



UNITED NATIONS  
LAO PDR



Photo: WFP

# 2021 PROGRESS REPORT

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



*The United Nations in Lao PDR, 2022*



**UNITED NATIONS**  
LAO PDR



**IAEA**  
International Atomic Energy Agency



Investing in rural people



THE UNITED NATIONS  
MIGRATION AGENCY



International  
Trade  
Centre



**UNAIDS**



Unlocking Public and Private  
Finance for the Poor



**United Nations**  
UNCITRAL



UNITED NATIONS  
UNCTAD



**UN DESA**



**UNDRR**  
UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction



**UNEP**



**unesco**



**unicef**



**UNFPA**



**UNIDO**



**UNODC**  
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime



**UN WOMEN**



**UN VOLUNTEERS**



**WFP**



**World Health Organization**

# Table of content

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>CHAPTER 1: KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN THE COUNTRY AND REGIONAL CONTEXT .....</b>   | <b>1</b>  |
| <b>CHAPTER 2: UN SUPPORT TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES .....</b>  | <b>5</b>  |
| 2.1 Overview of Partnership Framework Results .....  | 6         |
| 2.2: Partnership Framework 2017-2021 priorities, outcomes, and outputs .....   | 8         |
| 2.3 Support to Partnerships and Financing the 2030 Agenda .....  | 25        |
| 2.4 Results of the UN working more and better together: UN Coherence, effectiveness and efficiency & evaluation and lessons learnt ..... | 28        |
| 2.5 Financial overview .....   | 33        |
| <b>CHAPTER 3: UNCT KEY FOCUS FOR 2022 .....</b>  | <b>36</b> |
| <b>ANNEX: OUTCOME INDICATOR TABLES .....</b>   | <b>38</b> |
| <b>ANNEX 2: INDICATIVE FINANCIAL OVERVIEW (IN USD) .....</b>   | <b>41</b> |

## Acronyms

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| <b>AIDS</b>     | Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome   |
| <b>AFP</b>      | Agencies, Funds and Programmes   |
| <b>BMS</b>      | Breastmilk Substitute  |
| <b>BRI</b>      | Belt and Road Initiative   |
| <b>CCA</b>      | Common Country Analysis  |
| <b>CEDAW</b>    | Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (1979)                   |
| <b>COVID-19</b> | Coronavirus disease  |
| <b>CSO</b>      | Civil Society Organisations  |
| <b>CRC</b>      | Convention on the Rights of the Child  |
| <b>CRPD</b>     | Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities                                  |
| <b>CSE</b>      | Comprehensive Sexuality Education  |
| <b>DDF</b>      | District Development Fund  |
| <b>DFA</b>      | Development Finance Assessment   |
| <b>DLA</b>      | Digital Legal Aid Platform   |
| <b>EBA</b>      | Ecosystem-based Adaptation   |
| <b>EU</b>       | European Union   |
| <b>F4D</b>      | Financing for Development  |
| <b>FAO</b>      | UN Food and Agriculture Organisation   |
| <b>FNS</b>      | Farmer Nutrition Schools   |
| <b>GBV</b>      | Gender Based Violence  |
| <b>GHG</b>      | Green House Gases  |
| <b>GoL</b>      | Government of Lao PDR  |
| <b>GSAF</b>     | Green and Sustainable Agriculture Framework  |
| <b>HIV</b>      | Human Immunodeficiency Virus   |
| <b>HL-RTM</b>   | High-Level Roundtable Meeting  |
| <b>HPAI</b>     | Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza  |
| <b>HRBA</b>     | Human Rights Based Approach  |
| <b>IFAD</b>     | International Fund for Agricultural Development  |
| <b>ILO</b>      | International Labour Organisation  |
| <b>INFF</b>     | Integrated National Financing Framework  |
| <b>IOM</b>      | International Organisation for Migration   |
| <b>ITC</b>      | International Trade Centre of the UN – WTO   |
| <b>JSC</b>      | Lao PDR – UN Joint Steering Committee  |
| <b>JWP</b>      | Joint Workplan   |
| <b>LAC III</b>  | Agriculture Census   |
| <b>Lao PDR</b>  | Lao People’s Democratic Republic   |
| <b>LDC</b>      | Least Developed Country  |
| <b>LSIS</b>     | Lao Social Indicator Survey I, II, (III forthcoming)                                   |
| <b>LNOB</b>     | Leave No One Behind - commitment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015) |
| <b>LSB</b>      | Lao Statistics Bureau  |

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| <b>M&amp;E</b>  | Monitoring and Evaluation  |
| <b>MAF</b>      | Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry   |
| <b>MECG</b>     | Mother and Early Childhood Grant   |
| <b>MHPSS</b>    | Mental health and psycho-social support  |
| <b>MIS</b>      | Management Information System  |
| <b>MoES</b>     | Ministry of Education and Sports   |
| <b>MoFA</b>     | Ministry of Foreign Affairs  |
| <b>MoH</b>      | Ministry of Health   |
| <b>MoHA</b>     | Ministry of Home Affairs   |
| <b>MoJ</b>      | Ministry of Justice  |
| <b>MoLSW</b>    | Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare  |
| <b>MoPS</b>     | Ministry of Public Security  |
| <b>MPI</b>      | Ministry of Planning and Investment  |
| <b>MT</b>       | Metric tonnes  |
| <b>NAPEVWC</b>  | National Action Plan for the Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women and Children |
| <b>NCAS</b>     | National Clean Agriculture Strategy  |
| <b>NDVP</b>     | National Deployment and Vaccination Plan   |
| <b>NGO</b>      | non-governmental organisation  |
| <b>NSEDP</b>    | National Socio-Economic Development Plan   |
| <b>OHCHR</b>    | Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights   |
| <b>OMT</b>      | Operations Management Team   |
| <b>PHC</b>      | Primary Health Care  |
| <b>POG</b>      | Programme Oversight Group  |
| <b>PPE</b>      | Personal Protective Equipment  |
| <b>PSEA</b>     | Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse  |
| <b>PWD</b>      | Persons with Disabilities  |
| <b>RCCE</b>     | Risk Communication and Community Engagement  |
| <b>RCO</b>      | Resident Coordinator's Office  |
| <b>SDG</b>      | Sustainable Development Goal(s) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015)          |
| <b>STI</b>      | Sexually transmitted infections  |
| <b>STS</b>      | Smooth Transition Strategy   |
| <b>TVET</b>     | Technical, Vocational Education and Training   |
| <b>UNAIDS</b>   | UN Programme on HIV/AIDS   |
| <b>UNCDF</b>    | UN Capital Development Fund  |
| <b>UNCG</b>     | UN Communications Group  |
| <b>UNCITRAL</b> | UN Commission on International Trade Law   |
| <b>UNCT</b>     | UN country team  |
| <b>UNCTAD</b>   | UN Conference on Trade and Development   |
| <b>UN DESA</b>  | UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs   |
| <b>UNDP</b>     | UN Development Programme   |
| <b>UN DPPA</b>  | UN Department of Political Affairs   |

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>UNDS</b>           | UN Development System   |
| <b>UNEP</b>           | UN Environment Programme  |
| <b>UNESCO</b>         | UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation                      |
| <b>UNFPA</b>          | UN Population Fund  |
| <b>UN-Habitat</b>     | UN Human Settlements Programme  |
| <b>UNICEF</b>         | UN Children’s Emergency Fund  |
| <b>UNIDO</b>          | UN Industry and Development Organisation                                  |
| <b>UNJP</b>           | UN Joint Programme  |
| <b>UNODC</b>          | UN Office for Drugs and Crime   |
| <b>UNPF</b>           | UN Partnership Framework 2017-2021  |
| <b>UNRC</b>           | UN Resident Coordinator   |
| <b>UNSDCF (or CF)</b> | UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework or Cooperation Framework |
| <b>UNV</b>            | UN Volunteers   |
| <b>UPR</b>            | Universal Periodic Review of Human Rights                                 |
| <b>VNR</b>            | Voluntary National Review   |
| <b>WASH</b>           | Water, Sanitation and Hygiene   |
| <b>WFP</b>            | World Food Programme  |
| <b>WHO</b>            | World Health Organisation   |
| <b>WTO</b>            | World Trade Organisation  |

## Foreword by the Resident Coordinator

As around the world, the year 2021 saw an increase in the number of COVID-19 cases in Lao PDR, which at year end reached 111,060 positive cases with 372 fatalities - with profound impacts for all of our work. Beyond the immediate human costs of the pandemic, measures taken to control its spread resulted in significant and ongoing socio-economic implications, creating challenges for both the sustainable development that we are working towards, and the UN's capacity to deliver over the course of the year.

This report reflects the collective work of the United Nations country team during 2021, the final year of the Lao PDR - United Nations Partnership Framework 2017-2021, bringing to a close this chapter of the UN's development partnership with Lao PDR.

It begins by outlining key development trends in the country and the regional context, incorporating longer term trends to reflect on the whole cycle of the United Nations Partnership Framework, beginning in 2017. This outlines why Lao PDR is at an important stage in the achievement of its long-term goals to become a middle-income country and progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Chapter 1 reflects on this progress which has led to Lao PDR being recommended for graduation from Least Developed Country status; the importance of harnessing demographic change; the difficulties created by COVID-19 and the UN's and the Government of Lao PDR's response to the pandemic; as well as noting the transition between the United Nations Partnership Framework and the newly developed strategic framework – the Lao PDR United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework that will run from 2022 to 2026.

Chapter 2 outlines the UN's support to national development priorities, including the socio-economic response to COVID-19; a reflection on the human rights agenda; as well as the 13<sup>th</sup> High Level Round Table Meeting. It then moves to reflecting on some of the key results of the UN work under each of the three pillars of the United Nations Partnership Framework.

Pillar 1 on Inclusive Growth, Livelihoods, and Resilience, aims to support increasing opportunities for decent jobs and livelihoods, social protection - especially for the poor and vulnerable- the protection of forests and ecosystems and decreasing vulnerability to climate change and disasters. Pillar 2 on Human Development seeks to support quality basic education and skills development, improving access to quality health services, water, sanitation and hygiene and assisting the most vulnerable with improved food security and nutrition. Finally, Pillar 3 on Governance contributes to improving the functions, financing and capacities of national and subnational institutions as well as facilitating access to justice and a stronger rule of law, and more effective participation in national decision-making.

Section 2.3 of Chapter 2 reflects on the UN partnerships and work on financing the 2030 Agenda. In particular, it reflects the work of the UN in their support to the Government of Lao PDR's participation in the Food Systems Summit, given that 65% of the labour force is found within the agricultural and forestry sector and 85% of the population relies on subsistence farming, with significant potential for upgrade, intensification and trade. Yet with comparatively high levels of poverty and malnutrition, deforestation and environmental degradation and climate change vulnerability, a closer look at the national and regional food systems will be critical for Lao PDR in the coming years to ensure nutrition, food security and livelihoods whilst investing in green growth and natural resource management that can help strengthen resilience over time. An in-depth look at the Government's priority on the development of a financing strategy for the recently finalised 9<sup>th</sup> National Socio-Economic Development Plan 2021-2025, based on the Integrated National Financing Framework model, is also presented.

Section 2.4 of the report reflects on the results on improving the UN coherence, effectiveness and efficiency, as well as lessons learnt in light of the UN reform, and from the independent evaluation of the UNPF. Section 2.5 includes a financial overview of UN country team in 2021, including annual expenditure, available resources, funding gaps as well as a reflection on quality of funding and resource mobilisation.

Finally, Chapter 3 takes note of UNCT's key focus areas for 2022, including the next steps of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, the development of a COVID-19 Recovery Framework, the Least Developed Country Smooth Transition Strategy, financing for development, addressing the triple planetary crisis in Lao PDR, food system sustainability and the human rights agenda with a focus on leaving no one behind. Please note that a detailed look at progress against outcome indicators of the United Nations Partnership Framework in 2021 can be found in the annex.



Photo: FAO

# Chapter 1: Key developments in the country and regional context

In 2021 the COVID-19 pandemic has presented further challenges across development efforts and has to some extent stalled the promising advancements made in recent years. Following a rapid closure of borders in early-2020 and the introduction of prevention and control measures, Lao PDR was largely successful in containing the spread of COVID-19 in the country until the second quarter of 2021. After the Lao New Year in mid-April, imported cases spread rapidly among populations such as migrant workers, factory labourers, prisoners and eventually to several provinces in the centre and south of the country, leading to a second wave of the pandemic in Lao PDR.

### Demographic Change

Situated strategically along the Mekong River in the centre of Southeast Asia, Lao PDR is categorised as an Least Developed Country (LDC) and Landlocked Developing Country (LLDC), with an ethnically diverse, largely rural and agrarian population of approx. 7.2 million<sup>1</sup>. The country is experiencing the fastest urbanization rate in the region and the population is expected to reach 8.1 million in 2030 and 9.4 million by 2045, entering a 20-year window of opportunity during which the ratio of the working age population to older and younger dependents is high, offering a one-off opportunity to profoundly transform the country economically and in terms of overall development<sup>2</sup>.

