly extended the National Agenda on Addressing Economic and Financial Difficulties, which had been due to conclude at the end of 2023, through to the end of 2025.

Significant investments were also made in improving data and statistical systems to better understand the situation and its impact on households, including through LSIS III and preparations for the upcoming fifth national census. Increased emphasis on digital transformation, and the provision of digital public services including with the launch of the Gov X app, are intended to increase the efficiency service delivery and provide more effective support to households.

Inflation moderated from a peak of 41.2 percent in February to 24.4 percent in December, however this remained well above the target of 6 percent. With inflation and currency depreciation, the budget for health is estimated to have lost half of its purchasing power. Utilization of health services has declined, and immunization coverage regressed. The year saw an increase in the proportion of children out of school, and over half of households reporting a reduction in education expenditure.

Lao PDR also experienced record-breaking temperatures as well as hazardous levels of trans-boundary haze pollution during the year, underlining the country's vulnerability to climate change and environmental shocks. As part of efforts to manage this, the Government increasingly invested in disaster preparedness, as well as engagement in key international forums.

Addressing these challenges is critical to sustaining development progress and ensuring that no one is left behind, especially as the country moves closer to achieving the longstanding goal of graduation from being a Least Developed Country.





CHAPTER 2

UN development system support to national development priorities through the Cooperation Framework

OVERVIEW OF COOPERATION FRAMEWORK RESULTS

During 2023, we made progress across the 4 Strategic Priorities of the Cooperation Framework, with the vast majority of indicators measuring delivery of programming in the 21 output areas showing progress and two already reaching their targets.

There were several instances at the policy level where UN agencies came together to support initiatives and events to further advocate for and support the Cooperation Framework objectives. Laying much of the groundwork the year before, two key milestones in 2023 were the endorsement of the Financing Strategy for the 9th NSEDP and the Smooth Transition Strategy for LDC Graduation following commitments made under the Doha Programme of Action. The Financing Strategy brings a stronger linkage with environmental concerns in the country, and its 54 recommendations address critical development needs and gaps in the country.

Global meetings such as the Food Systems Transformation Summit and COP28, brought UN agencies together to support the Government to prepare and position itself. A roadmap for food systems transformation in Lao PDR is under preparation. UN agencies supported the preparation of the Lao delegation to COP28 as well as organized a debriefing on Lao PDR's status and direction on its NDC commitments. The UN Country Team supported the development of the SDG Status Analysis report for the Lao delegation to present at the SDG Summit.

At Lao PDR's first Human Capital Summit, a joint initiative with the World Bank,

the National Statement of Commitment to Accelerating Learning Recovery was established, ensuring high-level commitment and actionable directives. As a result, policies and measures have been included in the recently issued Decree No.9 to address teacher shortages, school dropouts, and equitable education finances.

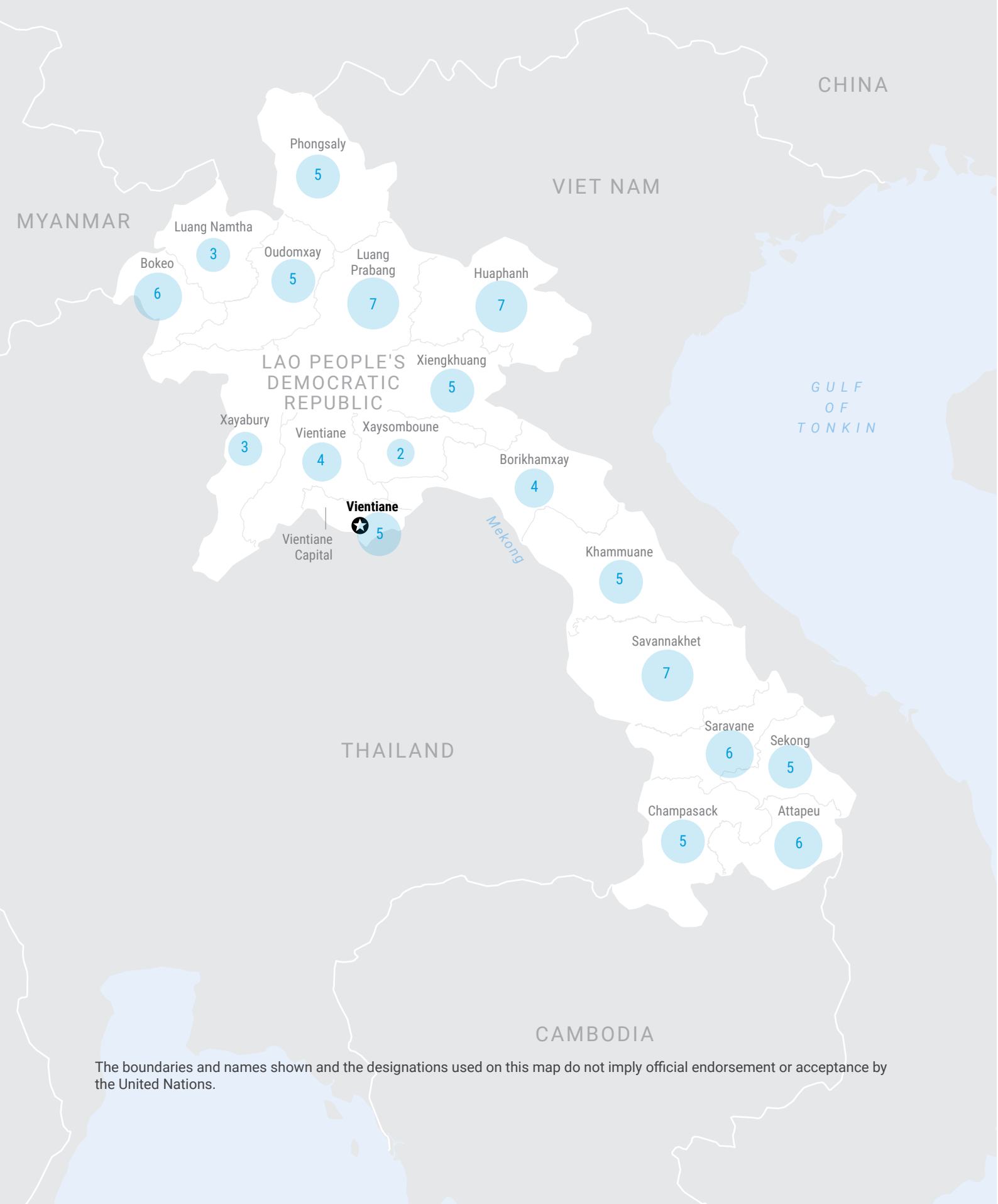
In early 2023, Lao PDR was selected as one of 30 pilot countries under the UN Secretary General's Early Warning for All (EW4ALL) initiative. The initiative brought together Government, UN agencies, international NGOs and CSOs working on disaster preparedness, awareness and communication in a stakeholder mapping exercise and to develop a roadmap for EW4ALL.

In 2024, Lao PDR will be submitting its third Voluntary National Review (VNR) of SDG progress. Under the Government's leadership, preparations were initiated and process will accelerate in the first half of 2024 in the lead up to the High-Level Political Forum in July.

As the 9th NSEDP entered its mid-point in 2023, support was provided to the Mid-Term Review of the NSEDP. Early discussions on the 10th NSEDP were also initiated. Several preparatory meetings and consultations were held to organize the 2023 Round Table Implementation Meeting, the most inclusive high-level forum bringing together the Government, UN agencies, diplomatic corps, private sector and civil society, held annually to take stock of progress and challenges, and make commitments to strengthen partnerships.

NUMBER OF AGENCIES WITH ACTIVE PROJECTS ACROSS THE 18 PROVINCES

The map does not include UN's work on policy at national level



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

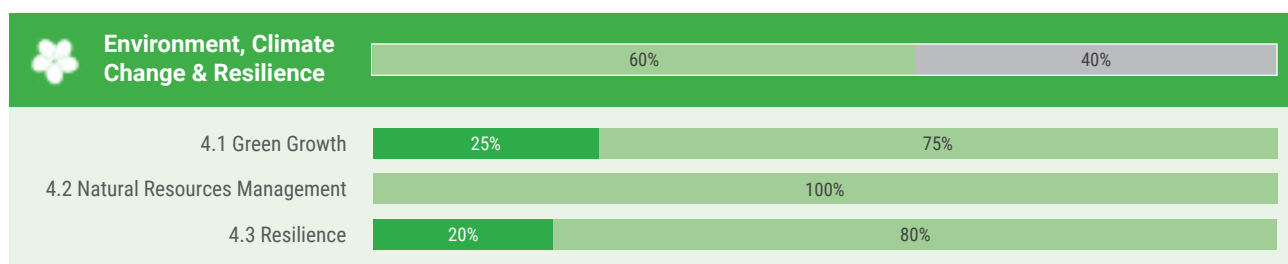
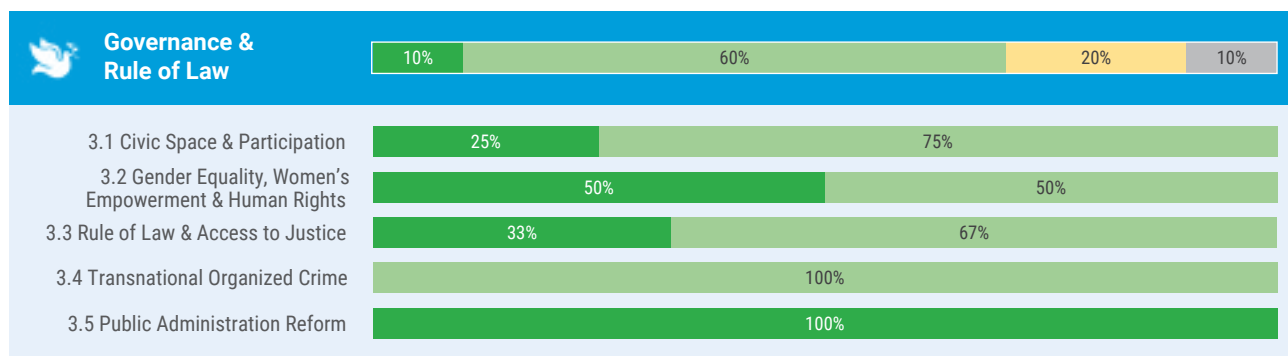
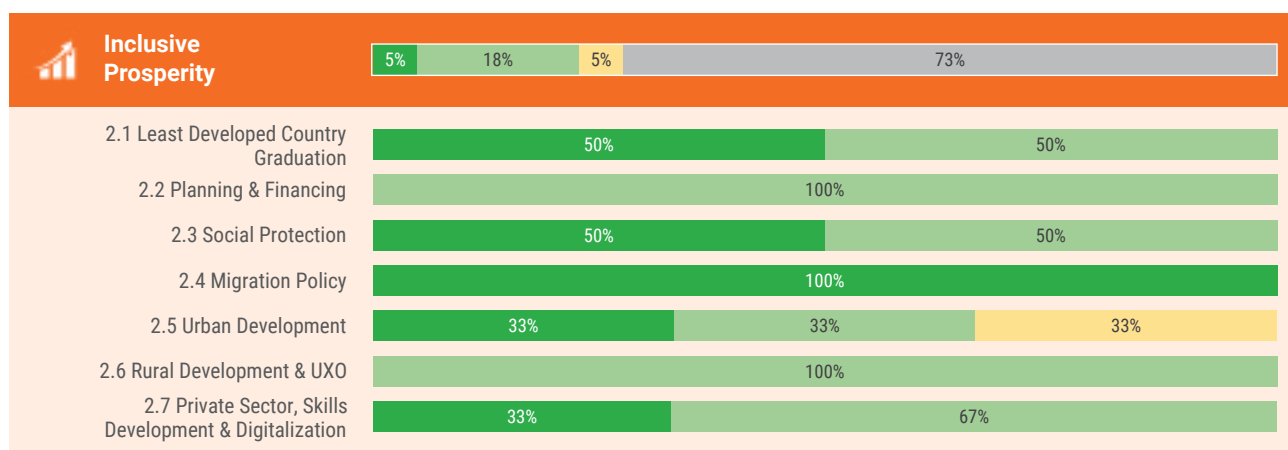
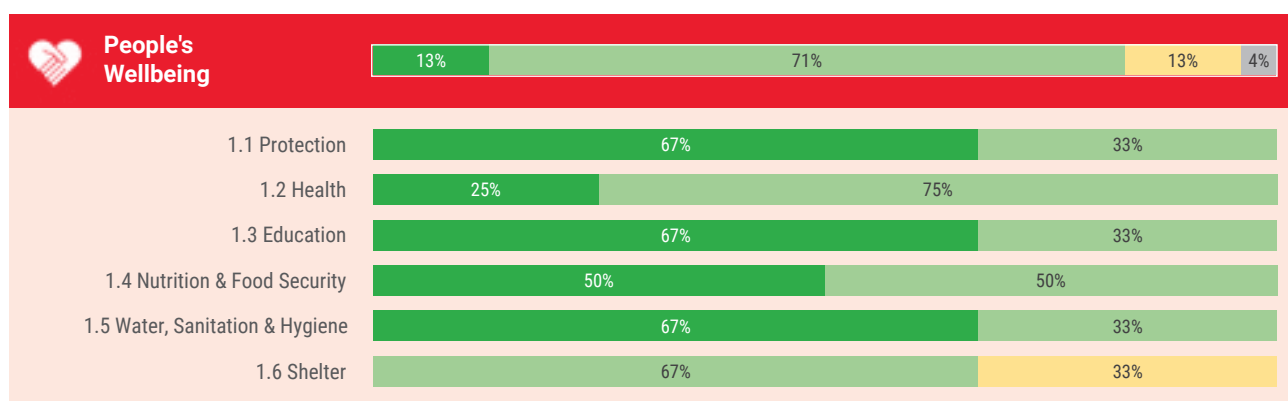
PROVINCES WITH UN ACTIVE PROJECTS BY STRATEGIC PRIORITY