Three out of every 50 people will be older than 65 by 2030, and the largest age group will be of working age (15-64 years, 68%) with females of reproductive age in a small majority<sup>3</sup>. Limiting the adverse health effects of ageing and ensuring good health for those entering the working age are necessary pre-

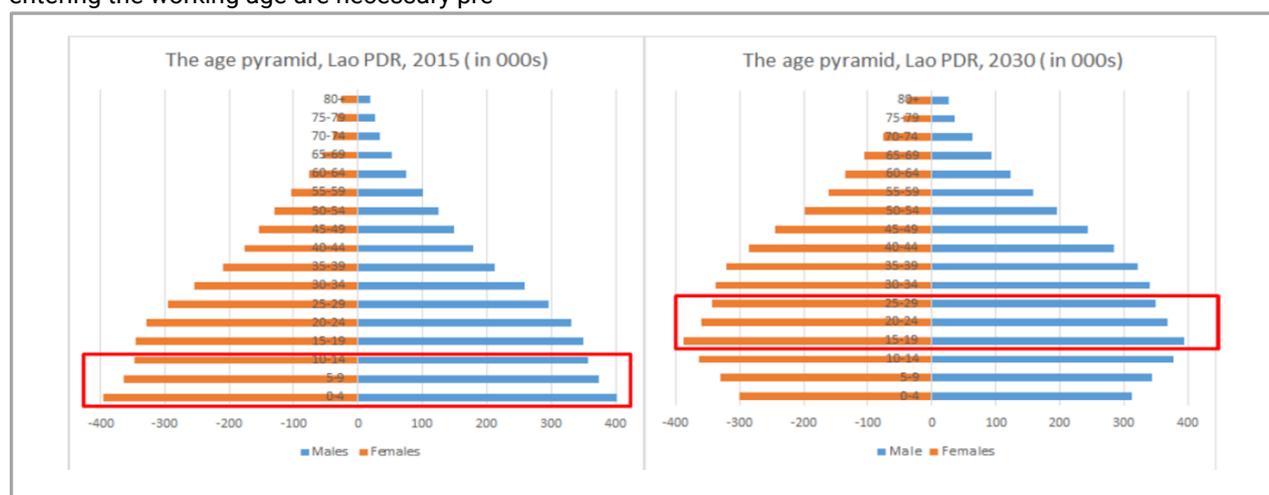
conditions for harnessing the opportunity for a [demographic dividend](#).

### Progress during the UNPF Cycle

Prior to the pandemic, Lao PDR was amongst the fastest-growing economies in the region for the past decade, leading to significant poverty reduction and improved living conditions. Lao PDR moved from low income to lower middle-income status in 2011 and the country has continued to make key advancements, meeting all three of the criteria outlined for LDC graduation – Gross National Income, Human Asset Index and Economic Vulnerability Index – paving the way for the Committee for Development Policy to recommend graduation from LDC status by 2026.

Recognizing the exceptional circumstances of COVID-19, the Committee further recommended an extended 5-year preparatory period, in place of the default 3 years. In June 2021, this recommendation was agreed by the Economic and Social Committee and in December 2021, the UN General Assembly presented its formal endorsement.

Despite the substantial progress which has led to the recommendation for LDC graduation, many issues remain. After consistent decline, poverty levels are now estimated to have risen as a result of the pandemic. Even prior to the pandemic, sharp regional, gender, and urban-rural differences persisted, as well as differences in progress amongst different ethnic groups. To ensure a more holistic and inclusive development model, the UN has identified eleven groups that warrant particular consideration<sup>4</sup> in programming to ensure that no one is left behind. Those with intersecting deprivations



<sup>1</sup> 50 ethnic groups recognised and registered by the National Assembly, MoFA, 2020; Rural population estimate at 68%, [Lao Social Indicator Survey II-Survey](#), Lao Statistics Bureau (LSB), Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI), 2017; Agricultural sector employed 62% of total workforce, [World Bank, 2020; Lao PDR Population Projections 2015-2045](#), LSB, MPI; UNFPA, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> at 5.3%, [World Cities Report](#), p. 198, UN Habitat, 2016; Lao PDR Population Projections 2015-2045, LSB, MPI; UNFPA, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> (Lao Statistics Bureau [LSB], 2015)

<sup>4</sup> Ethnic groups, women, children adolescents and youth, migrants, internally displaced persons, persons at risk of statelessness, LGBTIQ, persons with disabilities, persons living with HIV, older persons, populations in unplanned settlements and camps

compounded across multiple dimensions are most at risk. These groups were identified in the Common Country Assessment (CCA) by using a five-factor framework considering vulnerability to shocks, governance, socio-economic status, geography, and discrimination as per UN requirements<sup>5</sup>.

The share of the population affected by hunger has declined from one-third to under one-quarter over the past decade. However, even with this progress, Lao PDR is still classified as “serious” on the Global Hunger Index, as one-third of children under five suffers from undernutrition, and the proportion of stunting remains very high, at 33%. Life expectancy at birth has increased from 59 years in 2000 to 68 years in 2018. Similarly, key health indicators like the maternal and infant mortality ratios have improved, although they remain high by comparison to regional peers. Limited access to quality and coordinated health services, including urban-rural disparities, discrimination and availability of reproductive health services remains a challenge.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the majority of the population are not yet drinking safe water and there remains a sharp disparity in the use of basic sanitation and safe hygiene practices associated with income levels.

Enrolment in basic education has improved, now reaching over 90%, with negligible gender differences. The key outstanding challenges are addressing root causes for high secondary school drop-out rates, including child labour, early marriage, and early pregnancies, improving learning outcomes and completion of the full cycle of basic education, coupled with expanding early learning opportunities, with only one-third of children currently participating in early childhood education programmes. Not only are issues such as child labour, early marriage, and adolescent pregnancies barriers to accessing education, but also for young people, and in particular girls, to decide freely about their education and reproductive health free from discrimination.

## COVID-19

In response to COVID-19, the Government of Lao PDR (GoL) introduced stronger prevention and control measures, including locking down major cities, closing schools and suspending interprovincial movement. Despite a decrease of

positive cases reported mid-year, transmission spiked from September as a result of the more infectious Delta variant. Since the last quarter of the year, while continuing to vaccinate the population, the number of registered positive cases stood at 111,060 with 372 casualties recorded at year-end, and the GoL began to take measures to ease the restrictions to revitalise the economy.

WHO, UNICEF and other partners provided crucial support to the Ministry of Health (MoH) in the implementation of a National Deployment and Vaccination Plan (NDVP) for COVID-19 vaccines, including shipment of COVAX- and partner-supported vaccines, vaccination campaigns and strengthening cold chain capacity.

Socio-economic implications of the pandemic have been significant, with COVID-19 exacerbating Lao PDR’s longstanding structural vulnerabilities. For instance, revenue collection has continued to fall during the pandemic and public debt has increased causing further difficulties in servicing debt, compounding budget constraints for social sector services, integral components of COVID-19 recovery and more inclusive development<sup>7</sup>.

## Strategic Frameworks

2020 marked the conclusion of the implementation of the 8<sup>th</sup> National Socio-Economic Development Plan (8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP) and the commencement of the next five-year plan (9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP 2021-2025). The 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP is dominated by challenges associated with development sustainability and climate change, quality and inclusive growth, human capital, infrastructure development and the transition from LDC status. The NSEDP will be accompanied by a COVID-19 recovery strategy in 2022 to ensure further prioritisation in light of the continued fallout of the pandemic.

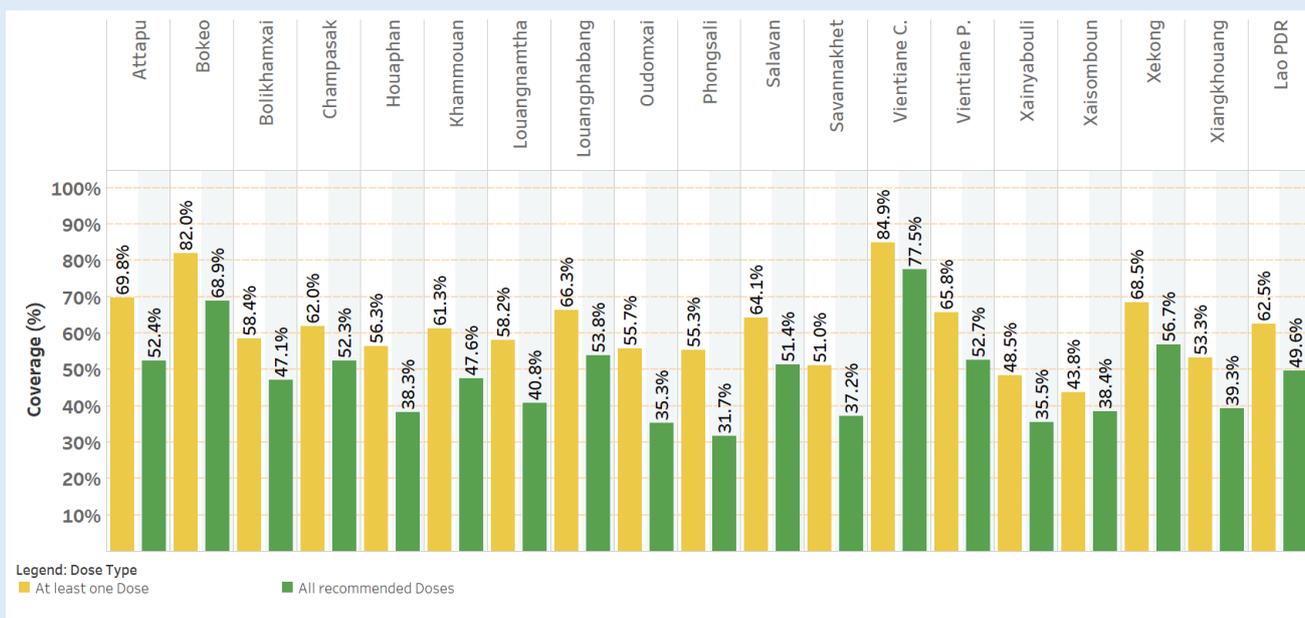
The UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2022-2026 was developed in 2021 as the UN Partnership Framework (UNPF) 2017-2021 cycle came to a close. The UNSDCF was developed through an extensive consultative process building upon a Common Country Analysis (CCA) and the 16 key recommendations from the independent evaluation of the UNPF.

<sup>5</sup> Five-factor framework for identifying discrimination: <https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/Interim-Draft-Operational-Guide-on-LNOB-for-UNCTs.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> 9<sup>th</sup> Health Sector Development Plan

<sup>7</sup> Mounting public debt-service obligations estimated at US\$1.3 billion annually over 2021-2025

**Percent of total population who received at least one dose, all recommended doses and booster dose, by Province, Lao PDR as of December 31, 2021**



The NDVP has been particularly successful in Lao PDR due to the GoL’s strong commitment to the programme, the donors’ active support and engagement with GoL, WHO’s and UNICEF’s joint efforts to coordinate with partners through COVAX and beyond, as well as the UNCT’s active engagement with communities to leave no one behind. Including shipments arrived in January 2022, COVID-19 vaccines via the COVAX Facility have provided full vaccination to over 3,8 million people, or approximately 52% of the Lao population. Unlike many other developing countries, Lao PDR has had minimal wastage of vaccines.

The target of 50% vaccination was met at year-end of 2021 with over 3.7 million people fully vaccinated

and over 4.6 million people vaccinated with at least one dose.

The table above illustrates that all provinces except for Xaisomboun reached the 2021 target of 50% vaccination rate as of February 2022, while Bokeo and Vientiane Capital have already reached the 2022 target in terms of all recommended doses. The UN will continue to provide support to the GoL to improve access to vaccination to hard-to-reach populations and accelerate the booster programme in 2022. For more information on UN technical and logistical support to the NDVP in 2021, please refer to Outcome 5 in this report.



Photo: UNICEF

## **Chapter 2: UN support to national development priorities**

## 2.1 Overview of Partnership Framework Results

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, the UN had a successful year in 2021. Although COVID regulations posed challenges to implementation, the UN adapted where possible, including holding meetings and trainings virtually. With support from the UN Resident Coordinator, UNDP and the UNCT, the GoL held the 13<sup>th</sup> High-Level Round Table Meeting (HL-RTM) virtually under the theme: *“Enhancing partnership to improve the effective implementation of the 9<sup>th</sup> five-year National Socio-Economic Development Plan aiming to accelerate the country’s achievement of the SDGs and graduation from the Least Developed Country status in the midst of COVID-19 recovery.”*

In the month leading up to the HL-RTM, a series of [side events and consultations](#) on issues relevant to national planning were held with extensive UN support. These included preparatory consultations on developing the Smooth Transition Strategy (STS) for LDC graduation, the COVID-19 Recovery Strategy (set to be finalised in early 2022), as well as the presentation of work to date on an Integrated National Financing Framework (INFF) as part of the implementation arrangements under the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP.

With UN support, the GoL sent a delegation to COP26 and updated Lao PDR’s Nationally Determined Contribution under the Paris Agreement. The GoL is committed to net zero carbon emissions by 2050, 60% reduced Green House Gases (GHG) by 2030, 100% renewable energy by 2030, increasing forest cover to 70% of total land area by 2030, promoting increased use of renewable and clean energy through a 30% share of electric vehicles, 10% biofuel, and improving water management practices. As with the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP, the updated Nationally Determined Contribution refers to the circular economy as a key strategy to reach these commitments. A national strategy on disaster risk reduction was also approved.

Complementing the programmatic activities of the UNPF (for which this report aims to cover its final year of implementation), the UN in Lao PDR also jointly organised events and advocacy campaigns on numerous global initiatives, such as International Women’s Day, the Food System Summit, World Habitat Day, World Food Day, International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, UN Day, 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence (GBV), International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, International Human Rights Day, International Day of People with Disability, and World Migration Day.

### Socio-Economic Response to COVID19

In response to the second wave of COVID-19 and subsequent lockdown, the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) re-convened the multi-stakeholder taskforce with the support of the UN and other development partners. The taskforce had initially assessed the implications of COVID-19 and integrated relevant recommendations into the 9<sup>th</sup> National Plan in 2020, at the time of its development. In 2021, this research was updated by the taskforce and background papers were drafted and structured around five themes:

1. Financing for sustainable development and effective development cooperation;
2. Trade and private sector, value chains and tourism;
3. Green growth, resilience and risk management with respect to potential environmental, health, and economic shocks;
4. Manage changes and enhance policy preparedness for decent work;
5. Human capital including health and education.