The map does not include UN's work on policy at national level.

PROGRESS OF THE COOPERATION FRAMEWORK INDICATORS

■ Target Met
 ■ Progressing
 ■ No Progress/Regressing
 ■ Insufficient Data

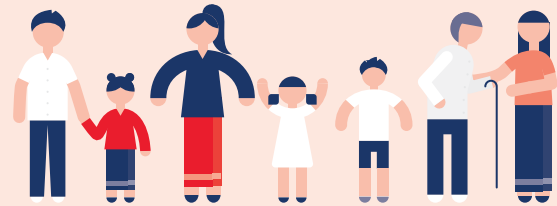


Assessment of progress to date of indicators in the Cooperation Framework results framework. Strategic Priority (Outcome) indicators measure the extent to which Lao PDR is progressing towards the target outcomes. Sectoral output indicators measure progress in delivering programmatic commitments by the UN with partners. The outcome indicator progress bar is not the compilation of progress against individual outputs. For full details on the Results Framework see separate Results Framework.

Strategic priority 1

PEOPLE'S WELLBEING

By 2026, people, especially the most vulnerable and marginalised, will have more equitable and inclusive access to and will benefit from better quality health, nutrition, food, shelter, protection, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), and education and learning, including during emergencies.



SUPPORTING SDGS



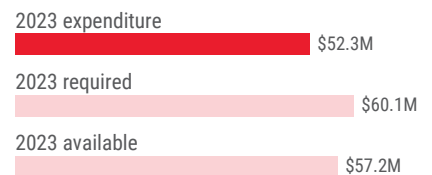
SUPPORTING 9TH NSEDP

Pillar 2: Improved quality of human resources to meet development, research capacity, science and technology needs, and create value-added production and services

Pillar 3: Enhanced well-being of the people

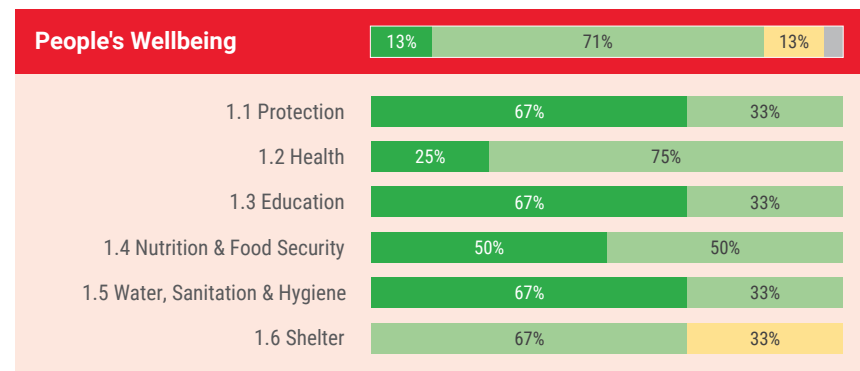
2023 EXPENDITURE (US\$)

\$52.3M



OUTCOME 1 INDICATOR PROGRESS

Legend: Target Met (Green), Progressing (Light Green), No Progress/Regressing (Yellow), Insufficient Data (Grey)



CONTRIBUTING AGENCIES

Leads: UNFPA, UNICEF

| | |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| FAO | Food security and nutrition; Animal health; Sustainable agriculture; Promoting gender equality in agriculture |
| IFAD | Agriculture for nutrition |
| IOM | Migration governance and policy |
| UNAIDS | HIV/AIDS response; Stigma and discrimination; Community-led responses; Community empowerment; Strategic information; ASEAN; Governance, and strategy development |
| UNESCO | Quality Education; Education statistics; Teacher policy; ICT and digitalization in education; National science policy and higher education; Cultural heritage preservation and promotion |
| UNFPA | Sexual and reproductive health and rights, including humanitarian; Gender equality; Reproductive maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health, including health system strengthening; Comprehensive sexuality education; Gender-based violence |
| UN-Habitat | Gender-based violence; Shelter; Community-based water supply systems |
| UNICEF | Health system strengthening; Immunization; Maternal, Newborn and child health; community health; Nutrition sector coordination and information; Infant and young child feeding; Integrated management of acute malnutrition; Education sector policy, coordination, and information; Early childhood and basic education; WASH sector coordination; Systems capacity for WASH; Child protection systems capacity, knowledge skills and practices |
| UNOPS | Malaria elimination; Mittaphab hospital renovation |
| WFP | Nutrition; Food security; WASH; Emergency response |
| WHO | Health systems and universal health coverage; Primary health care; Health financing, Maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health; Protection from health emergencies and diseases; Vaccine preventable diseases and immunizations; Protecting health from climate change and environmental threats; WASH in health care facilities and waste management; Clean green hospitals |

Despite the challenging circumstances, through advocacy, capacity building and support to policy formulation by UN agencies with Government partners, some progress was made in 2023 to improve outcomes on child protection, education, healthcare and food security. This included Lao PDR developing its first-ever National Plan of Action for Child Protection System Strengthening and amending the Law on Protection of the Rights and Interests of Children .

However, recent data on Grade 5 national learning assessment revealed some alarming results: only 23 percent of students met the minimum proficiency levels in reading; 16 percent in writing and just 1 percent in Mathematics. The Human Capital Summit on Education in June 2023, highlighting evidence on the situation of education in the country, led to a high-level commitment from the office of the Prime Minister, resulting in Decree No. 9 , which aims to minimize the worsening situation of children’s learning and reduce disparities in access, retention, learning achievement, and financing education that were adversely impacted by COVID19.

Over the year, the UN worked to strengthen the capacities of Government and schools at the national and sub-national levels, contributing to ensuring continuous quality education delivery reaching 6,048 education service providers and 884,977 learners, and working to address the learning crisis.

The UN also supported the Ministry of Health (MoH) to revise key health policies, improve access to quality health services, and advocate for pro-health taxation to increase resources available for expenditure on health. As a result of UN support to access to better healthcare services, there were improvements in immunization coverage, tuberculosis treatment saw an increased success rate, and the maternal mortality rate decreased.

Progress was also made in improving access to basic sanitation services and water supply systems. Malnutrition rates among children under 5 however showed no real improvement, with rates of stunting stagnating and rates of acute malnutrition continuing to increase.



Young leader takes a stand against child marriage

Child marriage is common in Phongsaly province, and for adolescent girls like Khonsavanh Phommalath it is not easy to transform deeply held social and gender norms. Under an Australian Government supported project, LYU and UNICEF organised school-based activities benefitting over 500 students across five provinces to address child marriage and adolescent pregnancy. Through the screening of short films, the film characters act as observers, enabling children and adolescents to analyze issues from an observer's perspective without revealing personal experiences while they look for solutions to the characters' issues. As a result, students were inspired to initiate discussions and awareness campaigns, challenging the status-quo of child marriage and adolescent pregnancy in their community.

Pledging to be an agent of change for her community, Khonsavanh reflects,

“As a fellow youth, I would like to share with my peers that adolescent pregnancy and child marriage entail numerous negative consequences, including the loss of future opportunities. Therefore, the decision to marry and have children should come after completing our education and when we are adequately prepared. If my close friends or family members experience similar situations, I'm committed to providing them with advice and support.”

Photo: Lao Youth Union/Sikhayphet Sengmany



I am particularly proud of the way we came together to implement several joint programmes – on maternal and child health, gender-based violence, rural employment and comprehensive sexuality education. Moving forward, I would like to see us come together to jointly mobilize resources and develop partnerships, including with the private sector, civil society and academia.”

- Bakhtiyor Kadirov, UNFPA Representative and co-chair of Strategic Priority 1



1.1. PROTECTION

The Lao Women's Union's (LWU), Lao People's Revolutionary Youth Union (LYU), Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare's (MoLSW) and Ministry of Justice's (MoJ) capacity to provide protection services to victims of violence was strengthened-reaching a total of 4,271 survivors across the social and health sectors. With UN support, Lao PDR also established its first hospital-based One Stop Service Unit and Gender-based Violence (GBV) Hotline for survivors of violence. Knowledge building and awareness-raising interventions encouraged more children, women, girls, boys, and men to participate in eliminating all forms of violence, discrimination, exploitation, and abuse against women and children, with a combined reach of 133,846 people.

The Law on Protection of the Rights and Interests of Children was amended.

The LWU established four protection shelters for survivors of gender-based violence in Bokeo, Attapeu, Borikhamxay, and Champasack provinces, providing shelter and multisectoral services to 100 survivors, including accommodation, counseling,

DPT3/Pentavalent
immunization coverage

92.2% 

Primary school
completion rate

93.1% 

psychosocial support, legal advice, and vocational training, with the backing of local authorities.