Together the papers aimed to inform and provide recommendations for a national COVID-19 Recovery Framework – an evidence-based, up-to-date situational analysis on the reverberating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on all aspects of the economy and society, with policy recommendations in 2022 to help ensure a focused and successful recovery plan for Lao PDR. Initial results were presented at the COVID-19 Recovery Framework pre-consultation to the HL-RTM and a way forward was discussed at the high-level event. Background papers reflecting the contributions of many partners can be found in the [HL-RTM handbook](#).

### Human Rights

The UN has increased efforts to mainstream the Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) and the principles of Leaving No One Behind (LNOB) across all programming. Under the new CF covering the next programme cycle 2022-2026, a Programme Oversight Group will support the UNCT to ensure that HRBA and the guiding principles of the CF will not only be at the centre of all UN programming, but also at the centre of UNCT policy and programmatic advice, and operational support to the GoL in its efforts to achieve the national goals of the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP and implement the 2030 Agenda.

With UNCT support, the GoL has rolled out two action plans on Gender Equality and on the

Elimination of Violence against Women and Children in 2021, based on the recommendations from the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The UN has also continued efforts to support the development of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) national action plan (yet to be finalised) and the work done to prepare Lao PDR's review by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), including the drafting of the first shadow report by civil society to a treaty body.

The UNCT has also raised the profile of its joint stand on human rights, gender mainstreaming, disability inclusion, prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) and other key principles and guidelines. A joint PSEA Strategy, Action Plan and an Inter-Agency PSEA Network were launched with the aim to strengthen horizontal coordination across the individual agencies, funds and programmes (AFPs) of the UN and with external partners. The UN House and the UN services underwent a disability accessibility audit and are under improvement accordingly. Efforts have also been made across the UNCT to better integrate staff with various disabilities in its workforce in line with the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy.

### **Key Challenges 2021**

#### **COVID-19**

Remote work and the repeated need to isolate increased stress levels and restricted the flow of engagement with partners. Capacity to engage in strategic priorities has been limited. Lockdown restrictions, including limited inter-provincial travel, hampered AFPs' delivery of projects, as well as coordination with GoL. The scale of many projects, trainings and workshops had to be reduced, moved online or postponed. The development of the CF presented further challenges with staff telecommuting from different countries and consultations done virtually. Recruitment and leave cycles were disrupted by the closure of borders, lack of commercial air transportation in and out of the

country, and more stringent entry requirements including on the issuance of visas, and a mandatory 14-day hotel quarantine throughout 2021. In collaboration with the UN in Myanmar, the UN's World Food Programme (WFP) continued to operate regular humanitarian air services for the humanitarian, development and diplomatic community in the absence of any commercial international flights, with 33 flights transporting 1,711 passengers and 2,252 kilogrammes of cargo into Lao PDR.

#### **Data Collection**

The availability, recurrent production and collection, disaggregation, and use of data for policymaking needs to improve. The absence of updated disaggregated data by geography, ethnicity, age, gender, and disability status hampers realistic assessment of the differential impact of government policies and programmes on different groups and makes evidence-based policy making difficult. Challenges include the unavailability and, in some cases non-use, of available and updated data for decision-making. This also affected the monitoring and evaluation of the UNPF, with several statistical datasets still not available to measure the level and impact of programme delivery. There is also a need for strengthening policy coherence with better inter-sectoral and therefore inter-ministerial coordination.

#### **UN Development System collaboration**

Weak linkages between individual projects and outcomes, priorities, policies and programmes led to less-than-optimal efficiency in the use of resources and sharing the benefits of lessons learned in order to increase the impact of programme delivery. The UNCT is therefore committed to use the new CF as a vehicle to increase in-country coordination and collaboration with development partners, partners in the private sector, civil society and bilateral partners, as well as regional collaboration on transboundary issues in order to achieve critical synergies and avoid overlap or duplication.



Photo: FAO

## 2.2: Partnership Framework 2017-2021 priorities, outcomes, and outputs

### PILLAR 1: INCLUSIVE GROWTH, LIVELIHOODS AND RESILIENCE

**Outcome 1:** All women and men have increased opportunities for decent livelihoods and jobs<sup>8</sup>

**Outcome 2:** More people have access to social protection benefits, in particular vulnerable groups and the poor

#### Poverty and inequality

As measured by the Gini Index, inequality increased from 36.0 (in 2012-2013) to 38.8 in 2018-2019. In this period, the growth in the incomes of the bottom 40% decile was 2.1%, which was lower than the average growth rate of 3.3%, pointing to the fact that the growth model was not allowing the poorest to close the income gap.

Consumption has failed to keep pace with economic growth due to growing inequality. The average consumption among the richest 10% was ten times that of the poorest 10%.<sup>9</sup> With the robust growth achieved, poverty would have declined much faster, by an additional 4.1 percentage points, if inequality had not also risen<sup>10</sup>.

Comprehensive data are not yet available, but indications suggest COVID-19 has exacerbated existing disparities with increasing levels of poverty. An estimated 43% of households experienced a decline in household income by March 2021 relative to before lockdown. During the pandemic, increased inflation further depleted the purchasing power with the second highest level of inflation in the ASEAN<sup>11</sup> region, at 5.1% registered in December 2021<sup>12</sup>. Fragile businesses and supply chains have been hit hard – particularly in the informal sector, where vulnerable groups, including women, are more heavily concentrated. Gender-disaggregated data on formal employment as a share of total employment have not been collected since 2017.

The UNCT continued to work to improve livelihood and employment opportunities for vulnerable communities in the country in 2021. For instance, over 50,000 people benefitted from International Organisation for Migration (IOM)-supported safe migration orientation and information, education,

and communication resources on employment promotion and access to work for returnee migrants. In response to the pandemic, the International Labor Organisation (ILO): supported the Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry's Association of Lao Garment Industry to procure and distribute Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to 54 garment factories, benefiting more than 19,335 workers (16,352 females); provided 70 dormitories for workers' quarantines to six garment factories for 280 workers (200 females); and supported trainings by the Department of Hygiene at MoH and University of Health for 47 garment factories (78 participants – 56 females) on COVID-19 prevention.

Further, 20,698 garment workers from 47 garment factories each benefited from one-time income support of 900,000 LAK (approximately 85 US\$). Collaborating with the private sector, an efficient cash transfer system by use of cell phone technology was developed as some 20% of garment workers eligible for cash transfers were found to have no bank account.

Under the Huapanh Alternative Development programme, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) supports a community of former opium farmers in establishing coffee as a sustainable income alternative. Around 400 hectares of coffee plantations have been established and 383 families have come together to form the Vanmai Cooperative, which includes a women's association to promote women's issues. In March, the Vanmai Cooperative signed a long-term partnership agreement with the French coffee roaster Malongo. This ensures a market for their coffee for the coming five years. In July, the Cooperative successfully completed its first export of one 20-tonne container of green coffee beans and submitted an application to become Fair Trade certified.

#### Social protection

Data on the number of formally employed workers enrolled in the Social Security Fund had not been collected at the time of writing. The national coverage of social security and other social protection schemes remains low, although National Health Insurance has achieved 94% overall national coverage.

<sup>8</sup> Outcome 1 & 2 contributing UN entities: UNDP (lead), IFAD, ILO, IOM, ITC UNCDF, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNODC, UN Women, UNV, and WFP. For further details on the Results framework, please see Annex 1

<sup>9</sup> World Bank, *Lao People's Democratic Republic Poverty Assessment 2020: Catching up and Falling Behind* (2020)

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Association for Southeast Asian Nations

<sup>12</sup> <https://iaotiantimes.com/2022/02/04/laos-has-second-highest-inflation-rate-in-asean/>

The UN Joint Programme (UNJP) on Social Protection (ILO, UNICEF and UNCDF) primarily aims to support the GoL to implement the new National Social Protection Strategy, through a 'systems development' approach. The UNJP has two interconnected components: (1) institutional capacity development to plan, coordinate, manage, finance, implement and monitor the Strategy, and (2) design and pilot of the Mother and Early Childhood Grant (MECG) and related welfare services reaching at least 2,000 pregnant women and children aged 0-12 months in three districts.

This UNJP provided continuous support to the GoL as it developed and adopted Prime Minister's Decree No.655 (9 Dec 2021), which established a high-level National Social Protection Commission at the central and provincial levels, determined its roles, responsibilities, structure, principles and working approach, to support in its primary responsibility of implementing the National Social Protection Strategy. The UNJP also finalised key documents that will support the Commission in fulfilling its duties, such as the Strategy's implementation roadmap, monitoring tool for the Strategy harmonised with SDG Target 1.3 reporting, cost projections of the Strategy's 'social welfare' pillar, a business plan for social protection financing in Lao PDR, and recommendations to improve the Chart of Accounts for disaggregated social protection reporting, among others.

Due to recurrent lockdowns, a remote implementation strategy was put in place to kickstart the MECG pilot in Attapeu province. The pilot supports 1,472 beneficiaries (633 children aged 0-12 months and 839 pregnant women). Some 1,100 from Sanamxay district and 372 from Phouvong district were registered and enrolled in the management information system. An additional 1,078 beneficiaries in Sanamxay district have received two cash transfers. 72 provincial and district officers were trained on programme operations and the system. The UNJP also successfully launched the MECG in Savannakhet province virtually and is preparing to roll out the training and beneficiary registration in early 2022.

Child protection services remain limited and fragmented in Lao PDR, leaving children vulnerable to violence, child marriage and human trafficking.<sup>13</sup> The UN Children's Fund's (UNICEF) work resulted in the launch of the Assessment Report and core recommendations for Strengthening the Child Protection System. The accompanying National Plan of Action for Child Protection System Strengthening

(2022-2026) is in its final approval process. A National Strategic Guideline on Social Service Workforce development was developed. Momentous progress was attained towards implementing the CRC and CEDAW Concluding Observations to Lao PDR with the launching of the new National Plan of Action on Mothers and Children (2021-2025) and the Elimination and Prevention of Violence against Women and Violence against Children (2021-2025).

### Outcome 3: Forests and other ecosystems are protected and enhanced, and people are less vulnerable to climate-related events and disasters<sup>14</sup>

#### Natural disasters and Agriculture

The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)-supported Department of Livestock and Fisheries (DLF) mission to investigate the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) outbreak in Luang Prabang province in March 2021 was successfully conducted. After initial findings of H5N6 in a human, subsequently HPAI was also found in poultry in live bird markets. The mission conducted further HPAI surveillance and explored the poultry value chain, to try to identify the source of the outbreak. The drivers of disease spread in markets were identified as poor biosecurity practices, lack of hygiene, mixing of poultry from different sources and the housing of chickens and ducks in the same areas and cages. The possible causes of infection of the human include poor food safety practises at the markets, insufficient hygiene during poultry food preparations and undercooking of poultry meat.

Reductions in agricultural activity and access to inputs have not been reported yet, but COVID-19 amplified an already existing rice and water crisis. As a result of two years of drought in Luang Prabang province alone, 80% of 756 villages ran out of rice by April. Loss of buying power reduced demand for farmer's products (e.g., 30% of meat and 40% of vegetables in Luang Prabang, Savannakhet and Vientiane Capital), especially affecting small holders. The price of meat and rice have gone up due to lack of supply while prices of vegetables have come down due to lower urban demands.

Floods, drought, storms, landslides, and crop pest invasions were recorded 65 times and affected a total of 70,200 people in 15 provinces, 94 districts and 786 villages<sup>15</sup>. In June 2021, Tropical Storm Koguma caused flooding that affected over 5,200 households in north-western Lao PDR, with total losses estimated at more than 94 billion kip (9.9

<sup>13</sup> UNICEF, "The Situation of Children and Women in the Lao People's Democratic Republic", 2019

<sup>14</sup> Outcome 3 contributing UN entities: FAO (lead), IFAD, IOM, UN-Habitat, UNDP, UNESCO, UNEP, UNICEF, UNV, WFP, and WHO.

<sup>15</sup> Over 70,000 people affected by natural disasters in 2021, Vientiane Times, February 7, Pg. 3

million USD)<sup>16</sup>. To address immediate food needs resulting from floods in Xayaboury and Savannakhet provinces as well as the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19, WFP and partners distributed 524 metric tonnes (MT) of rice and 40 MT of fortified cooking oil to beneficiaries. Through food-assistance-for-assets activities in Phongsaly province, WFP supported the creation of 13 community fishponds and distributed 32 MT of fortified cooking oil and USD70,000 as cash-based transfers to 18,963 beneficiaries, of which 9,481 were women.

Also on post-disaster efforts, UN-Habitat has finalised work that had begun in 2019 for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the housing sector in Oudomxay and Attapeu after flooding, landslides and collapse of Xe-Pian Xe-Nam Noy hydropower dam in 2018.

Annual losses from floods are about 3% of gross domestic product, with associated impacts on health, education, nutrition, and poverty. With climate change modelling predicting more frequent and severe flood events, there is an urgent need to strengthen not only the GoL's disaster preparedness and response, including early warning systems and coordination mechanisms, but also the capacities of the general population to prevent and withstand the impacts of climate change on food systems and social services.

Under the Building Climate Resilience and Eco-friendly Agriculture Systems and Livelihoods project by FAO, 55 people including 7 provincial and district authority officers received training on the Early Warning Systems. The training sessions helped enhance participants' knowledge and capacity to access weather forecasts and utilize climate information to improve early warning action. In addition, 26 vulnerable villages in three districts in Attapeu province received early warning equipment to support community action and disaster preparedness.

The UN continued to provide technical support to GoL to build long term resilience of vulnerable households against climate-related and other shocks. For instance, WFP contributed to the GoL's emergency response to returning migrants driven by COVID-19 and seasonal floods in the central and southern parts of the country. WFP supported government officials from the national and sub-national levels to enhance their capacities in climate-smart agriculture and disaster management and response.

The Strengthening Agro-climate Monitoring and Information Systems to the Adaptation to Climate Change and Food Security in Lao PDR project supported the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry

(MAF) in developing the Lao Climate Service for Agriculture Systems. The system provides weekly seasonal rainfall and temperature forecasts to farmers, as well as crop calendars and updates on pest and disease risks. During the reporting period, the weekly bulletins were produced automatically for 141 districts, and monthly bulletins were produced for 18 provinces in Lao PDR.

Also, under the project, foresight planning was introduced to help policymakers increasingly project future climate conditions and amplify the robustness of climate change adaptation planning. The foresight scenario training used a vast amount of data, such as future crops and future climate maps. At the time of reporting, four policies are under consideration to be addressed using the foresight scenarios.

### **Forest cover and biodiversity**

Lao PDR is facing deforestation, land degradation, and inadequate waste management, which in turn lead to aggravated levels of haze pollution, and loss of biodiversity. This has been further exacerbated by COVID-19, which increased reliance on natural resources due to travel restrictions on traders and loss of remittances as well as back migration from urban areas or from abroad to rural forest areas. The biggest pressure on forests and land comes from land-based investments, particularly those in the agriculture sector, which are expected to increase with further development of infrastructure, namely the opening of the Lao-China railway.<sup>17</sup>

[REDD+](#), a UN mechanism to reward developing countries that reduce GHG emissions from forests and land use change, was rolled out in 2021. It is hoped that this will contribute to a change for the better in forest loss trends.

In 2021, FAO contributed to the discourse and drafting of legislation in both the forestry and land sectors to clarify procedures for increasing tenure security in forestlands, anticipating a rush of land-based investments and responding to the increased concerns raised by local communities on how to engage sustainably in contract farming with investors. FAO and UNODC have made specific efforts for the protection of endangered species of wild fauna, flora and wildlife.

The UN Development Programme (UNDP) helped communities in 43 villages in Savannakhet province to reduce pressures on forest land being converted to agriculture, and enhanced their capacity to manage natural resources, through continued support in production and planting of tree seedlings. 55,000 seedlings were distributed to 977 households and planted utilizing agroforestry and peri-urban forestry techniques. UNDP also supported the GoL to

<sup>16</sup> [Laos Flooding June 2021 | NASA Applied Science](#)

<sup>17</sup> [Lao PDR National REDD+ Strategy, April 2021](#)

better govern National Protected Areas through the drafting of the updated Protected Areas Decree. Protection of forest and natural resources in Savannakhet province - an area of around 2 million hectares - was strengthened with the development of an online Decision Support System, which increased access to natural resources information.

Village forest management capacities were also strengthened through reforestation and afforestation practices. Approximately 768 hectares of degraded forest lands were restored, contributing to the national target of 70% forest cover. An additional 3,020 ha of partially degraded forest land has been demarcated by the communities and designated for afforestation allowing the forest to regenerate naturally. Under the Climate Adaptable in Wetland Areas project, FAO also supported communities to replant trees in 84.7 ha in flooded riparian forests during the reporting period.

Lao has one of the quickest urbanisation rates in the region - the sustainability of rapidly expanding urban systems is increasingly important, with close consideration of vulnerable communities, such as those living in informal housing and settlements. UN-Habitat and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) partnered to provide extensive capacity-building activities in Phongsaly and Oudomxay provinces through the "Building climate resilience of urban systems through Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EBA) in the Asia-Pacific region".

An urban ecosystem-based adaptation toolkit was developed in 2021 targeted to strengthen the technical and institutional capacity of city management authorities to plan and implement EBA. This toolkit specifically supports decision-making on climate change adaptation within urban areas by integrating urban planning with national adaptation planning processes to promote resilient urban development.

UNEP and UN Habitat also developed and facilitated training workshops for city management authorities; and designed and delivered decision-making tools to assist the integration of urban EBA into development planning and the National Adaptation Plan process. The project also focused on developing a results management and monitoring and evaluation framework for urban ecosystem-based adaptation focusing on setting up the baseline scenario, designing applicable methods and guidelines to help targeted city authorities to effectively measure and assess EBA demonstrations to be implemented in 2022.

### **Crosscutting**

The UN Industry and Development Organisation (UNIDO) supported the reduction of Greenhouse Gas emissions in the industrial sector through the promotion of pelletization technology and

supporting the increased use of solid biofuel for industrial applications including through training members of the Biomass Information and Technology Center, improving awareness, knowledge and capacity on solid biofuel production and usage in the country. Three companies, namely Dokchampakham Pellet Factory, Simmalakham Briquette Factory and Alexson Job's Tear Mill, were selected and signed an agreement in late 2021 for the Pellets Production Incentive Scheme, of which about USD39,600 will be support for their capacity of production of at least 1.5 ton/hour of biomass pellets. The three investors will invest at least USD100,000 for the pellet production systems. It is expected the first batch of production will be ready in the market by Q2 2022

In line with UNIDO efforts, UN-Habitat and Local Governments for Sustainability Network participated in the promotion of urban low emissions initiatives under the Urban Leds project, such as the deployment of urban solar lighting systems in Pakse.

The UN also provided technical support to the GoL in formulating the National Clean Agriculture Strategy (NCAS) and the Green and Sustainable Agriculture Framework (GSAF). The GoL took active ownership and organized a series of consultations, national and regional discussions throughout the process. The GSAF was approved in June 2021, while NCAS is awaiting approval.

The Lao Statistic Bureau (LSB) at MPI, in partnership with MAF, officially launched the Agriculture Census (LAC III) 2019/2020 in December 2021. With UN technical assistance the LAC III applied computer-assisted personal interview techniques, improving the country's capacity to transform from paper-based to digitalized data collection approach in the agriculture sector. The LAC III reveals significant findings and produces knowledge about rural employment and land use for agriculture available for public use, including evidence-based policy development, socio-economic development planning, and poverty eradication initiatives.

As part of the Food System Summit, the UN and development partners made commitments to develop a new National Plan of Action for Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change Adaptation in Agriculture; build capacity for Vulnerability Risk Assessments, climate change impact assessments and foresight planning for adaptive agriculture; strengthen national capacities to design, access climate and implement resilient food system initiatives; and mobilize civil society organisations (CSOs), the private sector and academia to build human resources, provide technical advice to farmers and agricultural workers on engaging in local and regional markets.



Photo: UN-HABITAT

## PILLAR 2: HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

### Outcome 4: Children and youth enjoy better access to inclusive and equitable quality basic education and vocational skills.<sup>18</sup>

#### School closures

The pandemic resulted in unprecedented setbacks to the education sector in 2021 with schools closed for a prolonged period along with a significantly decreased education budget. In response to school closures, the UN supported the Safely Back to School Campaign led by UNICEF with key messages on COVID-19 prevention reaching over 6.5 million people via social media platforms. Thanks to these efforts, 1.6 million children in 14,000 schools were reached through Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) materials. UNICEF and WHO coordinated with Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) and MoH to support the eventual reopening and safe operations of schools, specifically through the development of a checklist of key preventive measures that was disseminated nationwide for assessment and preparation for safe reopening of schools.

To mitigate learning loss from school closures and contribute to improving learning outcomes, the first ever online and offline learning platform was launched with UNICEF support in partnership with the EU and the Global Partnership for Education. MoES' Khang Panya Lao reached close to 70,000 users and has been used for remote teaching and as a supplemental learning resource with its thousands of local and international learning resources. Trainings for teachers and the expansion of Khang

Panya reach in remote areas will continue in 2022. Since the start of the new school year in September, most schools (70%) have been open throughout the country, with 90% of teachers vaccinated as a result of the UN supported #VaccinateLaos campaign.

Printed learning materials reached 1,389,623 children in public early childhood education, primary and secondary schools nationwide, covering 96% of all students in the country with UNICEF support. New episodes of the "My House" special TV show produced by MoES and Ministry of Information, Communication and Tourism with UNICEF support for young children and their families have been aired nationwide. Guidance on remote/hybrid learning, and remedial education have been developed; trainings on psychosocial support for students and teachers during the pandemic have been rolled out; and schools have been provided COVID-19 prevention supplies.

#### Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE)

UNAIDS partnered with the University of Health Science and the Centre for HIV, AIDS and STIs/MoH to develop a pre-service curriculum on HIV/AIDS for students at the University Health Science. The curriculum will be introduced to teachers with the aim of addressing the lack of human resources working in the field of HIV/AIDS and reducing stigma and discrimination in health settings.

The UN Population Fund (UNFPA) has promoted 5 videos on Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) online and through social media platforms including Khang Panya Lao for students to have access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, GBV and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) information during the lockdown. With UNICEF support, a new manual for training on MHPSS for

<sup>18</sup> Outcome 4 contributing UN entities: UNICEF (lead), ILO, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNV, WFP, and WHO. For further details on the Results framework, please see Annex 1

counsellors was developed jointly with the national University of Laos.

With support by UNFPA, systems for in-school CSE were strengthened by integrating CSE contents into pre-service training curriculum of primary and secondary in 8 teacher training colleges nationwide. CSE key contents based on international technical guidance on CSE were also integrated into the revised national primary curriculum of grades 4 and 5 in 2021.

In addition, capacity building efforts and trainings were held in Savannakhet and Oudomxay to strengthen knowledge and delivery of CSE, including on gender equality, healthy relationships, GBV, reproductive health, STI and HIV/AIDS, family planning, decision making, communication skills, and effective use of information and communication technology. CSE training was also delivered in Champassak, Sekong, Saravanh and Attapeu, and the National University of Laos agreed to include CSE in the university curriculum.

For out-of-school adolescents, the Nang-Noi Girls Groups curriculum on essential life skills was delivered to 1,800 adolescent girls in 92 villages in Savannakhet, Bokeo and Oudomxay provinces by 184 female mentors. 66 new mentors were selected and trained in 2021 and 118 former mentors received refresher training. Over 15,000 parents and community members were sensitized on reproductive and sexual health and rights of adolescent girls. A manual for adolescent boys' engagement was developed jointly with the MoES and was formally released. Additionally, 3,860 adolescent girls from 60 villages started receiving essential life skills through the Nang-Noi Girls Groups Curriculum delivered by 120 mentors as part of a new partnership started with the Foundation of Netherlands Volunteers by UNFPA and MoES in 2021.

2021 marked the first year of implementation of the Education and Sports Sector Development Plan 2021-25, developed with support from the UN. The UN continued to influence education sector prioritization and planning through evidence generation, direct support to MoES and working together with key education partners like Australia, the European Union, the US Agency for International Development, and the World Bank. A study on reasons for drop-out, and research on effective schools was undertaken by UNICEF. As a result, MoES and partners committed to address the learning crisis by prioritizing investments in early childhood education and primary education, including the capacity of teachers.

National and sub-national capacities on monitoring and data utilization for planning and decision-making were strengthened with UNICEF support through the development of the Lao Education and Sports Management Information System, the first ever consolidated MoES MIS with advanced geographic information system tracking, data visualization, and mapping features accessible at all levels in real time.

School development planning has been strengthened through the introduction of the fundamental quality standards for schools, which for the first time is linked to student learning outcomes allowing authorities to monitor whether student learning is improving and provide tailored support to schools and engage communities to support schools. While there have been delays in testing the fundamental quality standards due to school closures, MoES is committed to move this forward in early 2022, including national scale-up with UNICEF support in collaboration with other partners.

### **Youth and Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET)**

With support from UNDP more than 1,800 (Govt 1,600, youth 200) people (870 female) were trained on project management, vocational skill training, food processing, textiles, marketing, business management and packaging design enabling women and youth to seek new employment opportunities in both formal and informal sectors through the Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) centres and training programmes. 372 people (178 female) benefited from youth engagement in development and training on the Youth Innovation Challenge. Capacity of 22 trainers, including 17 females, have been developed in terms of technical knowledge and skills contributing to the TVET centre operation and management, which in turn will help the trainers to provide quality training to the youth the communities, increasing their chance of securing better livelihoods.

With support from UNESCO, sixty Lao youth from Luang Prabang, Xiengkhuang and Champassak participated in the Community Heritage for Sustainability Youth Forum for Thailand, where they worked with experts and local mentors to identify measures to safeguard their local heritage while maximizing its contribution to improving their communities' livelihood and wellbeing. A set of project ideas have been prepared and now are being implemented in collaboration with communities and some partner organizations.



Photo: IOM

### Outcome 5: People enjoy improved access to quality health services, and water, sanitation, and hygiene<sup>19</sup>

Together with development partners UN agencies provided continued support for the effective and timely response to the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 response aims not only to respond to immediate issues during the pandemic but also to improve the national health system to be more resilient in the longer term in alignment with priorities in the 9<sup>th</sup> Health Sector Development Plan 2021-2025 and the 3<sup>rd</sup> phase of Health Sector Reform Strategy 2021-2025.

For instance, UNAIDS supported capacity building on community resilience for the HIV/AIDS response through development of guidelines for community antiretroviral drug dispensing and tele-health services to minimize disruption of HIV services for people living with HIV. Capacity building efforts were aimed at strengthening community networks to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and ensure access to HIV services by people living with HIV and other key populations. Activities include training of peers working in antiretroviral therapy sites to provide tele-health services to people living with HIV and promote community antiretroviral drug dispensing.

As part of the COVID-19 response, UNFPA supported MoH to expand the telehealth work to provinces with a high number of COVID-19 cases in communities, in particular providing services at the quarantine camps and isolation facilities for returning migrants. The training modules were modified for telehealth service delivery including for antenatal and postnatal

care, family planning, adolescents and youth friendly services, as well as MHPSS.