UN agencies also supported the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) to conduct capacity building to enhance knowledge on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration. Seventy-seven human trafficking cases were addressed, with 63 individuals safely repatriated.



1.2. HEALTH

The joint programme on RMNCAH significantly contributed to improving maternal and child health, supply chain management, and midwifery training. In Bokeo province in particular, a joint assessment found that most women received sufficient pre-birth checkups and care, and were now attended by skilled birth attendants.

Reflecting learning from COVID-19, preparedness and capacity at the sub-national level was strengthened through the installation of modern oxygen production plants in 3 provincial hospitals. To ensure uninterrupted supply of quality vaccines, the UN built 6 new cold rooms and provided new cold chain equipment to 423 health facilities.

Key health laws including the Primary Health Care Law, the Communicable Disease Law, and the Public Health Law were developed and revised to better reflect human rights principles. MoH established a migration health working committee with a roadmap for Migrant Health Policy Development. Following the mid-term review of the National HIV/AIDS Strategic Action Plan, MoH renewed the national commitment to end AIDS in the country as a priority.



A partnership preventing severe malnourishment

When little Bounxay, the one-year-old son of Bouathip Xaykhamthip, was identified as moderately malnourished, his parents received advice from village health volunteers, and Bounxay was treated for his condition. Village health volunteers work in remote villages, such as Phanyasy ethnic Punoi village in Lao PDR's northern Phongsaly province. They work with the local health authorities, in partnership with WFP and UNICEF. Their goal is to prevent and treat malnutrition in children under five. From the volunteers, mothers also receive information on healthy habits, cleanliness, and the importance of a diverse, nutritious diet.

“I hadn't been aware of my son's condition and what it means for him. I am happy that he improved and am determined to keep feeding him diverse and healthy food, as well as cooking in a clean environment,” Bouathip says.

Photo: WFP/Hyejin Lee

Learners reached through continues quality education support programmes

885k 

Under-5 prevalence of stunting

32.8% 



1.3. EDUCATION

The capacities of Government and schools at the national and sub-national levels were strengthened with the support of UN agencies, contributing to ensuring continuous quality education delivery reaching 6,048 education service providers and 884,977 learners, and contributing to addressing the ongoing learning crisis.

Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) was included in the revised General Education Law and integrated and implemented in primary, secondary, teacher training, non-formal education, TVET, and university programmes. It is also included as 1 of 14 recommendations issued by the Deputy Prime Minister following the National Population and Development Conference in October 2023. Training was provided to 30 peer educators to deliver CSE to 300 vulnerable adolescents in two provinces.

To ensure quality delivery of the CSE curriculum, teachers were trained on the revised primary curriculum, reaching out to a total of 679,450 primary students (330,335 female).

For out of school life skills, 184 female mentors were trained on CSE, resulting in skills development of 1,780 adolescent girls belonging to marginalized communities, and 1,200 boys' knowledge was enhanced on gender equality, the consequences of early marriage/union enabling them to make informed choices for themselves and partners.

Advancing the sustainability of the national school lunch programme, a Prime Ministerial Decree on School Lunch Promotion established a policy



Nutritious school meals at

Naxiengdee School

The sisters Champa and King live in a remote village in Oudomxay province. Their mother is a farmer, a single parent who works hard to provide for the family, struggling to make ends meet. Champa and King used to walk to school for hours, arriving hungry and exhausted. Now, they are among the lucky ones who have access to lunch at their school, through a programme that provides nutritious meals to students every day.

Naxiengdee Primary School was one of the 515 schools that the Government of Lao PDR requested WFP in 2016 to initiate a school meal programme in. Since 2019, the programme is run collaboratively by the school and the community, without the World Food Programme's direct support. It remains robust, with daily hot lunch actively encouraging both boys and girls to attend school regularly.

Photo: WFP/Lee Sipaseuth

Use of basic sanitation services

83.5% 

Health centres supported with WASH service assessments

1,100 

framework to enhance the programme and the national budget for school lunches was increased by 20 percent.



1.4. NUTRITION AND FOOD SECURITY

Working with UN agencies, MoH strengthened its routine Health Information Management Systems to monitor nutrition service delivery by including 30 new indicators. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) developed a Project Information Management System to enhance transparency, decision-making, and overall project management efficiency in agricultural development.

Through in-kind support and cash-based transfers to pregnant and breastfeeding women during the lean season, 240 vulnerable communities across 17 districts had improved food security and nutrition outcomes. Government capacities to implement preventive and curative interventions to promote breastfeeding practices, provide micronutrient supplementation, and manage severe and moderate acute malnutrition were enhanced.

Food security and nutrition of 108,000 vulnerable people was improved through farmers nutrition schools and increased access to nutritious food with the help of household gardens.

Through the different interventions, emphasis was increased on enhancing the capacity for delivering behavior change interventions and increasing engagement with key audiences, such as parents and caregivers.



1.5. WATER, SANITATION, AND HYGIENE

The UN continued to prioritize partnerships with national and sub-national Government to strengthen capacities to deliver water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). Through the provision of piped networks in remote communities, over 50,000 people were reached with improved water supply contributing to an overall increase in national access to basic drinking water services to 85 percent.

Through community-led approaches and the provision of subsidies for last mile households, over 40,000 people gained access to sanitation, thereby reducing open defecation to 16 percent. A Sanitation Roadmap was developed with commitments to eradicate open defecation by 2025.

WASH infrastructure upgrades in flood-affected areas were accompanied by climate-resilient designs, community-based disaster risk planning, and improved capacities for WASH in emergencies. WASH in institutions was improved in 112 schools and 9 health centers. A total of 1100 health centers were supported with the WASH facility improvement tool and 68 centers were supported in infection prevention and control through provision of chlorinators.

Provinces supported with enhanced capacities on shelter development and management

4 



1.6. SHELTER

The UN worked with ministries and Government bodies to safeguard the right to housing and provide shelter for survivors of human trafficking, GBV, and climate-related disasters.

Seventy-seven human trafficking cases were addressed, with 63 individuals safely repatriated. Additionally, four new protection shelters for survivors of gender-based violence were established by LWU in Bokeo, Attapeu, Borikhamxay, and Champasack provinces. These shelters have already provided shelter and multisectoral services to 100 survivors, including accommodation, counseling, psychosocial support, legal advice, and vocational training, with the backing of local authorities.

Following a shelter analysis of climate-vulnerable settlements in six provinces, support was mobilized to improve living conditions for 5,542 households. 423 women and girls from flood-affected communities benefited from a new Women Friendly Space in Khammuane, and 100 survivors of violence benefited from four new and one improved safe shelter in four provinces.



How a piped water supply transformed lives

Meet Khambang, a resilient 60-year-old woman from Nadee Village, Xiengkhuang province. Life hasn't been easy for her, especially when it comes to water. Back in the day, she had to hike 1 kilometre from her home to the nearest stream to collect water for her family. To add to her hardships, she had to wake up at four every morning to collect water before heading to the fields. By the time she returned home, the sun had already set, and it was too dark to fetch water. As a result, her family had to ration the water, using it only for cooking and drinking at night.

Through the collaboration between the Government of Japan, Xiengkhuang Provincial Health authorities, and UNICEF Lao PDR, a gravity-fed water system is now bringing clean, accessible water to Nadee as part of a province-wide initiative targeting 55 villages. Thanks to these efforts, a piped water supply with individual household water connections is now available across the province to ensure access to clean and safe water for all. This development has brought relief and joy to the villagers, especially the women, who now have more time for themselves and their families. The women in the village can now grow nutritious vegetables and use their creativity to supplement their families' income.

Photo: UNICEF/Mphetxayyabouth

Strategic priority 2

INCLUSIVE PROSPERITY

By 2026, people, especially the most vulnerable and marginalised, will benefit from more inclusive, and resilient, transformative, and sustainable socio-economic opportunities to reduce poverty and inequalities.



SUPPORTING SDGS



SUPPORTING 9TH NSEDP

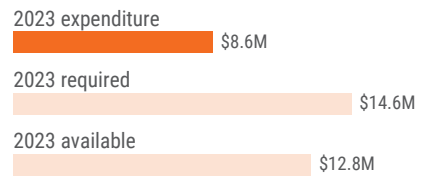
Pillar 1: Continuous quality, stable and sustainable economic growth achieved

Pillar 3: Enhanced well-being of the people

Pillar 5: Engagement in regional and international cooperation and integration is enhanced with robust infrastructure and effective utilisation of national potential and geographic advantages

2023 EXPENDITURE (US\$)

\$8.6M



OUTCOME 2 INDICATOR PROGRESS

■ Target Met
 ■ Progressing
 ■ No Progress/Regressing
 ■ Insufficient Data

| Inclusive Prosperity | 5% | 18% | 5% | 73% |
|---------------------------------------------------------|------|-----|-----|-----|
| 2.1 Least Developed Country Graduation | 50% | 50% | | |
| 2.2 Planning & Financing | 100% | | | |
| 2.3 Social Protection | 50% | 50% | | |
| 2.4 Migration Policy | 100% | | | |
| 2.5 Urban Development | 33% | 33% | 33% | |
| 2.6 Rural Development & UXO | 100% | | | |
| 2.7 Private Sector, Skills Development & Digitalization | 33% | 67% | | |

CONTRIBUTING AGENCIES

Leads: ILO, UNICEF

| | |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| FAO | Agricultural and rural development; Food systems; Strengthening value chains and market access |
| IFAD | Irrigation and commercialisation of smallholder agriculture |
| ILO | Social protection policy and capacity; Skills development; Labour standards and working conditions |
| IOM | Cross-border mobility; Combating human trafficking; Immigration and border management |
| ITC | MSME support; Value chain integration ; Trade policy analysis |
| UNCDF | Municipal investment |
| UNCITRAL | Technical assistance and capacity building in trade and commercial law |
| UNCTAD | E-commerce; LDC graduation |
| UNDESA | LDC Graduation; MSME resilience |
| UNDP | National planning and financing; UXO; Youth participation and employment |
| UNESCO | Cultural heritage and sustainable tourism; Youth entrepreneurship and cultural creative industries. |
| UN-Habitat | Urban development |
| UNICEF | Mother and early childhood grants; Social inclusion; Disability inclusive social protection |
| WFP | School meals; Social protection; Disability inclusion; Livelihoods; Gender |
| WHO | Sustainable health financing; National health insurance |

In 2023, the Lao economy continued its recovery, with GDP growth forecast at 4.2 percent, broadly maintaining the 4.4% achieved in 2022. However, challenges persisted in the economic and financial sectors, with inflation peaking at 41 percent in February and a significant depreciation of the Lao Kip due to debt servicing payments, import costs, and limited foreign exchange. These pressures have not only impacted household welfare but have also reduced the government's capacity to make social investments, resulting in reduced access to healthcare services for children and a decline in healthcare quality. The cost of vital medical supplies, including vaccines, has risen considerably due to

high inflation. The government's expenditure on the education sector remains low at 9.43 percent, significantly below the benchmark established by the Education Law.

In response, the Government has implemented policies and initiatives such as Task Force 19 and Prime Minister's Order 13. Efforts are also underway to expedite learning recovery, protect the education budget from cuts, and prepare for Lao PDR's graduation from its current Least Developed Country status by 2026.

However, even with these challenges, progress was achieved in a number of priority areas. For example, efforts to increase support available to households to cope with the circumstances saw the share of households that received social transfers (in cash and in kind) increase from 12.4 percent to 22.6 percent, and the share of the population covered by the National Social Security System increase to 11 percent.

Following a Prime Ministerial decree, Lao PDR continued to make progress towards a sustainable national school lunch programme aimed at improving both education and nutrition outcomes for children.

Advancing progress towards Universal Health Coverage, the Government, UN, and other partners prioritized work on sustainable health financing, including exploring pro-health taxes and supporting the development and implementation of a National Health Insurance Law.

However, challenges resulting from the continued threat from unexploded ordnance (UXO), have persisted. Despite progress in clearing high priority hazardous areas, with the pace of clearance work picking up from 2022, there are significant hazards remaining in villages with high poverty levels, with 2023 seeing a significant increase in the number of reported casualties.



Growing livelihoods in Champassak province

Along with 116 other families in the area, three years ago Sengthong and Keolay Manisab formed the Paksong Tea Promotion Association, and together they have been steadily working to grow their incomes in this rural community. However, as a small association, they did not have the resources to invest in new processing equipment, meaning they relied on old, unsafe tools that could not always meet the expectations of their customers.

With support from the EU, Japan, and the Mekong Tea Company, ILO was able to provide new production and safety equipment to the farmers allowing them not only to increase production, but to set their sights on new ambitions including obtaining organic certification, growing to become a full Cooperative, and allowing more families to be able to enroll in social security.

Photo: ILO/Duangkhiew Mongkon



Speaking on behalf of my co-chair from ILO and myself, I feel that our joint support to the government in terms of programmes, missions, and advocacy has strengthened inter-agency partnerships as well as amplified our impact. Our experiences have shown that an evidence-based approach to programming is critical in ensuring that no one is left behind, and we remain committed to continuing our collaborative efforts towards achieving equity focused, sustainable socio-economic and demographic opportunities for all in Laos.”

- Dr. Pia Britto, Representative, UNICEF and co-chair of Strategic Priority 2



2.1. SMOOTH TRANSITION BEYOND LDC GRADUATION

Lao PDR's preparations to manage a successful graduation process took a significant step forward in December, with the issuing of a decree by H.E. Prime Minister Sonexay Siphandone formally endorsing the Smooth Transition Strategy (STS) and instructing ministries and all relevant organizations to collaborate with the MoFA as the lead ministry on its implementation.

The STS, setting out clear responsibilities and actions to manage the implications of graduation, and developed with integrated support from the UN represents the realization of one of the key assumptions identified for the successful realization of the target outcome for Inclusive Prosperity.

Monitoring of Lao PDR's readiness for graduation was also enhanced, with systems put in place to make use of more frequent data sources through the Enhanced Monitoring Mechanism to inform preparations and decisions on appropriate responses by the UN Committee for Development Policy, which will review readiness for graduation in early 2024.



2.2. PLANNING AND FINANCING FOR THE SDGs

Through support to the 9th NSEDP Mid-Term Review, the UN worked to enhance its M&E framework and strengthen national capacities for strategic development planning. Reflections from this Review will be a key reference for formulation of the forthcoming 10th NSEDP, setting overall national development priorities and directions until 2030- focusing on economic stabilization, diversification, investment in human resources, and sustainable use of resources.

MoH, with UN support, worked to bolster government officials' ability to oversee the implementation of the 2021-2025 Health Financing Strategy through a mid-term review. Alongside the World Bank, the UN advocated for sustainable health financing, including pro-health taxes. Furthermore, the UN and partners supported the implementation of National Health Insurance (NHI) and revision of the NHI Law, thus advancing universal health coverage.



2.3. SOCIAL PROTECTION

The UN supported financial (actuarial) and legal assessments in preparation for the amendment of the Laws on Social Security and Health Insurance.

Dedicated national committees were established to draft the amended legal provisions and findings were presented at high-level and technical meetings. In particular, inputs sought to address financial sustainability challenges of the National Health Insurance scheme.

To support increased social protection coverage, UN agencies collaborated to support capacity development for government officials and key implementers, as well as outreach campaigns to villages in partnership with local authorities and civil society.

Under the National School Meals Programme, the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) provided lunches to 274,774 pre-primary and primary children (137,573 girls) with support from UN agencies and NGOs.

With UN support, MoLSW provided monthly cash transfers to 428 households with 462 children with disabilities in three districts of Xiengkhuang province.



2.4. MIGRATION POLICY


MPI launched the first ever Country Profile on Migration for Lao PDR with support from the UN, compiling information of migration patterns, trends, impact of migration on key development areas and governance of migration in the country. This is the start of a process that aims to facilitate strengthened coordination and information sharing within the Government, and serve as a capacity-building tool for evidence-based policymaking on migration.

MoH, in partnership with ADB and the UN strengthened understanding of the health circumstances and challenges of migrants, with a view to building a roadmap for migrant inclusive national healthcare policies.

Share of the population covered by the National Social Security System

11% 

Households that received social transfers (cash/in kind) in the past 3 months

23% 



Disability inclusive social protection

Vanh Larthammavong is a mother of three children living in Phonthong village, in Pek district of Xiengkhuang province. Her youngest son, Keodone, has been living with vision impairment since birth and has not been able to enroll in any school due to functional difficulties, even though he is a fast learner with remarkable math and musical talent.

With the introduction of the disability grants plus programme in partnership with UNICEF, Keodone had the opportunity to receive a proper medical check-up to confirm the intensity of his disability. His mother, Vanh, now receives a monthly cash transfer of 400,000 Kip, which allows her to spend time teaching Keodone practical skills while he enjoys playing with his musical toys. The project has also opened up opportunities for Keodone to attend a special school for kids in Vientiane when he turns ten and can care for himself.

Photo: UNICEF



2.5. URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Heightened awareness was fostered of the challenges and opportunities amid Lao PDR's rapid urbanization through the second Lao National Urban Forum convening a diverse group of stakeholders, organized by the Ministry of Public Works and Transport (MPWT) with UN support. To support a paradigm shift in urban planning, the Public Works and Transport Research Institute, developed the capacity to formulate two city master plans, integrating climate vulnerabilities.

Data availability on the mobility impacts for Lao PDR, including rural-urban migration, of climate events and natural resource management, was enhanced through a regional study by the UN and the Stockholm Environment Institute.

MoPWT, worked on increasing urban safety, by improving public buildings and by providing water supply and gender-segregated sanitation facilities in health centres in four provinces.

Children provided with school meals

278k 
(137,573 girls)

Children living with disabilities provided support

426 
(428 households/215 girls)



2.6. RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND UXOs

An area equivalent to 1,280 football fields of high-priority land was cleared of UXO contamination with support from the UN, freeing land for the construction of schools and rural medical centres in villages with high poverty rates, and for income generation by farmers. This clearance effort involved 501 clearance technicians and support staff (25 percent of whom were women).

In Luang Prabang province, the UN partnered with the Government to undertake a diagnostic study to identify the factors and obstacles faced by the high-potential, but currently limited, orange production value chain, providing a foundation to guide the development of the sector. In partnership with MAF, the UN supported the extension of small-scale irrigation to boost agricultural productivity.

To support efforts in mainstreaming biodiversity considerations into agriculture sector development, the UN supported the development of an agrobiodiversity roadmap for planners and technical staff at the national level.



Building dreams on a safer ground

In 2023, Sone and Oun Senkong in Xaybouathong district, Khammuane province, saw a significant transformation in their prospect of moving out of poverty. Previously, their land was barren and unsafe due to contamination of UXOs. Following a UXO Lao led clearance operation, their land was cleared of 21 UXOs, which are legacies of War from the Second Indochina War (1964-1973). With technical support from UNDP and funding from the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, this change is part of a broader initiative where 763 UXOs were cleared that benefited 488 villagers in Khammouane province in 2023.

Once overshadowed by threats of hidden dangers beneath the soil, the impact of the project extends beyond economic opportunities on top of the increased safety and security in the province. The Senkong family has started gathering materials – cinder blocks, and sand, hoping to build a house in two years' time. The earnings from Cassava farming and cattle rearing in the UXO-cleared land hold the key to a dream close to their hearts – sending their daughters through high school.

Photo: UXO Lao/Douangchanh Phommavong

Number of reported UXO casualties (2023)

47 

Equivalent of football fields cleared of UXO

1,280 



2.7. PRIVATE SECTOR AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND DIGITALIZATION

In partnership with MoLSW and MoES, the UN supported curriculum and skill standard development, as well as knowledge exchange programmes across a range of professions. This included support to the development of the Laws on Skills Development and Employment, and providing vocational training support to returning migrant workers. Provincial and District Agriculture and Forestry Offices' capacity was strengthened to better support farmers in adopting sustainable and profitable agribusiness practices.

The UN provided capacity-building to the Government and judiciary to facilitate an enabling legal ecosystem for trade, investment, and access to justice, which is fundamental to inclusive prosperity and strengthening the rule of law. Topics ranged from digital trade to access to credit for MSMEs, international transport of goods, and dispute settlement.

Support was also provided to MSMEs and integration into global production chains for wood and coffee.



How fish farming transformed the rural economy

All his life, Xieng had grown rice in his small plot of land, cultivated vegetables in his home garden, and raised fish in his fishponds. It was enough to feed his household, but not enough to sell and earn a reliable income.

In 2020, he was among the farmers supported by IFAD to change this. With intensive training on fish-raising techniques, and a grant of US\$ 500 to buy healthy fish to stock three fishponds, he worked tirelessly to apply his new knowledge and create the perfect conditions for fish by improving and deepening his ponds and building protections against flooding.

During that first year, Xieng sold 200 kg of fish, bringing home US\$ 2,000 – nearly twice what he'd earned the previous year. Ploughing this profit back into his business, it grew to increase his revenue by a further US\$1,000 the following year, and became a supplier to other farmers in the area.

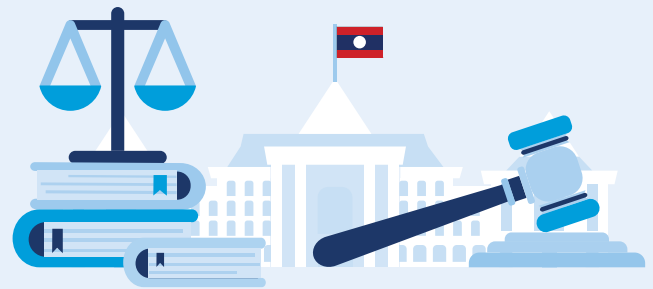
Today, Xieng has been recognized as a model farmer by the district authorities. He passes on what he has learned to other smallholders, giving them hands-on technical advice on rearing healthy animals.

Photo: IFAD/Vilasak Chanthamith

Strategic priority 3

GOVERNANCE AND RULE OF LAW

By 2026, people, especially the most vulnerable and marginalised, are better served by public institutions at all levels in a transparent and inclusive manner, able to exercise their rights and obligations and the institutions shall be strengthened and more accountable while the rule of law and international human rights commitments made by Lao PDR are upheld.