The UN also scaled up efforts towards Universal Health Coverage and increased awareness for building strong and resilient health and nutrition systems, especially for disadvantaged populations including with technical inputs to the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP 2021-2025 and Health Sector Development Plan 2021-2025 to ensure the integration of nutrition and inclusion of Primary Health Care (PHC) as a multi-sectoral approach.

#### Under-5 mortality

The under-five mortality is estimated at 45.5 per 1,000 live births, compared with 49.2 in 2018 and approaching the 2021 national target of 40. Nevertheless, due to reduced coverage of essential health services during the pandemic – as funds have been re-allocated towards prioritizing the immediate impacts of COVID-19 as well as the reduction of the accessibility of health facilities due to lockdown and precautionary measures for limiting community spread – there is a high risk of failing to achieve some of the national targets of 11 health indicators. As child immunization coverage dropped sharply during the lockdown period, UNICEF supported campaigns to prevent outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases.

The UN has continued to support the GoL to increase coverage of essential health services in light of these circumstances. Based on collaboration with UNDP to engage with local governance for the COVID-19 response initiated in 2020, WHO made more intensified efforts to support two Ministries,

<sup>19</sup> Outcome 5 contributing UN entities: UNFPA (lead), IOM, UN-Habitat, UNAIDS, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNODC, UNV, WFP, and WHO. For further details on the Results framework, please see Annex 1

MoH and Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA), in more active empowerment and engagement with the communities for the COVID-19 response and beyond through the Community Network Engagement for Essential Healthcare and COVID-19 Responses through Trust initiative. The MoHA and MoH are preparing a memorandum of understanding to expand this initiative nation-wide under the decentralization policy of the 3 Build (“Samsang”) to strengthen PHC beyond COVID-19.

### Maternal mortality

Overall, the maternal mortality rate data showed a slight reduction from last year. For the period Jan-Nov, there were 113 deaths recorded in 2020. In 2021, a total of 102 deaths were recorded in the same period. Challenges remain with estimating the maternal mortality rate; primarily due to the availability and usability of population-based data on maternal deaths. In Lao PDR, three major causes have been identified in relation to maternal mortality with postpartum haemorrhage as a leading cause, followed by pre-eclampsia and eclampsia and sepsis.

The UN has supported maternal health in 2021 through a UN Joint Programme (UNICEF, WHO and UNFPA) which supported MoH in development of a Reproductive and Maternal, New-born, Child, Adolescent Health Strategy and Action Plan 2021-2025 and dissemination of the PHC Policy nationwide. In addition, UNICEF supported the costing and finalization of the Community Health Systems Strengthening Action plan 2021-2025.

The UN also helped to strengthen the skills of maternal and perinatal program managers, providers in Maternal and Perinatal Death Surveillance and

Response processes helping to improve the quality of maternal and perinatal health care.

In July 2021, staff from the Obstetrics and Gynaecology Association, Paediatric Association and Department of Health Care participated with staff from UNFPA and UNICEF in a virtual training in collaboration with WHO and the Asia & Oceania Federation of Obstetrics & Gynaecology. Following the four-day training, an Action Plan was developed for Lao PDR. Key interventions will focus on the inclusion of Perinatal deaths into the Maternal Death Surveillance and Response system.

UNFPA also provided support to the Department of Health Professional Education to improve the educational standard of midwives. To ensure a better quality of maternal care, support was also provided to the Lao Association of Midwives to register as a professional body that will support midwives working in clinical areas.

### Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and Support to Quarantine Centres

The UN ensured that the GoL was able to provide appropriate and accurate information to inform the population with consistent messages on hygiene practices. As a result, more than two and a half million people were reached on social media with hygiene messages, 1.4 million schoolchildren were provided with accessible hygiene messages to enable a second safe return to school, and over 690,000 children in the higher-risk areas were provided with soap to facilitate safer hygiene practices. However, the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need for further system strengthening, remote working, in-country production of critical WASH supplies, and managing emergency supplies, facilities, and storage.



Photo: WHO

Since August, the Resident Coordinator (RC) helped mobilise the relevant UN entities (i.e. WHO, WFP, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, UN-Habitat, IOM), along with the Swiss Development Cooperation, and other development partners to rapidly mobilise over USD 5 million to support returning migrants with nutritious meals in quarantine centres as well as coordinating support to the GoL to increase the capacity of quarantine centres for returning migrants in the southern provinces of the country. WFP distributed over 2.1 million meals to 61,200 returning migrant labourers, including 30,500 women, at quarantine centres across 9 provinces together with NGO partners at cost of USD4.3 million. Under the COVID-19 Multi-Partner Trust Fund, UN support included building and improving WASH facilities, providing MHPSS services and basic hygiene supplies at quarantine centres.

UN contributions included 37 new gender-sensitive WASH facilities, including bathrooms and shower facilities, in addition to public hand-washing stations, drainages and water pipes, reaching 8,343 people (4,136 female and 4,207 male) between October and December 2020.

Support to quarantine centres also included sanitary and hygiene kits to 22,000 women and young female migrants in quarantine centre and isolation facilities in 16 provinces. The kits include sanitary pads, soaps, reusable face masks, insect repellent, whistles, handwashing gel and other essential hygiene items.

Beside emergency support at quarantine centres, in 2021 UN-Habitat enabled the construction of two functioning Decentralised Wastewater Treatment Systems (in Attapeu and Sekong provinces. In Sekong, the construction of an improved sewage treatment system and biogas digester has improved the hygiene and sanitation standards at the Sekong Hospital, promoting a sustainable and environmental-friendly system.

In Attapeu, the wastewater treatment system and biogas digester construction are located at the ethnic school in Saysaart Village, improving access to gender-inclusive toilets and WASH facilities for teachers and students. 480 users benefit from the intervention in Sekong province, while 638 students have access to the improved services in Attapeu province.

In partnership with Nordic Climate Facility and Stockholm International Water Institute and the Adaptation Fund, UN-Habitat and Ministry of Public Works and Transport have successfully built 102 small-scale water infrastructures, improving the lives

of those living in the most vulnerable settlements of southern Lao PDR. Capacity-building activities were developed with water utilities and private sector stakeholders to strengthen their knowledge on public-private partnerships, environmental and social safeguards.

UNICEF support provided 29 rural villages (15,722 people) with household water supplies in four provinces (Phongsaly, Xiengkhuang, Saravane and Attapeu). This approach represents a strategic shift in the provision of rural water supplies, with a significant increase in service levels, providing water to individual households, rather than village standpipes.

Since 2020, funding to support the COVID-19 responses has created opportunities to invest in WASH that are both longstanding national priorities and important components of the pandemic response. In 2021, WHO provided continued support to MoH in implementation of WASH Facility Improvement Tool<sup>20</sup>, combining it with a comprehensive package of interventions for “Safe, Clean and Climate Resilient Green healthcare facilities in enhancing capacity for COVID 19 pandemic.

With WHO support, MoH has succeeded in mobilizing substantial resources from a number of donors to boost the national “Safe, Clean and Climate Resilient Green” Initiative for improving WASH services. Based on request from Department of Health and Hygiene Promotion at MoH, amongst others, funding has been used for:

- providing autoclaves for 82 hospitals;
- installing additional hand washing stations (85 sinks and 300 automatic hand gel dispensers);
- providing cleaning and disinfection materials and personal protective equipment for cleaners and waste handlers for 157 hospitals;
- providing 58 water tanks and pumps in selected hospitals in water scarce districts in 2021;
- 172 toilets constructed in 22 facilities including quarantine and isolation facilities in Vientiane Capital and other 5 provinces; and
- 77 autoclaves and waste segregation, collection bins, trollies for internal transport provided.

A range of trainings on these issues were provided in 2020-2021 in collaboration with relevant programs.

UNICEF support enabled the declaration of the first open defecation free district in Saravane province in

<sup>20</sup> Water and sanitation for health facility improvement tool (WASH Facility Improvement Tool) has been introduced in the country since 2018, as means of implementation of basic WASH standards at the health facility level.

2021. This declaration, despite the challenges of implementing community mobilization strategies during COVID-19 gathering and movement constraints, was an indication of the rapidly growing momentum that longer-term UNICEF support for Community-Led Total Sanitation has facilitated in the country. The declaration in Saravane was complemented by the declaration of 41 villages which were declared open defecation free in Savannakhet, Saravane, Attapeu and Phongsaly provinces.

### COVID-19

The UN has continued to support GoL in response to COVID-19 by improving the emergency operations centre for timely and effective response to the pandemic at central and subnational levels, strengthening national capacity for early detection through enhanced surveillance, laboratory testing and management of points of entry, improving system preparedness and readiness through the clinical management of COVID-19 patients by improving care pathway, hospital preparedness and infection prevention and control to introduce the COVID-19 vaccine and enhancing risk communication during the pandemic.

In addition, the WHO, WFP and the RCO worked with the Institute Pasteur du Laos to secure donor support for SARS-CoV-2 virus sequencing and expanded RT-PCR testing capacity and in the process, securing the institutes testing services to the WFP humanitarian air service passengers throughout the pandemic.

WHO provided technical assistance to MoH to develop the NDVP for COVID-19 vaccines. This included a large-scale tabletop exercise to prepare all 18 provinces for a rapid roll-out of COVID-19 vaccines. Further, in close collaboration with UNICEF, WHO supported the MoH's Vaccine

Committee to prepare COVAX Facility vaccine request and 'first wave' expression of interest.

WHO technical support enabled the Lao National Immunisation Technical Advisory Group to review global recommendations and provide guidance on prioritized target populations depending on epidemiological situation and supply availability. The group met regularly during the course of 2021 to consider new evidence related to priority groups for COVID-19 vaccination, vaccine safety, expansion of age groups, and addition of booster doses, amongst others.

WHO provided technical support for designing COVID-19 vaccination data collection and management tools including pre-vaccination screening, immunization register, and immunization cards. The system uses the DHIS2, a backbone of the MoH's health information strategy prior to COVID-19. The data collected allows the GoL to monitor progress in rolling out COVID-19 vaccines at all levels, by target group, age, gender and other metrics.

WHO supported MoH in establishing a regulatory system for emergency use authorization of COVID-19 vaccines and is working with key partners to support MoH to cost the roll out of COVID-19 vaccines.

The Risk Communication network for UN partners, international non-governmental organisation and civil society was re-convened in 2021 when vaccines were made available through the COVAX Facility. The Centre of Communication and Education for Health chaired the meeting supported by WHO and UNICEF, to share the communication strategy and action plan, and the information, education and communication materials that were developed for the vaccine roll-out.



Photo: IOM

## Outcome 6: The most vulnerable people benefit from improved food security and nutrition<sup>21</sup>

### Indicator progress

A national nutrition surveillance system was established in 2019 but after the initial two rounds in 2019, no further collection was possible in 2020 and 2021 due to COVID-19. The next round of data collection is planned for early 2022. The prevalence of stunting among under-five aged children reduced to 33% (LSIS II 2017) from 44% (LSIS I 2012) but limited-to-no-progress has been made in wasting prevalence for children of the same age.

According to a [recent analysis](#) published in the Lancet microeconomic model projections indicate that for Lao PDR, it is possible that up to 73,000 under-five aged children could suffer from acute malnutrition each year due to COVID-19 related losses in gross national income per capita. The second wave of COVID-19 in the country led to increased losses to livelihoods, exacerbated food insecurity and all forms of malnutrition, and further tightening of government finances. All of these factors are expected to continue to exacerbate all forms of malnutrition.

The number of active COVID-19 cases continued to climb through the end of 2021, pushing up food and fuel prices, disrupting trade, and increasing food and nutrition security concerns for 2022. Despite the effects of COVID-19, overall progress has been made in this outcome area since the implementation of the UNPF. The proportion of hungry people has declined from 33% to 23% over the past decade and prevalence of undernourishment in the population has seen dramatic decrease since 2014 at 22% and continued downward trend to 5.3% 2019/20.

### Progress made in 2021

The UN has supported the delivery of several nutrition specific and sensitive interventions in 2021, complementing one another to make progress towards SDG2. For instance, UNICEF procured vitamin A and iron folate supplements for the entire country as well as supported the distribution of special Ready to Use Therapeutic Foods needed for all cases admitted for severe acute malnutrition in 2021. UNICEF also supported the training of health workers in selected provinces on the integrated management of acute malnutrition and commenced on the development of the first e-learning course for integrated management of malnutrition in the region, which will be made available in Lao and is expected to be adapted for use in other countries.

UNICEF also supported the delivery of nutrition services as part of the integrated outreach services delivered through the health sector to the hardest to reach communities across all districts in 10 provinces. UNICEF supported the undertaking of the first ever Nutrition in Emergencies course in Lao PDR which aimed to strengthen the capacities of Government and

key stakeholders on the preparedness and response to nutrition in emergencies.

As part of its support to MoES and the National School Meals Program, WFP provided 88,670 schoolchildren (43,488 female) in 915 target primary schools with nutritious school meals and later with take-home rations, when schools were closed due to COVID-19. Furthermore, 1,480 farmers (450 female) participated in training to improve agricultural production that contributed to school meal programmes, as part of a holistic program with interventions around WASH, literacy, nutrition and more in support of a strong and sustainable school meals program. Given the importance of school meal programmes for child health and nutrition, 707 schools with 64,000 students in government priority districts that have not benefited from school feeding to date, were identified together with the Government for expansion in 2022.

UN agencies supported several research initiatives to improve understanding on the causes and consequences of malnutrition. These included but were not limited to an analysis of the economic consequences of malnutrition in Lao PDR led by UNICEF; an analysis of the determinants of stunting, and formative assessment on the drivers of food choices in school-age children, led by WFP in collaboration with Helen Keller International.

Farmer Nutrition Schools (FNS), used as Village Nutrition Centres, were established with UN support in 400 villages of 12 districts in the four northern provinces of Huanphan, Xienhouang, Oudomxai and Phongsaly. Through the collaboration between IFAD, FAO, WFP and local authorities, FNS learning sessions were held on nutrition aspects with support of Village Facilitators, benefitting a total of 21,593 participants (95% women). Cooking sessions were organized as part of the FNS, to provide practical demonstrations for the participants and other interested villagers using nutrient-dense foods grown and produced in the villages. A total of 19,949 people joined these sessions (94% women).

In total, 25,000 women (mothers with under-five aged children and pregnant women) that successfully participated in the FNS activities received a garden grant of 1 million LAK (approximately USD120) for home garden investments to directly support their household nutrition. The total number of garden grants distributed is now 15,130 surpassing the original project target of 15,000. Almost 93% of all garden grants were used for backyard poultry raising and vegetable production. The midterm survey showed that both food security and dietary diversity had increased considerably, especially for women.

Results from the Midline and Annual Outcome Surveys in 2020 and 2021 showed that: 83.4% of women in surveyed households consume at least five out of ten major food-groups; and for under-five aged children, the

<sup>21</sup> Outcome 9 contributing UN entities: WFP (lead), FAO, IFAD, UN-Habitat, UNDP, UNICEF, UNODC, UNV, and WHO. For further details on the Results framework, please see Annex 1

incidence of underweight decreased from 23.4% at baseline to 18.9% in 2020; the incidence of stunting decreased from 47% to 44%; and the incidence of wasting decreased from 5% to 3.4%.

In 2021, UNICEF continued to provide support for the improved governance and coordination for nutrition. This included support for the development, finalization and launch of the National Plan of Action for Nutrition (2021-2025) including the development of a revised monitoring framework, a review of costing of the previous Plan of Action (2016-2020) as well as a comprehensive review of the most recent global evidence on nutrition interventions with a particular focus on evidence from the region. Technical and financial support was also provided to prepare and host the 6<sup>th</sup> National Nutrition Forum and the 2020 Annual Nutrition Committee meeting.

UNICEF also provided technical and financial support for the first annual National Nutrition Technical Meeting and the development and launch of a national nutrition dashboard<sup>22</sup> which enables easy access to nutrition data. Technical and financial support for the provincial and district nutrition coordination structures in 10 provinces was also provided including for facilitators coordination meetings and monitoring of efforts, as well as the internal Government biannual National Nutrition Committee Meeting in September 2021.

The UN also supported a national Maternal, Infant and Young Child Nutrition campaign, to promote healthy norms around care and feeding practices among mothers and families, cultivate greater understanding about good nutrition-related behaviour, and improve nutrition outcomes for children in the first 1000 days. The campaign reached 5.9 million people. Services for children suffering from acute malnutrition were enhanced, and the enforcement of the national legislation on the promotion of breastmilk substitutes (BMS) was strengthened through real-time monitoring of violations at the retail level, making Lao PDR one of the strongest countries in the region for the prevention of BMS marketing.

The development of an online real time data collection for monitoring violations of the National Decree on Food Products and Equipment for Infant and Young Child (the BMS decree) was endorsed and adopted by the GoL and subsequently rolled out to 4 provinces across all districts with the support of UNICEF and partners. More than 150 Government staff were trained and data on the monitoring of the decree was collected in 37 districts including the global positioning coordinates of the shops in which violations were found. The tool was recognized at multiple regional events as a strong innovation including featured at the regional meeting for the launch of the Southeast Asia Regional Report on Maternal Nutrition and Complementary Feeding as [a best practice example](#).

UNICEF also co-hosted of the 2021 World Breastfeeding Week and technical support was provided to the MoH to include breastfeeding women in

the COVID-19 vaccination inclusion criteria, whilst emphasising the importance on continued breastfeeding when getting vaccinated. This support included the development of COVID-19 breastfeeding communication messages as part of the wider national COVID-19 communication plan and support for the procurement and distribution of communication equipment including loudspeakers to 10 provinces.

MAF and FAO launched the Hand-in-Hand Initiative Inception Workshop in May 2021 to accelerate the elimination of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition; enabling inclusive, efficient and sustainable agricultural food systems and increasing resilience of livelihoods to threats and crises. The Government has identified the provinces of Luang Namtha, Oudomxay, Luang Prabang and Vientiane along the Laos-China Railway for Hand-in-Hand Initiative prioritised support, with the aim of transforming this geo-spatial area into a Sustainable Green Growth Economic Corridor.

The Building Climate Resilience and Eco-friendly Agriculture Systems and Livelihoods project supported farmers to adopt climate resilience and eco-friendly agriculture production in Attapeu province. During the reporting period, 462 farmers, of which 167 were females, received practical training on organic vegetable planting, native chicken raising, and straw mushroom growing. Furthermore, the project provided technical support to establish 8 Farmer Field Schools (3 schools were established in 2020 and 5 were newly established in 2021). The schools will bring local farmers together to exchange good agricultural practices, experiment, and engage in hands-on learning to improve skills and knowledge that will help adapt practices to their specific context.

The Climate Risk and Early Warning Systems project brings together work by UNDRR, the World Bank, and the World Meteorological Organization to strengthen the capacity of Lao PDR to manage growing climate risks. This new joint initiative was launched in 2021, working with the Ministries of Natural Resources and Environment, and Labour and Social Welfare (MoLSW).

Over the last few years, in partnership MAF and MoLSW, WFP and FAO have implemented disaster recovery activities focusing on Attapeu and Sekong provinces assisting affected communities to increase agricultural productivity and the availability of nutritious foods. By 2021, 1,717 households in Attapeu Province received agriculture inputs and materials, enabling them to grow vegetables in the dry season. 100 households in 10 villages received poultry kits, vaccination, and starter feed. In addition, the project provided loudspeaker systems to support village authorities in disseminating weather announcements and strengthen disaster preparedness at the village level. In Sekong and Attapeu provinces, the project delivered trainings on climate-smart agricultural techniques to 2,674 beneficiaries, including native chicken and pig production and seasonal vegetable production.

<sup>22</sup> [\(NIPN Lao PDR Dashboard \(lsb.gov.la\)\)](#)



Photo: IFAD

### Food Systems Summit

Emerging from the Food System Summit in Lao PDR, the following recommendations, amongst others will be integrated into the GoL's upcoming Plan of Action on Food System Sustainability in Lao PDR:

- Better understanding of nutritional issues, food behaviours including the perspective of the consumers and how this interacts with the food and social environment to influence behaviours and taste preferences (cost/marketing, availability etc.) and setting of clear research priorities;
- Development of evidence-based national dietary guidelines which nuance the multiple burdens of malnutrition across different contexts;
- Development of nutrition standards for school feeding and social protection programmes;
- Improvements in food environments that promote nutrition and food security, including strengthening of local supply chains;
- Incentivise innovation by the private sector to make nutrient-rich foods affordable, accessible and safe for consumers, while at the same time supporting the livelihoods of producers e.g., product reformulation or innovative technologies that improve the productivity and safety of healthy, affordable foods by smallholders. Identification of incentives and disincentives, and support for nutrition-sensitive innovations, along both domestic and international supply chains;
- Greater nutrition focus in financing and other public policies, particularly in agriculture. Small and medium-sized enterprises need access to financing and capacity-building resources to

support improved production of safe and nutritious foods;

- Greater investment in infrastructure and the agricultural value chain, prioritising areas that are food and nutrition insecure, i.e., roads from farm to market in remote areas;
- Creation of demand for healthy foods especially among children and adolescents as this is the key period in which values are shaped about food. Nutrition education, sensitisation, training, social media campaigns, marketing techniques, as well as economic incentives.

## PILLAR 3: GOVERNANCE

### Outcome 7: Institutions and policies at national and local level support the delivery of quality services that better respond to people's needs<sup>23</sup>

#### Aggregate effectiveness

Outcome 7 aims to ensure that national and local institutions are transparent, accountable, efficient, and effective, contributing to the delivery of quality services that correspond to the needs of citizens. In response to COVID-19, UN agencies assisted the GoL and communities to strengthen provincial and district preparedness and surge capacity, including at points of entry in connection with the large number of returning migrant workers. Increased and improved coordination between local authorities dealing with public security (border controls), health and home affairs led to improvements in the conditions of quarantine centres. UN agencies also

<sup>23</sup> Outcome 7 contributing UN entities: UNDP (lead), FAO, IFAD, IOM, UN-Habitat, UNCDF, UNCITRAL, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNODC, UNV, WFP, and WHO. For further details on the Results framework, please see Annex 1

provided infrastructure support in information and communications technology equipment including teleconferencing and software licenses and related training to ministries, local government offices, and provincial ministry offices to enhance the digitalization of work in general but also in support of telecommuting arrangements and ensure continuity during the pandemic.

Although 2021 data from the Annual World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicator are not yet available, the UN has provided support to the GoL to increase aggregate effectiveness through a number of activities in 2021. Since 2016 a number of capacity building initiatives have been organized in multiple parts of Lao PDR for the benefits of hundreds of officers from police, customs, the Department of Forest Inspection, the Office of the Supreme People's Prosecution and the Anti-Money Laundering Intelligence Office. In 2021, UNDP assessed justice and policing agencies in terms of their capacity to prevent and respond to GBV, with concrete recommendations made on closing capacity gaps in 2022. With support from IOM, 700 (490 men 210 women) frontline border officials and 10 senior heads of offices from the Ministry of Public Security (MoPS) benefitted from capacity-building support on enhanced border assessment and management, and COVID-19 detection and response. A further 145 (80 women and 65 men) from the MoLSW and MoPS; benefitted from capacity support for evidence-based policies on various themes on Counter Trafficking in the Global Pandemic Context; and Supporting People on the Move.

With training courses on investigation techniques for wildlife enforcement agencies,<sup>24</sup> UNODC continued building capacity and providing support on advanced investigation techniques through the tailored "Enforcement Advisory Programme". The UNODC Global Programme against Money Laundering, Proceeds of Crime and the Financing of Terrorism provides technical assistance and training to financial intelligence units, ministries of justice, ministries of public security/interior (economic and counter terrorism police), state prosecutors' offices and customs departments of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Viet Nam. This support has focused on: guidance to the Anti-Money Laundering Intelligence Office on its approach to being assessed by the Asia Pacific Group on Money Laundering as part of the Financial Action Task Force 4<sup>th</sup> Cycle Mutual Evaluation Process; support to the MoF Customs Department in the review and

translation into English of the Customs Law 2020 (revised), focusing on assessing the legal framework for future capacity building requirements (such as financial investigation training and mentorship); and collaboration with the Anti-Money Laundering Intelligence Office and the Lao Bankers' Association to raise awareness of the Financial Action Task Force regime and anti-money laundering and countering the financing of terrorism across the banking sector.

Lao PDR is a significant transit country for illicit drugs and precursor chemicals. The country's position in the Mekong region puts it at the centre of all exchanges (borders with five countries), and the amount of crystalline methamphetamine and precursor chemicals seized annually in Lao PDR has increased exponentially in recent years.<sup>25</sup> To strengthen border control capacity to address illicit trafficking, UNODC is supporting 20 Border Liaison Offices at land and river border crossings in Lao PDR. In addition to supporting these offices, the UNODC Border Management Programme launched a new initiative in 2021 to strengthen community policing interventions, encouraging Lao authorities to adopt a holistic approach to counter-trafficking efforts. This project, concentrated in Huaphanh province, is supporting community policing interventions. Furthermore, UNODC has continued to support the introduction of Community Based Drug Treatment. This is an option for the people who have a problem with drug use disorders. As outpatient, low threshold services, Community Based Drug Treatment services have been expanded to 28 Community hospitals in 6 provinces. In 2021 there were 2,067 visits with more than 500 new clients accessing treatment and counselling.

To help strengthen the capacity of LDCs in developing evidence-based, coherent and well financed strategies to implement the 2030 Agenda, UN DESA helped to reinforce the GoL's network of SDG focal points in line ministries. Aside from bringing together this larger network, it developed a specialised team of facilitators who can lead future engagement in the SDG focal points network as well as analysis of who is participating in the national planning process and which entities need to be engaged more actively.

FAO provided technical support to the Government in formulating the NCAS and the GSAF. The Government took active ownership and organised a series of consultations, national and regional discussions throughout the process.

<sup>24</sup> Lao PDR is a major hub for the trafficking of wildlife, including threatened and endangered species. It is predominantly a transit country and gateway to other Asian markets, while playing a smaller role as a source of timber and destination for illegal wildlife. Lao PDR was one of the pilot countries in Southeast Asia for the implementation of the International Consortium on Combating Wildlife Crime (ICWC) Indicator Framework in June 2019 and the ICWC Toolkit report was adopted by GoL in November 2020 and presented to Lao authorities in early 2021.

<sup>25</sup> UNODC, Synthetic drugs in East and Southeast Asia, 2021



Photo: UNICEF

Contributing to the strengthening of national policy capacities for jointly implementing the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) towards the SDGs, UN DESA modified and customized the Expanded World Economic Forecasting Model<sup>26</sup> for simulations of the impact of various types of country-level investments, including BRI infrastructure investment, in the areas of long-term growth, labour market, gender inequality, fiscal sustainability, poverty reduction, and the environment. The modifications were made to supply, demand and monetary sides. As a result, the model provides a meaningful, working tool to assess the impact of BRI investments.

To enhance coordination and mainstreaming climate change at all levels, UN-Habitat and Local Governments for Sustainability Network under the Urban Leds II project supported the GoL in building capacities to enhance vertical integration to tackle climate change challenges and promote urban low emission opportunities in Lao PDR. At the same time, UN-Habitat supported Ministry of Public Works and Transport in developing a National Urban Strategy with the objective to ensure that urban growth in the next 20 years creates prosperity and opportunities for all, in line with the recent National Progress Report on the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda (2021).