SUPPORTING SDGS

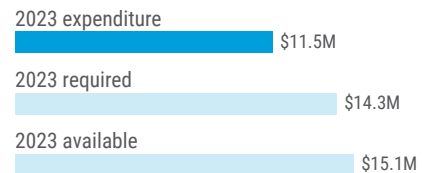


SUPPORTING 9TH NSEDP

Pillar 6: Public governance and administration is improved, and society is equal, fair, and protected by the rule of law

2023 EXPENDITURE (US\$)

\$11.5M



OUTCOME 3 INDICATOR PROGRESS

Target Met (Green) | Progressing (Light Green) | No Progress/Regressing (Yellow) | Insufficient Data (Grey)

| Indicator | Target Met | Progressing | No Progress/Regressing | Insufficient Data |
|---------------------------------------------------------|------------|-------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| Governance & Rule of Law | 10% | 60% | 20% | 10% |
| 3.1 Civic Space & Participation | 25% | 75% | | |
| 3.2 Gender Equality, Women's Empowerment & Human Rights | 50% | 50% | | |
| 3.3 Rule of Law & Access to Justice | 33% | 67% | | |
| 3.4 Transnational Organized Crime | 100% | | | |
| 3.5 Public Administration Reform | 100% | | | |

Reports submitted to Treaty Bodies

3 

People using legal aid services

36k 

CONTRIBUTING AGENCIES

Leads: UNDP, WHO

| | |
|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| IOM | Cross-border mobility; Counter trafficking |
| OHCHR | Civic space and participation; Capacity building for duty-bearers and rights-holders on engagement with UN human rights mechanisms (treaty bodies, special procedures, and universal periodic review); Capacity development for rights holders to participate in decision-making (including in human rights mechanisms); Technical advice on human rights |
| UNDESA | Digital governance and connectivity; Female leadership promotion |
| UNDP | Civic space and participation & Human Rights; Rule of law and access to justice; National Assembly and Provincial People's Assemblies; Disability inclusion; Digital governance |
| UNESCO | Media development and access to information ; Ethics of AI Readiness Assessment |
| UNFPA | Population and housing census; Lao social indicator survey; Civil registration and vital statistics; Sexual and reproductive health and rights; Youth engagement |
| UNHCR | Population and housing census (technical support on identifying stateless populations and those of undetermined nationality) |
| UNICEF | Lao social indicator survey; Legislative advocacy on child-friendly budgets (national assembly and provincial people's assemblies) |
| UNODC | Anti-corruption; Anti-money laundering/counter-financing of terrorism; Border management; Criminal justice; Crimes that affect the environment (including waste trafficking); Cybercrime; Drugs and health; Global rapid interdiction of dangerous substances; Pre-cursor chemicals and illicit drugs; Sustainable alternative development; Trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants |
| UNOPS | Border control management |
| UNV | Advocating for volunteer participation |
| WHO | Health governance; Data governance |

During 2023, the Government and UN made important progress on strengthening the rule of law. Training on legal aid services, combatting transnational and organized crime and trafficking in persons was provided to 1,672 officials from the justice and police sectors. Coordination of regional responses to drug trafficking improved with increased technical support on border management and anti-money laundering. The Legal Aid Offices of MoJ and provincial Justice Department launched the Digital Legal Aid Platform - an innovative tool to support the access to legal aid services, especially for vulnerable groups, including survivors of GBV, youth, children and communities living in rural areas.

Progress on tackling GBV included the launch of the 'Essential Services Package for Women and Girls Subjected to Violence' and standard operating procedures to prosecute GBV perpetrators and support survivors. Over one million people were reached through Information Education Communication campaigns with more than 2,000 interventions designed to raise awareness for the rights-holders to claim their rights, including in the areas of women's empowerment and gender equality, child rights and sexual and reproductive health.

Progress was also made on identifying gaps and key actions necessary to accelerate women's leadership at both national and subnational levels of government.

The year also saw important steps forward in the country's statistical capacity, with support to the Lao Social Indicator Survey III, Civil Registration and Vital Statistics System (CRVS), 2025 Population and Housing Census preparation, digitalization of hospital record systems, online migration data platform and juvenile justice data collection system. Strategic plans for digitalizing the Government and

Border Liaison Offices supported

21 

Proportion of births registered

65% 

Health sectors were finalized and the Government's digital public services app (Gov X) launched.

In the area of human rights, the Government submitted three overdue reports to the Treaty Bodies and proactively engaged with Human Rights Council mechanisms. Civil society organizations were further empowered with more technical guidance, which enabled them to submit a parallel report to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and prepare a parallel report to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Support was also provided to develop the National Action Plans addressing recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, with civil society consultation.

Local governance was strengthened substantively through an initiative bringing together district and local leaders – including representatives from communities, Government, mass organizations, health-care providers, and ethnic and religious groups – to enhance trust, ownership and leadership regarding health, particularly for rural and marginalized groups. More than 190 villages across 24 districts in nine provinces were assisted via the MoH and MoHA-led initiative, with plans for a nationwide roll-out.



An idea where we could work more joined up is at the local level – many local leaders are responsible for engagement and activities on behalf of multiple entities or mass organisations, as well as looking for ways to improve coordination, planning and mobilizing support and resources for their area. We need to place more emphasis on institutionalizing, so that there is sustainability and ownership by the government, and we can do this by using existing laws and mechanisms that are already part of the governance system.”

- Dr. Ying Ru-Lo, WHO Representative and co-chair of Strategic Priority 3



3.1. CIVIC SPACE AND PARTICIPATION

Lao PDR successfully developed and launched the National Action Plan on Universal Periodic Review recommendations, with support from the UN and CSOs consultations. Through this collaboration, understanding of human rights obligations and engagement with UN human rights mechanisms increased. This contributed to the Government's formulation of pledges for the 75th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the



Heroes in pink: Lao midwives supporting rights and saving lives

Every year, about 200 students graduate from Lao PDR's three internationally-accredited midwifery colleges – the first to receive the distinction in the Asia-Pacific region, with the process supported by UNFPA. “Establishing the higher diploma in 2019 added another dimension to the practice of midwifery, levelling up their learning,” midwifery teacher Phout Sidavong told UNFPA. “After graduation, some midwives join the public sector; some prefer to work in private clinics. But we always select students from vulnerable areas so that they can go back and support their communities.”

Across many remote and hard-to-reach Lao communities, a shortage of trained health providers jeopardizes access to family planning and sexual and reproductive health services – endangering the lives of women and girls. Midwives like Ms. Kamsing are excited to fill this gap. “I am proud to be able to help women in my village. I can't wait to graduate and become a practising midwife.” Ms. Kamsing said. As part of her studies at the College of Health Sciences, Ms. Kamsing currently works at Xiengkhuang central hospital as an intern.

Photo: UNFPA/Fatima-Zahra Benyahia

organization of a human rights symposium also attended by youth and university students.

Nine women-led CSOs increased their capacities to document and report on human rights violations. As a result, a coalition of CSOs submitted the first-ever nationally led alternative report to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In parallel, Organizations of People with Disabilities received training to engage in all phases of the development process of the National Action Plan to implement Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recommendations, contributing to increasing their engagement in decision-making.



3.2. GENDER EQUALITY, WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT, AND HUMAN RIGHTS

The Government, with support from UN agencies, advanced the National Action Plan on Ending Violence Against Women and Promoting Children and Gender Equality. Over 6 million were reached through various awareness-raising activities, including the 16 Days of Activism Against GBV campaign involving more than 50 UN, Government, civil society and private sector partners.

A comprehensive National Study on Child Marriage and Adolescent Pregnancy was conducted in collaboration with the CSOs. 775 service providers strengthened their capacity to respond to GBV with standardized operating procedures.

In partnership with MoHA, the UN supported a national review of measures to promote female leadership at both national and local levels.

The Government submitted two overdue reports and engaged with the Human Rights Council with UN support. In southern Lao PDR, 58,717 women, were supported to increase their capacity to advocate for their rights to access clean water.



3.3. RULE OF LAW AND ACCESS TO JUSTICE

As part of efforts to strengthen the capacity of the legal sector, the UN supported the Lao Bar Association to prepare its first strategic vision, as well as continuous professional development programmes, and establish a lawyer network and mentoring programme.

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) launched a digital platform to increase access to justice and is currently finalizing the legal aid action plan. Meanwhile, the Government launched standard operating procedures for the Justice and Police sectors covering GBV to ensure effective implementation of the Essential Services Package for women and girls affected by violence.

The Office of Supreme People's Prosecutor enhanced their staff's capacity on law enforcement through various training activities and sessions sharing best practices on trafficking in person prosecution, and victim-centered interview techniques and approaches.



3.4. COMBATTING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME

With UN support, the criminal justice sector in Lao PDR improved the coordination of responses to Transnational Organized Crime, in particular through recommendations provided during strategic dialogues. At the regional level, improved coordination and focused responses to increased drug trafficking were facilitated through the Mekong MoU on Drug Control mechanism.

Lao authorities were also supported in addressing the strategic deficiencies identified by the Asia



National, provincial, district and local leaders coming together and putting health first

“CONNECT has really improved engagement between village authorities and health centre. The Lao Women's Union, village health volunteers and village chief work closely together to assist pregnant women in receiving services at the health centre, children are getting vaccinated and birth registration, and to make sure everyone has the right documents to access health insurance.” says Mailor Xong, a community leader in Borikhamxay Province.

At a community level, local governance (with health as the entry point) is being substantively strengthened via a WHO-supported initiative, CONNECT, which brings together district and local leaders – including representatives from communities, government agencies, mass organizations, health-care providers, and ethnic and religious groups – to enhance governance, ownership and leadership regarding health, particularly for rural and marginalized groups.

Mailor Xong is one of the thousands putting health at the top of their priority list, both during the COVID-19 pandemic, and beyond. As a result of her efforts to prioritize health beyond the health sector, and improve coordination and planning with local health staff, community members are reporting improved trust in local health services, increased birth registrations, better maternal health outcomes and increased COVID-19 and regular vaccination coverage.

Photo: WHO/Enric Catala



Reducing reliance on illicit opium poppy cultivation in Huaphanh province

UNODC's Alternative Development projects aim to target the interlinked challenges of opium poppy cultivation, poverty, and trans-national organized crime by breaking the dependence on illicit opium poppy cultivation through the promotion of high-quality coffee farming in northern Lao PDR.

“ Before our family used to be poor and grow opium. However, after the Alternative Development project began, we began growing coffee. Since growing coffee, I have been able to grow more income, and buy more materials not only for farming but also for serving the needs of my family.”

– Nong Sengvida, a coffee farmer from Kuan District in Huaphanh province

The Vanmai Coffee Cooperative, founded with UNODC's assistance, has become a Fairtrade-certified, farmer-owned organization uniting 12 villages across

Huaphanh province. In 2023, Vanmai's washed Arabica coffee earned the title of the best in Laos, generating over \$600,000 in revenue since its inception in 2021. Beyond economic impact, Vanmai fosters social bonds, providing social and environmental services, empowering both men and women in the process.

“ Through this project, I can see more women involved in the coffee plantations and in farming the coffee. Also, whenever we have meetings, training, or workshops, women are also increasingly participating. This is helping improve the gender balance in our village. More importantly, by participating in this coffee cultivation, women are also able to participate in decision-making in the family.”

– Nong Sengvida in conversation reflecting on the impact of the project on women

Photo: UNODC/Xaysavath Keoduangvichith

Pacific Group on Money Laundering, in relation to Lao PDR's money laundering, terrorist and proliferation financing regime, during and following the publication of Lao PDR's mutual evaluation in August.