**Basic services**

Under the framework of the National Governance and Public Administration Reform Programme of the GoL, with MoHA leading the implementation, and with cross-sector cooperation and implementation MoF, MPI, and provincial and district administrations, UNDP and UNCDFs Joint Programme on Governance for Inclusive Development has helped improve access to services - especially for the most vulnerable

communities - through the One Door Service Centres National Strategy 2021-25, which sets out for the first time the key sub-targets and approaches to guide the roll-out of the Service Centres<sup>27</sup>. The programme also piloted an instrument to capture villagers' perceptions on access and quality of basic services and promoted opportunities for collaboration with civil society in local development and services through the Service User Feedback Survey and the Public Services Innovation Funds, respectively.

The GDP aims to improve service delivery through the District Development Fund (DDF). DDF has proved to be one of the most effective tools in the quest for the inclusive and cost-effective transformation of local economies, providing discretionary budget funds and developing technical know-how within local governments to better deliver services. Through technical assistance from UNDP, local authorities were enabled to develop and finance the implementation of multi-sector work plans for local development initiatives based on community priorities through the 16 projects under the DDF. These projects adopted the LNOB budgeting model which was introduced to GoL for the first time and helped to target marginalized and vulnerable groups, including women beneficiaries, who comprised 47% of the total. The capacity of district authorities was developed through training for 130 participants on fiduciary management and reporting under the DDF. In 2021 UNDP supported the development of the first DDF Standard Operating Procedures, which were adopted by the MoF.

UNFPA in conjunction with the LSB convened a first stakeholders briefing for the upcoming 5<sup>th</sup> Population and Housing Census to be held in 2025. In the meeting, LSB presented the desired methodology for the upcoming census, lessons

<sup>26</sup> WEFM-e, an expanded version of the World Economic Forecasting Model, is a structural econometric macroeconomic model that provides quantitative analysis regarding impacts of infrastructure investment on GDP growth, productivity, labour, gender equality, poverty, debt sustainability, CO2 emissions, etc. for the next 5 years.  
<sup>27</sup> Services provided in the ODSCs include administrative, land management, public security, tourism and cultural, sports, commercial and public works.

learnt from previous census and an estimated budget. UNFPA will continue to provide technical support to LSB, MPI to develop the proposal document for the census to be presented and submitted for approval by the government of Lao PDR in 2022. The first vital statistics assessment was conducted, and key findings and recommendations were presented to key government and development stakeholders for further discussion and improvement of the civil registration and vital statistics system in Lao PDR.

### **NSEDP Monitoring**

With support from UN, GoL convened the 13<sup>th</sup> High-Level Roundtable Meeting (HL-RTM) in November 2021. The proceedings focused on the finalisation of the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP 2021-2025 and its implementation. The HL-RTM had three clear objectives that helped to improve the extent to which NSEDP monitoring informs evidence-based policy making:

**Taking Stock of Progress:** This included a snapshot review of the 8<sup>th</sup> NSEDP, with an overview of achievements, gaps, challenges and measures in need of special focus over the coming years. Progress against the 2030 Agenda was presented by the main findings of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Voluntary National Review (VNR) report finalized in June 2021, including reflections on limitations, data challenges, and best practices.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> VNR takes a critical look at progress and challenges in selected areas, considers ways to strengthen policies and institutional arrangements, and mobilise multi-stakeholder support and partnerships to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs. The UNCT supported the GoL in integrating SDG targets and indicators into national planning, bringing the SDGs to the local level, and preparing its VNR. UNV organized a Volunteer and Youth Consultation in partnership with RCO, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) to reflect volunteers' contributions to the SDGs as part of whole-of-society approaches in the VNR. The consultation's outputs were contributed and reflected in the final VNR report.

**Looking Forward:** the HL-RTM and its side events focused on national development priorities expressed in the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP, necessary policy adjustments and measures to take in the current context, as well as indicative resource requirements for the effective implementation of the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP. This included necessary technical preparations for the LDC graduation STS 2026 and a COVID-19 recovery plan in 2022 as well as the presentation of

work to date on an INFF as part of the implementation arrangements under the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP.

**Thinking about How:** a desk review of the Vientiane Declaration Country Action Plan was conducted to assess the effectiveness of development cooperation and provide recommendations on ways to improve further work. Recommendations emerging from the review and the HL-RTM on development cooperation included:

Sector Working Groups and development coordination mechanisms remain siloed and need to be reconsidered and/or revitalised in line with the outcome-based structure of the national plan to strengthen alignment, efficiency, effectiveness of and synergies between development partners' current and future interventions

Efforts are necessary on the allocation of development assistance, civil society and private sector engagement, transparency, usage of digital tools, predictability of financial flows with focus on domestic finances and revenue, and the streamlining of MoU approvals.

### **Outcome 8: People enjoy improved access to justice and fulfilment of their human rights<sup>28</sup>**

#### **UPR and Human Rights**

Work continued to link human rights with the national development achievements and SDGs and to capacities of central and local governments on M&E to improve data availability and quality in the country, and with civil society, academia and the private sector to strengthen their engagement in advancing the SDGs. Lao PDR has ratified several international human rights treaties, covering social, economic, and cultural rights; civil and political rights and the rights of specific groups of people, including women, children, persons with disabilities amongst others.

Following the review of Lao PDR in the 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle of the UPR, with support from the UN, and development partners, the GoL is developing a national action plan for implementation of the 160 recommendations accepted. The development has been delayed and is expected to be finalized in early 2022.

In 2021, the UN has supported the GoL's roll out of several key policies to address inequalities, including two action plans on Gender Equality and National Action Plan on the Prevention and Elimination of Violence Against Women and Children (NAPEVWC) based on the recommendations from the CEDAW and CRC committees. The NAPEVWC and National Action Plan on Gender Equality were developed with technical and financial support from UNPFA,

<sup>28</sup> Outcome 8 contributing UN entities: UNDP (lead), ILO, UN Women, UNCITRAL, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNODC, and UNV. For further details on the Results framework, please see Annex 1

endorsed by GoL and integrated into 18 provincial and 17 sectoral plans. UNFPA developed draft SOPs for the health and social sectors' response to GBV, as well as for a National Coordination Mechanism and Referral Pathway that align with the NAPEVWC and international standards. 150 people in three pilot villages in Savannakhet were also sensitised to gender, power GBV and sexual and reproductive health.

In consultation with 16 CSOs, NGOs, and international organizations, UNDP conducted a capacity needs assessment of four key justice sector agencies – Ministry of Justice (MoJ), MoPS, the Courts and the Public Prosecutors - to determine the readiness to implement the NAPEVWC. Recommendations from the assessment will be used in 2022 to develop materials for basic gender training and an overarching SOP for the justice sector, which will be critical to establishing rule of law in the area of violence against women.

Originally scheduled for 2021, the review of Lao PDR before the CRPD committee was postponed to August-September 2022. In preparations, three report submissions were under development in 2021 including the state report, the compiled UNCT report and a CSOs report (supported by UNDP on behalf of UNCT) drafted by a network of 11 Organizations of Persons with Disabilities. The report provides 78 concrete recommendations to the GoL on strengthening protections for the rights of persons with disabilities (PWD). This was the first time a CSOs report was prepared and submitted by civil society in Lao PDR to a treaty body.

UN partnerships with local international CSOs played an increasing role in implementing activities in 2021. OHCHR continued to support CSOs to monitor and report on human rights in the country, most notably the country team's support to organizations of persons with disabilities in preparations for Lao PDR's review before the CRPD committee in 2022. The UN communicated with the GoL to follow up on individual human rights cases<sup>29</sup>, conducted advocacy and offered technical support to support the GoL and other stakeholders, including civil society, to implement provisions under human rights and normative frameworks ratified or in other ways committed to by Lao PDR.

Progress was also made with respect to ratification of international labour standards, with agreement by the GoL and endorsement from the National Assembly to ratify the ILO convention No.155 on Occupational Safety and Health, and No.187 on Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health. A draft outline of Employment Promotion Law is developed for the consultation process. The

National Rural Employment Promotion Strategy was endorsed by the Prime Minister's Decree No.652/PM, dated 6<sup>th</sup> December 2021, declaring the implementation of the Strategy, vision 2030 and target 2025. The National Occupational Safety and Health Profile of Lao PDR was developed through tripartite consultation and endorsed by the MoLSW.

### **Access to Justice**

UNDP initiated the development of the legal aid strategy through two workshops with more than 100 participants and senior officials. Government officials learned good practices in legal aid from Viet Nam, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines. Moreover, through workshops and advocacy, MoJ committed to develop a legal aid strategy to enhance coordination among partners and mobilise resources.

In widening access to justice to promote the rule of law, UNDP supported the development of the Digital Legal Aid Platform (DLA) which was piloted in five Legal Aid Offices across four provinces. At least 2 legal aid officials in each office were trained for this new digital transformation and the Offices are familiarizing themselves with the new DLA services. The platform not only contributes to the government's Digitalization Master Plan, but also helped to increase access to legal information and assistance, especially to vulnerable groups, women, GBV victims and PWD.

The DLA has helped to increase the opportunity for citizens' in accessing justice. The platform provides basic legal information, and preliminary legal consultancy through chat functions, so anyone in the country can access this platform with a particular focus on supporting vulnerable groups, including women at risk of GBV and PWD.

Access to justice for small businesses and commercial entities are also critical to economic and social development, and strengthens the rule of law. In this regard, the UNCITRAL Special Session, held in Republic of Korea, in Nov 2021, provided capacity-building to GoL and international organization officials on UNCITRAL alternative dispute resolution texts on international commercial arbitration, international commercial mediation, and online dispute resolution. Participants shared experiences and updates from their respective jurisdictions on dispute resolution, dispute resolution in the digital economy and investor-State dispute settlement. The hybrid event was attended by representatives from 17 jurisdictions, development banks, and international organizations in the Asia-Pacific region, including from the RCO in Lao PDR.

<sup>29</sup> Regarding the UN communication to the GoL on rights cases, please see the [Special Procedures database](#), the [Secretary General's report on intimidation and reprisals against individuals seeking to cooperate with the UN](#), and a [press-statement from UN Special Procedures](#).



## 2.3 Support to Partnerships and Financing the 2030 Agenda

### Food Systems Summit in Lao PDR

*“National dialogues have catalysed unexpected opportunities for collaboration and created safe spaces to convert tension to co-creation. Stressing the centrality of human rights and the 2030 agenda, prioritising equity and sustainability; highlighting the role of national and territorial governments in shifting food systems, shaping national pathways, what needs to happen, how it will happen, who needs to be involved, and what progress would look like.”*

**David Nabarro**

On 2 June 2021, the Food System Dialogue was held in Lao PDR. Technical working groups led by UNICEF, WFP, IFAD, FAO and composed of other UN AFPs, government partners, CSOs and the private sector presented their research, and commitments were made by development partners and the UN to improve food system sustainability in the country. Emphasis was placed on finding synergies across components of food systems to mobilise multi-stakeholder and cross-sectoral partnerships in order to accelerate progress towards multiple SDGs through the four interconnected action tracks of the Food System Summit:

1. Ensuring safe and nutritious food for all
2. Boosting nature positive production at sufficient scales

3. Advancing equitable livelihoods and value distribution
4. Building resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks, and stresses

Underpinning all action tracks is the commitment to LNOB principles by ensuring representation for the most vulnerable groups in the food system and aiming for all members of society to have equitable access to resources, information, food and livelihood opportunities. The Food System Dialogues provided an opportunity to discuss food systems from different perspectives and to identify opportunities and challenges in the country; to acknowledge and identify synergies and possible trade-off among the four action tracks; to acknowledge the importance of having all stakeholders on board to collectively tackle the challenges and seize the opportunities while making sure no one is left behind; to learn from good practices and policies as well as to benefit from lessons learnt; to collect and to strengthen the commitments from stakeholders for collaborative actions on the pathway towards sustainable food systems.

Lead agencies were given space to develop their working group’s presentations/workshops at the Food System Dialogue, which involved breakout rooms and smaller sessions to facilitate genuine dialogue and incorporate the perspectives of a wide range of participants, including CSOs, the private sector and line ministries.

The UN further provided technical support to the National Convener for Lao PDRs Food System Summit at the Asia Pacific Regional Food Summit, the pre-Summit in Rome and the Food Systems Summit in New York. The Asia Pacific Summit was an opportunity for South-South cooperation and resulted in the development of a joint statement emphasising regional cooperation from Cambodia, Japan, Lao PDR, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam that was eventually delivered at the Food System Pre-Summit.

The Food System process was a success in Lao PDR, embracing the guiding principles set out by the Food System Secretariat; act with urgency; be respectful; recognise complexity; embrace multi-stakeholder inclusivity; complement the work of others; and build trust. The Food System Summit incorporated stakeholders from all aspects of food systems in the country - continuing through to a regional and then global level – providing feedback to inform the GoL's efforts to move forward on improving food system sustainability. The Food System was incorporated into the HL-RTM and is a priority for both GoL and UNCT in 2022 and beyond.

As follow up from the National Dialogue, MAF requested FAO to support establishing the national process and coordination mechanism, and to implement the recommendations of the [synthesis report](#) that emerged from the national Food Summit process. This will kickstart the process of developing a National Action Plan on Pathways to Sustainable Food Systems by August 2022.

## Financing

In 2021, UNCT laid the foundations for a financing strategy for the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP to make best possible use of available financial resources in support of national development goals and the 2030 Agenda. This financing strategy formulation is inspired by the INFF approach endorsed by Member States in 2015 as a solution to two key problems:

1. **A missing link between planning and financing development:** most national plans lack strategies to finance development priorities, implying that well-consulted financing strategies are necessary to accompany national plans.
2. **A funding gap to achieve the SDGs** and national development priorities aligned to the SDGs, implying that all sources of finance and stakeholders can better contribute to the achievement of the SDGs.