The Ministry of Public Security's efforts in border management continued to receive support, marked by the opening of the 21st Border Liaison Office

(BLO) in Saravane province. Through the BLO network, cross-border cooperation is enhanced through multi-agency mechanisms; improving counterparts' capabilities to collect, analyze and disseminate information; and strengthening staff knowledge and skills through training programmes.



3.5. PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM AND DATA-DRIVEN GOVERNANCE

The Government successfully drafted the Digital Government Master Plan and launched digital public services app (Gov X) with UN support. The Digital Health Strategy, which provides a roadmap to improve government systems, processes, and public service delivery was put in place. Data-driven health governance was enhanced by the digitalized national health management and medical record systems. An online migration data platform and juvenile justice data collection system were also activated.

National statistical capacity saw progress through support to the Social Indicator Survey III, Civil Registration and Vital Statistics System, 2025 Population and Housing Census preparation and improvements in birth registrations.

Recognizing that data is a critical asset of public administration, a baseline study was conducted with the Ministry of Technology and Communications (MoTC) to address challenges and gaps in digital data management and governance across government agencies, with a focus on enhancing whole-of-government institutional capacities.



Gov X App

The Gov-X application is a new mobile app that aims to improve the delivery and accessibility of government services to citizens, businesses, and government officials in Lao PDR. This application was developed as part of the national strategy to transform digital governance and is a significant step towards establishing a new standard and model for digital governance. It is part of the Ministry of Technology and Communications' Digital Government Strategy, which aims to make government services more accessible, efficient, and transparent. The new application is now available for free download on the Apple App Store and the Google Play Store.

Strategic priority 4

ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE, AND RESILIENCE

By 2026, people, especially the most vulnerable and marginalised, and institutions will be better able to sustainably access, manage, preserve, and benefit from natural resources and promote green growth that is risk-informed, disaster and climate-resilient.



SUPPORTING SDGS

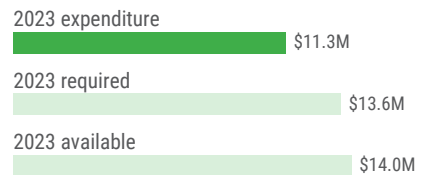


SUPPORTING 9TH NSEDP

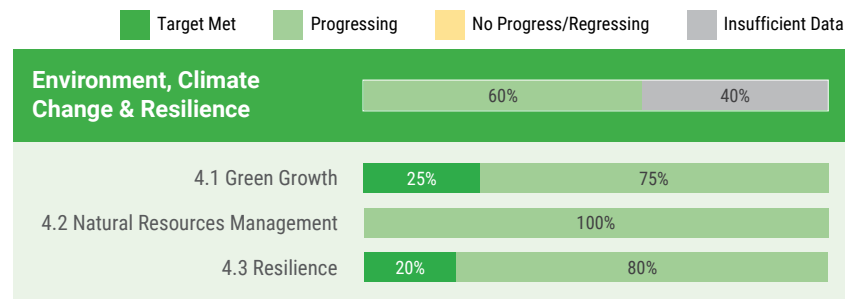
Pillar 4: Environmental protection enhanced and disaster risks reduced

2023 EXPENDITURE (US\$)

\$11.3M




OUTCOME 4 INDICATOR PROGRESS



Functional weather stations

76 

Forest coverage

62% 

Villages support to have direct access to weather and disaster risk information

479 

CONTRIBUTING AGENCIES

Leads: FAO, UNEP

| | |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| FAO | Disaster risk management; Forest and ecosystem protection; Food systems strengthening; Livelihood resilience; Climate-smart agriculture; Policy and capacity development; Natural resource management; Sustainable agriculture |
| UNCDF | Financing for local climate change adaptation |
| UNDP | Disaster risk management; Low-carbon agriculture; Climate-sensitive health risks; Plastic pollution; Water resource management |
| UNDRR | National adaptation planning; Ecosystem-based adaptation; Sustainable forestry; Carbon markets and financing climate action; Strengthening capacities for NDC reporting |
| UNEP | National adaptation planning; Financing for climate change adaptation |
| UN-Habitat | Disaster risk management; Urban resilience |
| UNICEF | National Disaster and Climate Risk Mitigation, Disaster Preparedness and Response; Climate change resilience |
| UNIDO | Reducing Persistent Organic Pollutants and Greenhouse Gas emissions |
| UNOPS | Infrastructure asset management |
| WFP | Climate Resilience, Disaster Risk Management, Emergency Preparedness and Response |
| WHO | Environmental Health; WASH in health care facilities |

The sustainable use of natural resources remained a key environmental concern in 2023, with the Government increasingly highlighting the need for strengthened management and oversight practices. The 9th NSEDP Financing Strategy (2023-2025), developed by the Government with support of the UN agencies and development partners recognizes this concern and includes a decision to consider environmental fiscal reform as well as a review of legislation and regulations. Given its growing importance globally and potential for Lao PDR, Government awareness and understanding of options for carbon finance was strengthened through a series of World Bank and UN-supported knowledge-sharing seminars.

Efforts to strengthen evidence-based planning included support to strengthening institutions and infrastructure. The addition of 76 weather stations in 2023 enhanced meteorological data availability, thereby supporting risk-informed development planning. UN agencies trained government staff on greenhouse gas inventory preparation and Nationally-Determined Contribution tracking methodologies. The continued expansion of capacity was also supported through the development of courses at the National University of Laos.

In 2023, Lao PDR was affected by seasonal floods, affecting 102,191 people in 12 provinces. To better manage this, with UN support, 15 villages strengthened climate and disaster resilience through the adoption and implementation of disaster risk reduction strategies. Efforts to enhance resilience in 189 vulnerable villages in southern Lao PDR were driven by development of actionable plans and support for resilient infrastructure, rooted in climate risk and vulnerability assessments.

Positive steps were taken to address environmental health challenges through the 'One Health' approach. With UN support, MoH, MoNRE, and MAF developed a roadmap to strengthen inter-sectoral coordination, cooperation and capacity building in the detection, communication, response, and prevention of cross-cutting human, environmental and animal health challenges. The UNCT also provided support to national authorities on the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment and mainstreaming human rights in climate action.

With UN support, MAF led the development of a National Action Plan for Food Systems Transformation, to guide Lao PDR's pursuit of the SDG High-Impact Initiative on Food Systems Transformation.



We have made significant strides in addressing environmental challenges, mitigating the impacts of climate change, and fostering resilience in our communities. Our collaborative efforts have demonstrated power of working together, and we remain steadfast in our commitment to creating a sustainable and resilient future for all. We are dedicated to continuing our joint initiatives and partnerships to ensure that our environment is protected, our climate is sustained, and our communities are resilient in the face of ongoing challenges."

- Kim, Kyung Mee, FAO Representative and co-chair of Strategic Priority 4



4.1. GREEN GROWTH

In partnership with the UN, MoNRE developed a Gender Action Plan incorporating 119 individuals' perspectives on gender roles in addressing climate change. Interministerial coordination and data collection were strengthened for the Measurement, Reporting and Verification of greenhouse gas emissions with joint technical support.

The COP-28 Health Declaration was endorsed by MoH, as part of ongoing efforts to strengthen the climate resilience capacity of the health system and promote low-carbon sustainable technology and services .

The UN supported MAF to develop guidelines on food systems and nutrition, fostering policy coherence and promoting sustainable food systems, as well as on land resources information management systems to promote more sustainable land use and climate resilience.



4.2. NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

The Government developed the Law on Crop Protection to decrease environmental harm from agriculture. MAF and MoNRE, partnering with UN agencies, worked to enhance Lao PDR's agricultural and forestry management, resource utilization, and resilience in the face of climate change by establishing rubber processing guidelines, a pathway for accessing REDD+ funding through forest carbon markets, and improved REDD+ benefit sharing.

Foresight tools were also used to empower stakeholders with data and insights for key crops, climate, and livelihoods- to contribute towards increases in agricultural resilience and productivity.



Resilient shelters build resilient lives

Following the dam collapse in Sanamxay district in 2018, UN-Habitat assisted with the construction of shelters. Vice District Governor Ms. Phoudone Choummaly highlights that the relocated residents in the district still harbor fears of flooding.

Having the right to access shelters is not just about physical protection but a vital first step in rebuilding lives.

With the support from the Adaptation Fund, MoNRE, MPWT, and UN-Habitat, a new project sets out to enhance climate resilience across six provinces. The lessons learned from the Sanamxay project will be incorporated into it, ensuring that the insights gained contribute to the ongoing effort to enhance community resilience and sustainable reconstruction.

Initiatives such as reconstructing 5,500 houses and 4 evacuation centers, and implementing 9 hydro-meteorological stations embody a commitment beyond immediate relief. This commitment seeks to nurture sustained resilience and reconstruct lives in the face of adversity.

Photo: UN-Habitat

To optimize agricultural practices, they also drafted agrometeorology protocols and trained extension officers. The capacity of Government officials across ministries to integrate the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment in their respective work was strengthened through a series of workshops.



4.3. RESILIENCE

The capacity of 6,516 individuals, including 2,600 women and 1,161 government officials, in climate and disaster risk management was strengthened through activities by MoLSW, MoNRE, and MoH, with UN support.

Fifteen new community-based disaster risk management (CBDRM) plans in Phongsaly were established, CBDRM capacity strengthened in 45 communities in Savannakhet, and data from hazard, vulnerability, and capacity assessments in 55 Phongsaly and Oudomxay communities was collected. MoH carried out a national risk assessment and pilot-tested a hospital safety index to inform resilience planning.

MoLSW developed child-friendly evacuation centre guidelines and enhanced warehouse management capacity, upgrading four warehouses, and providing emergency preparedness and response training. Inter-ministerial capacities were enhanced on emergency response, and a MoNRE disaster risk reduction action plan 2023-2025 was developed. Disaster data management was enhanced through MoNRE and MoLSW upgrading of information systems.

Over 50 organizations including government, UN agencies, IFIs, private sectors, NGOs and CSOs were engaged by MoNRE and MoLSW to develop a roadmap to deliver Early Warning for All.



Addressing disability inclusion and environmental resilience together

Every year, a significant number of WFP food commodity bags branded with donor visibility are left over. The bags are used to package dry food items, such as rice and lentils, for transportation to target communities. Surplus commodity bags are normally discarded, adding to landfill and environmental pollution.

In 2023, as a further step in ensuring inclusion across its programmes and support systems, WFP reached out to organizations for persons with disabilities (OPDs) to request quotations in a tendering process to reuse the discarded commodity bags. The Xonphao Working Group for People Living with Disability won the bid to turn these items into shopping bags. This project supported the vocational skills of people with disabilities, raised awareness on traditional handicrafts produced in Laos, while strengthening the ability of OPDs to enter competitive procurement processes. In addition, visibility for WFP’s donors was created, as the repurposed commodity bags shows branding from donor countries.

In a first step, 200 shopping bags were produced and the partnership was documented in a video, while the development of new products is underway with the Xonphao Working Group. The bags are being distributed amongst donors and partners, highlighting the partnership.

Photo: WFP/Vilakhone Sipaseuth



Strengthening village resilience in Phongsaly province

“We, the villagers of Soulinh Village, gathered to discuss potential disasters that could impact our lives and livelihoods”, explained Mr. Phantamin, Chair of the Village Disaster Management Committee. “Together, we developed a comprehensive disaster risk management plan to reduce risks and ensure an effective and efficient response in case of a disaster”.

Having recognized that locust infestations, droughts, and animal epidemics posed significant threats to their livelihoods, the villagers identified proactive measures, including preparedness and response activities, to cope with the potential impact.

With support from WFP, the villagers established a community rice bank in a safer area to serve as a local safety net during lean seasons and disasters, as well as making arrangements for loudspeakers for early warning during emergencies.

The village’s disaster risk management efforts were supported by WFP, UNDRR, and USAID-BHA in collaboration with MoLSW and Provincial and District Authorities.

Photo: UNDRR/Sanjay Pariyar

PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships are at the core of how the UN in Lao PDR is working to deliver on the goals set out in the Cooperation Framework. Building on the essential partnerships with the Government of Lao PDR and development partners supporting the country, the UN Country Team has continued to explore innovative new partnerships across a range of different issues that could help to unlock faster progress towards shared goals.



Fostering regional collaboration and partnership to prepare for LDC Graduation

Bangladesh, Nepal, and Lao PDR were all recommended for LDC graduation in 2026. Whilst this milestone represents a longstanding national ambition for all three countries, a successful and sustainable graduation requires careful management. To support this, the UN has been facilitating substantive exchanges and sharing of lessons between the three countries.

Following a successful peer exchange in organized Thailand in 2022, work continued to support collaboration into 2023. This was exemplified with the hosting of a joint event in the margins of the LDC V conference in Doha, attended by the Prime Minister of Bangladesh and Deputy Prime Ministers of Nepal and Lao PDR, and a joint statement issued following this. This provided an opportunity to work together to amplify their voices in calling for appropriate international support to navigate their graduation processes.



Partnerships with Persons living with Disabilities

Collective efforts among UN Agencies to deepen partnership on the Rights of Persons with

Disabilities continued the strong momentum gained in 2022.

Following Lao PDR's submission to the Convention on the Rights for Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the UN is supporting the government in the implementation of the recommendations. In 2023, the UN working group on persons with disabilities has been working closely with the National Committee for persons with disabilities (NCPD), Disability persons, UN Agencies, INGOs and OPDs to develop the National Action Plan to implement the CRPD recommendations.



Strengthening partnership across stakeholders on data

Accurate and timely data is essential to making informed decisions. However, collecting and processing information from across the country for use by decision makers remains a challenge.

The third round of the Lao Social Indicator Survey (LSIS III), undertaken during 2023, demonstrates the importance of effective partnerships to meeting these data needs. Led by the Lao Statistics Bureau in close collaboration with MoH and MoES, LSIS III received technical support provided by the UN and financial support from the EU and Australia.

This partnership successfully trained 173 field officers and surveyed more than 21,000 households nationwide to collect data for the first set of national data on the welfare of children and women in Lao PDR since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It unlocks essential insights into the situation of women and children in Lao PDR and sheds light on how the lives of women and children were affected by the pandemic.

Under the slogan of "Counting everyone because everyone counts", the 5th Population and Housing Census (PHC) of Lao PDR is gaining its full speed to take off in March 2025. The PHC is amongst the Government's largest and most complex operations, and the first-ever digital Census,

requiring significant preparation, adequate human and financial resources to collect census data from approximately 1.4 million households in 18 provinces by 13,151 enumerators. In addition to the government's financial resources, the PHC has been receiving technical and financial assistance from UNFPA in collaboration with USAID and DFAT to ensure it meets the international standards.

Findings from LSIS-III and 5th PHC will directly provide data to monitor the implementation of the 9th NSEDP, the formulation of the 10th NSEDP and enabling the measurement of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.



Joint Advocacy to end Gender-Based Violence

In 2023, the landmark annual '16 Days' campaign grew to unite over 50 partners to join hands promoting public awareness of violence against women.

Under the theme of "Unite! Invest to Prevent and Respond to Violence Against Women and Girls", the Campaign brought together UN agencies, international NGOs, donor governments, private sector, youth, media, and civil society organizations participating in various public events and outreach activities, including art and sports in 8 provinces.

This extensive collaborative partnership around GBV reached over 6 million people across the country and sends a strong message on the national commitment to eliminate gender-based violence.



Clean air without borders- Cross-border partnership to address air pollution issue in Thailand and Lao PDR

During early 2023, air pollution became an increasingly prominent issue in Lao PDR with implications for a range of different development priorities. The transboundary nature of the challenge, with large scale burning in rural areas leading to haze being carried across national

borders by the wind, makes addressing the issue especially challenging.

In response, the UN in Lao PDR in collaboration with counterparts in Thailand, with financial support from Luxembourg and Germany, co-designed actionable and scalable solutions for clean air in Thailand and Lao PDR by creating a platform for representatives from the civil society, Government, private sector, academia and youth in Thailand and Lao PDR to network and share knowledge on possible solutions. The most promising of the ideas generated will receive grants to practically test their innovations.



Support to disaster preparedness and response

Chaired by the MoLSW and the UN RC, the Inter-agency Standing Committee in Lao PDR developed an inter-agency contingency plan ahead of the annual monsoon season. Based on a flood scenario, the plan was developed with engagement from UN agencies and NGOs across nine clusters. The plan was endorsed at a high level meeting in July 2023.



DiDRR (Disability Inclusion Disaster Risk Reduction)

In any disaster, persons with disabilities are one of the most vulnerable groups with significant barriers to avoid loss, death and injury. With an aim to empower them and their families in a safer and more resilient environment within their communities, the UN in Lao PDR is supporting the Government to integrate Disability-inclusive into their national Disaster Risk Reduction Plan and come up with a practical guidance to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk. This tool, once finalised, can also be used by persons with disabilities and Organizations of Persons with Disabilities for policy advocacy and collaborative action.

RESULTS OF THE UN WORKING BETTER TOGETHER



“Tapping into expertise from the various agencies in Lao PDR’s Joint UN Team on HIV has been critical in providing services to those left farthest behind, not only in health, but also in other areas like human rights, gender, and social protection. Declining resources and competing priorities continually test the ability of a joint team to respond, and therefore more than ever, the resolve and commitment of the UN is needed to deliver as one through the UNSDCF in collaborative means to amplify each other for impactful results.”

- Patricia Ongpin, UNAIDS Country Director Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Malaysia



“2023 marked the half-way point to the 2030 deadline for achieving the SDGs, as well as the mid-point of Lao PDR’s 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan 2021-2025. Working closely together, UN agencies provided technical support and critical analysis for the mid-term review of the Plan, paving the way for in-depth discussions and a reinvigorated dialogue at the round table meeting with development partners on how to tackle the challenges facing Lao PDR.”

- Martine Therer, UNDP Resident Representative



“Close collaboration among UN agencies in Lao PDR is the key to unlocking the full transformative power of sustainable industrial development. Using our synergies, pooling resources and expertise, we can be more impactful in accelerating economic growth, driving innovation, and creating prosperity for all.”

- Gerd Müller, UNIDO Director General



“The success of the second Lao National Urban Forum stands as a testament to the collaborative spirit uniting Ministries, development partners, and the people. Over seven days, we witnessed the power of collective effort in shaping sustainable urban development. This inclusive synergy reflects our commitment to fostering positive change for a better future.”

- Dr. Avi Sarkar, UN-Habitat Regional Advisor South-East Asia, UBS, UPB, GSD, and Head of Office, Lao PDR



“Working together through the Programme Oversight Group enhances the understanding of what agencies do in Laos, and provides a platform for collaboration. It helps avoiding overlap in activities and streamlines the approach vis a vis the government. With a plethora of different coordinating groups, it can be challenging to be present in all relevant groups all of the time. Moving forward, it would be good to look at how we can provide concise information as relevant to all – such as the UNCT minutes that are now being shared as relevant – and to replicate this for the other working groups.”

- Jacqueline DeGroot, WFP Deputy Representative and POG co-chair



“The coordination between UN agencies makes it easy to leverage complementarities and improve quality. The UN is a recognized and credible partner which reflects on all of us. We also have a shared set of values. Regional and global backup from the system, as well as access to knowledge and expertise inside and outside of our own organization are additional benefits of working together. Moving forward, I would like to suggest to simplify our internal coordination architecture. I would also like to see UN agencies include other UN agencies in their discussions with the government on common themes.”

- Marc-Andre Prost, WFP Representative and Country Director



“Working together and in close coordination amongst UN agencies brings a multi-sectorial approach to migration management that is critical to saving lives and protecting people on the move by facilitating pathways for regular migration. Leveraging our individual and cross-cutting UN mandate is key to unlocking the links between migration and development in Lao PDR. Increasing our advocacy, programmatic, and operations coordination efforts will enable the UN to respond effectively to the country’s common themes.”

- Shareen Tuladhar, IOM Chief of Mission to Lao PDR



“One of the main challenges in 2023 was ensuring timely implementation of key OMT priorities and interventions, including harmonizing UN agency focal points’ programmes, operations and administrative arrangements. As a result, we have come up with solutions such as linking the newly introduced OMT Dashboard with the online UN Business Operations Strategy, revamping the UN Task Force on the Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers, establishing a multisectoral coordination mechanism to ensure fast-track decisions and consensus-based solutions to various operations and administrative issues with government partners, among others.”

- Bakhtiyor Kadirov, UNFPA Representative and OMT Chair

EVALUATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

After the first year of implementation of our next-generation Cooperation Framework, the UN Country Team and Programme Oversight Group made up of senior programmatic staff held a retreat to reflect on the early experiences of implementation, and to collect reflections ahead of a substantial leadership transition for the Country Team, with eight UNCT members transitioning during 2023, including the UN Resident Coordinator and the FAO, UNCDF, UNDP, UNFPA, UNIDO, UNODC and WFP representatives.

Focused on how our ways of working could be further improved in line with the expectation of the UN development system reform, the retreat tackled questions relating to joint programming; joint planning, information-sharing, and collaboration; resourcing; and country ownership.

Key reflections included:

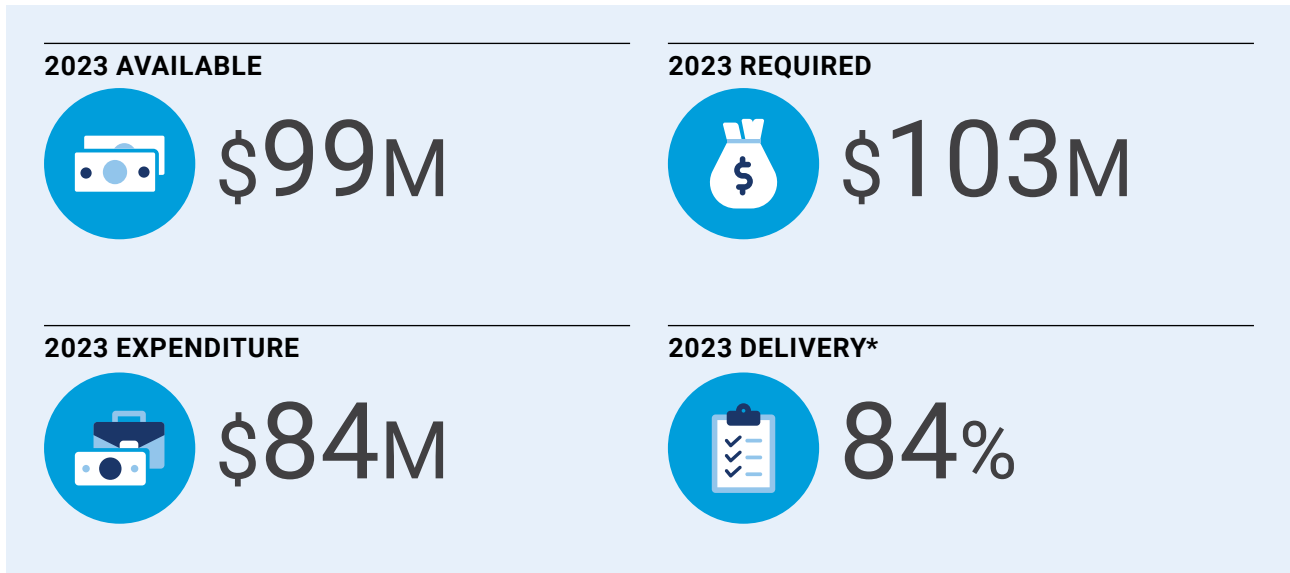
- With the move towards increasingly integrated ways of working across different UN agencies, funds, and programmes, there is a need to address how contributions by agencies to joint work are incentivized and recognized, minimizing the extent to which they are seen as being in tension with individual agency objectives;
- Recognizing the substantial variation in capacity and partnerships across UN entities operating in

Lao PDR, the UN will further consider how those with larger presences could facilitate increased effectiveness of interventions by smaller specialized entities as part of larger ongoing initiatives, with the aim of improving the overall effectiveness of programming;

- As part of a new Partnership Strategy to be developed in 2024 to support the implementation of the Cooperation Framework, the UNCT will consider options for increased coordination of resource-mobilization efforts across UN entities, including considering establishing mechanisms to make joint resource mobilization easier;
- The roles and responsibilities across the coordination mechanisms established under the Cooperation Framework will be revisited at the mid-way point to reflect lessons learned on practically implementing a shared planning cycle. This update will also take forward relevant reflections from mid-term reviews of individual agency strategic country programmes.

Decisions in response to these reflections will be taken forward in 2024, following the UNCT transitions, in coordination with our key partners and consultation with the government.

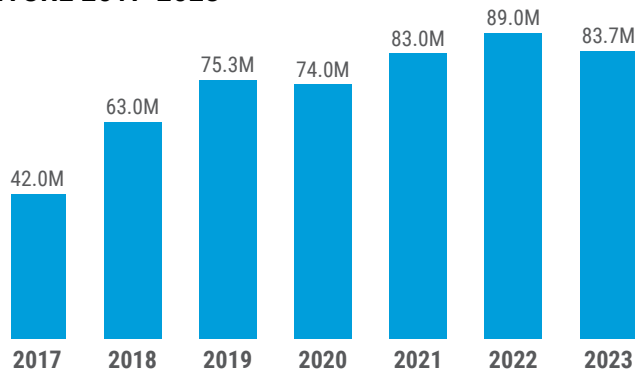
FINANCIAL OVERVIEW AND RESOURCE MOBILIZATION



BY OUTCOME

| | 2023 available | 2023 required | 2023 expenditure | 2023 delivery | |
|-----------|----------------|---------------|------------------|---------------|-----------|
| Outcome 1 | \$57.2M | \$60.1M | \$52.3M | 91% | Outcome 1 |
| Outcome 2 | \$12.8M | \$14.6M | \$8.6M | 67% | Outcome 2 |
| Outcome 3 | \$15.1M | \$14.3M | \$11.5M | 76% | Outcome 3 |
| Outcome 4 | \$14.0M | \$13.6M | \$11.3M | 81% | Outcome 4 |

TOTAL ANNUAL EXPENDITURE 2017-2023



*Delivery rate is calculated as a percentage of delivery against available resources. For some agencies that operate on a multi-year funding framework, the annual available resources and delivery rates are estimated.

BY ORGANIZATION

| | 2023 available | 2023 required | 2023 expenditure | 2023 delivery | |
|------------|----------------|---------------|------------------|---------------|------------|
| FAO | \$3,440k | \$3,440k | \$2,667k | 78% | FAO |
| ILO | \$1,556k | \$2,815k | \$1,556k | 100% | ILO |
| IOM | \$1,487k | \$2,390k | \$1,304k | 88% | IOM |
| ITC | \$1,083k | \$1,034k | \$1,083k | 100% | ITC |
| UNCITRAL | \$10k | \$10k | \$7k | 76% | UNCITRAL |
| UNCDF | \$123k | \$123k | \$122k | 99% | UNCDF |
| UNICEF | \$18,318k | \$22,067k | \$17,410k | 95% | UNICEF |
| UNDESA | \$121k | \$577k | \$111k | 91% | UNDESA |
| UNDP | \$14,499k | \$14,499k | \$12,187k | 84% | UNDP |
| UNESCO | \$430k | \$597k | \$372k | 87% | UNESCO |
| UNEP | \$4,608k | \$4,608k | \$2,519k | 55% | UNEP |
| OHCHR | \$139k | \$17k | \$139k | 100% | OHCHR |
| UN-Habitat | \$3,167k | \$3,167k | \$3,167k | 100% | UN-Habitat |
| UNIDO | \$86k | \$86k | \$86k | 100% | UNIDO |
| UN-AIDS | \$264k | \$200k | \$264k | 100% | UN-AIDS |
| UNDRR | \$172k | \$172k | \$170k | 99% | UNDRR |
| UNOPS | \$7,002k | \$7,002k | \$6,311k | 90% | UNOPS |
| UNODC | \$5,831k | \$3,860k | \$3,832k | 66% | UNODC |
| UNFPA | \$3,888k | \$3,330k | \$3,431k | 88% | UNFPA |
| WFP | \$19,326k | \$17,789k | \$13,664k | 71% | WFP |
| WHO | \$13,618k | \$14,792k | \$13,257k | 97% | WHO |

The available and required budget includes some resources for future years since some UN agencies have multi-year project cycle

WHO's fiscal cycle runs on a biennium basis. The biennial Programme budgets are developed and approved based on the General Programme of Work approved by the Member States. The financial data reported in the Annual Results Report 2022 were estimated figures for the 2022-23 biennium, covering two years. The financial data reported in this Annual Results Report 2023 correspond to the year 2023 only.



CHAPTER 3

UNCT key focus for next year



National Planning and Financing

With the finalization of both the Mid-Term Review and the Financing Strategy for the 9th NSEDP, a key priority for the UNCT in collaboration with key partners in 2024 will be providing support to the implementation of the key recommendations and priority actions. This will include work to support the development of the 10th NSEDP, which will run from 2026 through to 2030, particularly regarding supporting coherence across policy priorities. The UN will also prioritize support to the implementation of the recently approved Smooth Transition Strategy for LDC graduation, both with regards to supporting the implementation of some specific actions, and supporting overall coordination and management by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



Cooperation Framework Mid-Point

The Cooperation Framework and many agency-specific programming documents that support its implementation will reach the mid-point of their 5-year implementation timeframe in 2024, with several mid-term reviews planned. This will present an opportunity for joint lesson learning on how to improve the effectiveness of both joint and individual activities, and to strengthen joint UNCT planning and coordination processes. This work will be informed by the six key transitions and engine-room actions, aiming for catalytic and multiplier effect across SDGs, with a spotlight on investment pathways to achieve the goals. UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, and WFP will coordinate the reviews of their respective programming documents in 2024, with results feeding into joint UN planning and coordination efforts.



Voluntary National Review

In 2024, Lao PDR will present its third Voluntary National Review of progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to the High-Level Political Forum in New York. Building on previous reports, this high-profile, integrated assessment aims to facilitate a collaborative reflection on the country's development achievements, the most pressing challenges, and potential ways forward. Including reflections on the 6 key transitions identified at the global level as central to accelerate progress towards the achievement of the SDGs, it will serve as a key input into national processes for determining policy priorities to accelerate progress towards the SDGs over the remaining years to 2030.



Summit of the Future

In September 2024, world leaders will convene for the Summit of the Future. This will be a once-in-a-generation opportunity to work to rebuild global trust and international cooperation to effectively tackle the global challenges that have emerged in recent years or may yet be over the horizon. Leading up to this Summit, the UNCT will work closely with Government counterparts to support preparations for substantive and productive engagement in discussions.

ACRONYMS

| | |
|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ADB | Asian Development Bank |
| BLO | Border Liaison Office |
| BoL | Bank of Laos |
| CBDRM | Community Based Disaster Risk Management |
| CDP | UN Committee for Development Policy |
| CEDAW | Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women |
| CPRD | The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities |
| CRS | Catholic Relief Services |
| CRVS | Civil Registration and Vital Statistics |
| CSE | Comprehensive sexuality education |
| DFAT | Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade |
| ESCAP | United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific |
| EU | European Union |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organisation |
| GBV | Gender-based Violence |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| IFAD | International Fund for Agricultural Development |
| ILO | International Labour Organisation |
| INGOs | International non-governmental organizations |
| IOM | International Organisation for Migration |
| ITC | International Trade Center |
| JICA | Japan International Cooperation Agency |

| | |
|----------------|------------------------------------------------|
| KOFIH | Korean Foundation for International Healthcare |
| Lao PDR | Lao People's Democratic Republic |
| LDC | Least Developed Country |
| LSB | Lao Statistics Bureau |
| LSIS | Lao Social Indicator Survey |
| LWU | Lao Women's Union |
| LYU | Lao People's Revolutionary Youth Union |
| MAF | Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry |
| MoES | Ministry of Education and Sports |
| MoF | Ministry of Finance |
| MoFA | Ministry of Foreign Affairs |
| MoH | Ministry of Health |
| MoHA | Ministry of Home Affairs |
| MoIC | Ministry of Industry and Commerce |
| MoJ | Ministry of Justice |
| MoLSW | Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare |
| MoNRE | Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment |
| MoPWT | Ministry of Public Works and Transportation |
| MoTC | Ministry of Technology and Communications |
| MoU | Memorandum of understanding |
| MPI | Ministry of Planning and Investment |
| MSMEs | Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises |
| NGOs | Non-governmental organizations |
| NHI | National Health Insurance |



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| NSEDP | National Socio-Economic Development Plan |
| OCHA | United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs |
| OHCHR | Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights |
| OPDs | Organisation of person with disability |
| PHC | Primary health care |
| REDD+ | Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries |
| SDGs | Sustainable Development Goals |
| STS | Smooth Transition Strategy |
| TVET | Technical and vocational education and training |
| UNAIDS | Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS |
| UNCDF | United Nations Capital Development Fund |
| UNCITRAL | United Nations Commission on International Trade Law |
| UNCT | UN Country Team |
| UNCTAD | United Nations Conference on Trade and Development |
| UN-DESA | United Nations Department of Social and Economic Affairs |

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| UNDP | UN Development Programme |
| UNDRR | United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction |
| UNEP | United Nations Environment Programme |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation |
| UNFPA | United Nations Population Fund |
| UN-Habitat | United Nations Human Settlements Programme |
| UNHCR | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |
| UNIDO | United Nations Industrial Development Organization |
| UNODC | United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime |
| UNOPS | United Nations Office for Project Services |
| UNSDCF | Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (Cooperation Framework) |
| UNV | United Nations Volunteers |
| UXO | Unexploded Ordnance |
| VNR | Voluntary National Review |
| WASH | Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene |
| WFP | World Food Programme |
| WHO | World Health Organisation |