The financing strategy objectives are to identify (1) the most relevant financing policy options and ensure that policies, instruments, and regulatory

frameworks are coherent, sustainable and risk-informed, and (2) needs and opportunities of technical assistance and capacity building required to support its smooth implementation

The United Nations Joint Programme on Efficiency and Optimization of Lao PDR's Public budget to finance the SDGs supported by the Joint SDG Fund, provides technical and coordination support to the GoL across the three main stages of the INFF implementation: diagnostics of the country's financial constraints, formulation of credible and realistic policy options, and monitoring and evaluation of progress towards the implementation of a holistic and ambitious approach to development finance.

As the main vehicle to support the formulation of a financing strategy for the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP, it is coordinated by the MPI and the RCO, and the core team involves the MoF, MPI, and MoH, as well as UNFPA, UNCDF, and UNDP as the technical lead entity from the UNCT.

During the inception phase, this UNJP worked to create the conditions for the successful delivery of a financing strategy: create coordination mechanisms, agree processes and timelines, and review methodologies and key concepts.

An inception dialogue was held in Vang Vieng in April 2021 to discuss key methodologies and concepts. In particular, the core concept of the INFF, its holistic approach and fourfold process, as well as costing methodologies and challenges, was agreed.

A following diagnostics phase aimed to provide all stakeholders with a set of key findings that would serve as the analytical backbone of the financing strategy.

The diagnostics can be divided into two types of assessments which complement one another in painting a clear picture of the financing landscape for the achievement of the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP:

- **Investment needs, or "costing"**, were estimated through 6 reviews of the literature corresponding to the 6 outcomes of the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP and a modelling of health costs through the development of a Health Investment Case.
- **The resource envelope, or "financing"**, is estimated through the Development Finance Assessment (DFA), which analyses four sources of finance according to the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, namely: State budget, domestic private finance, international private finance, and Official Development Assistance. Two additional briefs complement the picture painted by the DFA- on climate finance and on State borrowing.

The main findings from these various assessments were presented and agreed at a first structured dialogue organized by UN and MPI in October.

Work is now progressing on the financing strategy formulation phase, with a scoping step, to map, identify, and discuss a draft list of financing policy areas, against the findings of the diagnostics carried out, executed between October and November 2021. It included series of pre-consultations to discuss a preliminary scoping of financing policy areas and existing reforms and policies, and a second structured dialogue, organised as a side event to HL-RTM, to agree the outline of the financing strategy. A secondary objective was to reinforce coordination and ways of working between key stakeholders at the beginning of the policy formulation phase.

### UNJP on F4D key achievements in 2021

A shared understanding on development finance reached: In addition to an updated DFA, a costing report with an adapted methodology, and the UNFPA health investment case, UNCDF (sovereign borrowing) and UNDESA (climate finance) developed two additional reports. These 5 studies were widely circulated, and their main findings presented by the MPI at the HL-RTM Meeting. They underpin the scope and outline of the financing strategy, which was also endorsed in late 2021.

Scope and outline of financing strategy developed and agreed with GoL, based on a shared

understanding on development finance: there is a marked increase in buy-in from the government. 2021 saw the consolidation of clear ways of working between the UN entities and their government counterparts. Significant efforts were put by the RCO into the development (and the communication) of clear processes following the INFF guidance and the synchronization of UN entity activities. Another significant result has been to further integrate the JP activities into the national development coordination systems. The Deputy Prime Minister created a Technical Working Group on F4D in April 2021, and the JP achieved the successful integration of its activities (and aspirations) into the Round Table Process under the leadership of the RC. This helped to generate ownership of the financing strategy, in particular through the leadership of the MPI, which champions F4D in Lao PDR, through one of its vice-ministers.

UN's role in F4D expanded and partnerships were strengthened: intra-UN coordination and coherence increased. RCO and agencies regularly provided data or quality assurance. UN DESA, specifically, helped the JP to put the subject of environmental and climate finance high on the agenda. The WB, ADB, and IMF became regular contributors to the JP activities. This year's achievements successfully helped to strengthen the UN's role as a key convener on F4D.

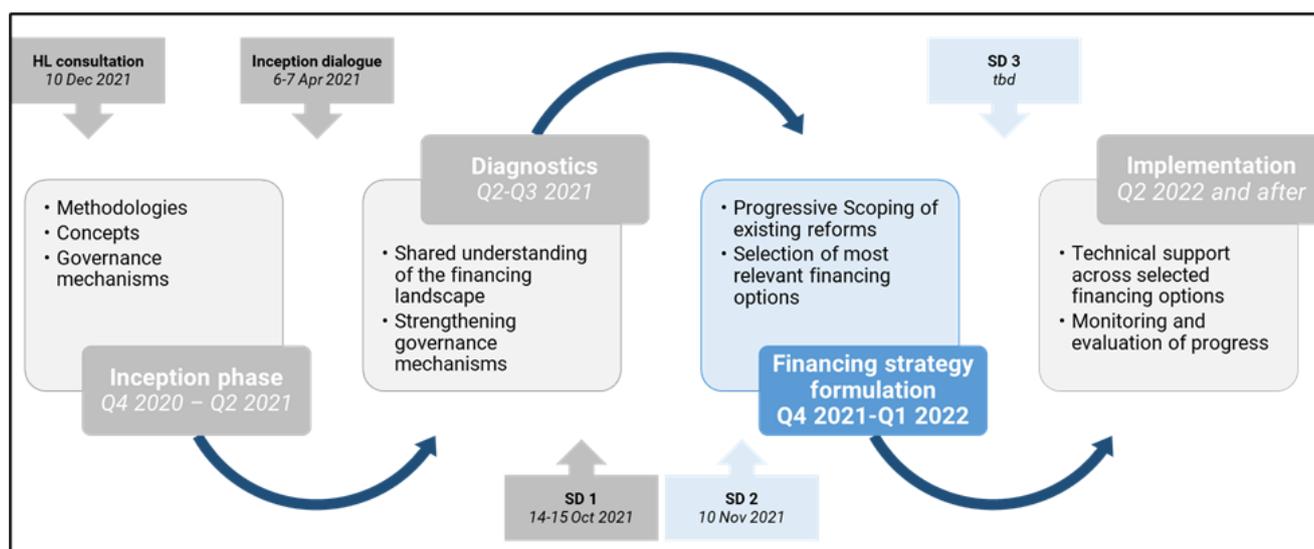




Photo: UNDP

## 2.4 Results of the UN working more and better together: UN coherence, effectiveness and efficiency, evaluation and lessons learnt

### UNSDCF

The independent evaluation report of the UNPF 2016-2021, finalised in early 2021 found that the UNPF has been ineffective as a coordination mechanism, offering a great opportunity with the development of the new UNSDCF of creating a more effective guiding framework for the UN in Lao PDR. The evaluation recommended that the GoL be more actively involved in the design and implementation of UN programmes. At the strategic level, the Joint Steering Committee (JSC) should agree on directional issues, while at the operational level a joint Theory of Change, monitoring framework and indicators should be developed.

In response to this, the Terms of Reference of the JSC and the UNCT were revised for better coordination and engagement in the CF cycle. Increased frequency of engagement and consultation with the JSC to ensure its strategic guidance during the development stages of the new CF cycle was included in the mandate for JSC. The JSC is now scheduled to meet three times per year with a High-Level JSC organised in the first half of the year to provide strategic guidance for the CF implementation in the year.

The Technical JSC will meet semi-annually: in the first half of the year to prepare the organisation of the High-Level JSC and in the second half of the year to conduct a review of implementation and put forward recommendations, as necessary, for the continued CF implementation.

Following an initial roadmap agreed with the GoL in August 2020 the development of the CCA and the CF included consultations with the JSC and the GoL at various stages, as well as consultations jointly chaired by MoFA and the UN with development partners, civil society and private sector representatives, focusing on strategic priorities, outcomes and outputs. The GoL was involved in the drafting of the CCA, which was finalised in Q1 2021 as well as the development of the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework, with the design of indicators and targets done as a joint exercise in order to promote increased joint buy-in and improved measurement of progress. MoFA was consulted on the first draft and the JSC provided both technical and high-level feedback to the draft CF before its finalization.

## M&E and Reporting

As recommended by the UNPF evaluation, clearer articulation and alignment between the results groups of the CF and the sector working groups and the outcomes of the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP and the CF are necessary, helping to promote and track changes at the transformational outcome level. Clear identification is needed regarding how the CF supports and aligns with the NSEDP in its monitoring and reporting mechanism, and how it is linked to the national SDG indicator framework. This will be facilitated by the fact that, at the outcome level, 71% (39 out of 58) of indicators are aligned to the national SDG indicator framework, and 45% (26/58) are aligned to indicators of the NSEDP. Efforts were also made to identify indicators underpinned by existing datasets and regular data collection. 78% (45/58) are at least aligned to either the NSEDP or the SDG indicator framework.

Also noted in the UNPF evaluation was the need for further improvements to strengthen M&E and statistical management as well as overall joint reporting. The ToR of the M&E group were revised as part of the development of the CF, with clear entity leads for each indicator to strengthen the reporting process. The Results Framework was developed through a consensus-based process with all 25 UN entities signing the CF. All 58 indicators have a custodian agency, charged with tracking indicator progress on a regular basis, under the strategic coordination of the RCO.

The evaluation of the UNPF as well as AFPs in the 2021 reporting year highlighted the need to strengthen national capacities to produce, analyse and utilize data and statistics linking data producers and users within the efforts of public administrative reform and data-driven governance in support of evidence-based policy development.

This is essential for an effective monitoring and evaluation framework that can help the UN development system and the GoL respond and adapt to changing circumstances in the country and target key areas and groups that need specialized support. It is especially important for effective integration of the human rights-based approach across all UN programming, ensuring that no one is left behind.

During the CF implementation period, the UN in Lao PDR will provide support to the rollout of key national surveys including the 2025 Population Census, the Lao Social Indicator Survey III, and the Labour Force Survey; these will inform the monitoring of both the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP and national sectoral strategies, as well as the CF.

## One UN

As per the UNPF evaluation, stronger emphasis needs to be put on ensuring UN AFPs are coordinated in delivery and monitoring of the achievements. The CF priorities are determined based first and foremost on the country's progress on the SDGs, as well as opportunities, gaps and challenges identified through the CCA against the backdrop of national imperatives.

Collective priorities shape outcome objectives that steer the country programmes of each UN development entity. In the short term, the successful achievement of outcomes will be measured by delivery of joint outputs attributable to UN work articulated in the CF. In the longer term, the success of the CF will be judged by its contribution to a smooth, successful, and sustainable graduation of Lao PDR from LDC status and its achievement of the SDGs.

Throughout the development phase of the CF, the technical level task team members and UNCT put strong emphasis on joint outputs to avoid siloed initiatives and the ToRs of Result Groups (RGs) were adapted to reflect a platform for increased and more efficient joint work that pools the capacities of different agencies at both the outcome and joint output levels. All UN contributions have been organised into 21 joint outputs, coordinated through joint output groups.

The joint output work under the oversight of the more strategic RGs, and facilitate ongoing, practical, and programmatically focused exchanges of information, work planning, and development of joint initiatives amongst UN entities. One lead is appointed for each output, who, with support from the RCO, will be responsible for informing the relevant RGs leads on quarterly results and initiatives. Loosely defined ToRs for the output groups emphasise coordinated and integrated development of joint initiatives and programs and program delivery at a more granular level than the RGs, striving for limited overlaps and improved synergies, as well as efficient information-sharing.

An extensive joint work planning (JWP) exercise is being held in Q1 of 2022. JWPs at the outcome-level are critical instruments to avoid duplication and fragmented approaches and to ensure UN-wide coherence in collective programming. The JWPs will contain planned interventions and resource contributions from the UN entities towards the achievement of joint outputs and outcomes.



Photo: UNFPA

### Communicating and Advocating Together

The UN Communication Group (UNCG) implemented its activities based on the Joint UN Communication Strategy for 2017-2021 with a focus on improving inter-agency cooperation to ensure consistent and cohesive messaging and enhance the image of the UN.

In the context of COVID-19, the campaign #VaccinateLaos implemented by UNICEF effectively supported COVID-19 vaccination rollout across the country through online and offline communication platforms, directly reaching and engaging more than 3 million people. UNICEF and WHO supported MoH to develop Interactive and engaging communication materials in different formats and local languages for various Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) activities to leverage the MoH's network in priority districts and villages in all 18 provinces.

To tackle COVID-19 vaccination hesitancy, increase vaccination uptake and build trust in vaccine safety and effectiveness, UNICEF produced 62 videos and disseminated them through digital media channels. The topics covered included: vaccine arrivals supported by COVAX Facility and bilateral support from countries with friendly ties; advice from medical experts; information on safety and efficacy of vaccine; and endorsements from influential people including ministers, doctors, ambassadors, and celebrities. The messages were published by local media agencies.

WHO supported the Centre of Information and Education for Health under MoH to strengthen its capacities to produce videos, news and livestreams of daily press conferences on [Facebook](#) which was

considered the most reliable and most updated source of information in the country on COVID-19 related issues. Joint media briefings and panel discussions were also organized under the technical assistance of WHO and UNICEF to provide timely information and updates to journalist on COVID-19 situation and vaccination coverage to mitigate misinformation and rumours.

The first national digital teaching and learning platform "[Khang Panya Lao](#)" was launched to support children's learning during the pandemic and benefitted more than 70,000 learners, supporting their remote learning and their face-to-face classes as a supplementary learning resource. The second season of the popular early childhood development TV series "[My House](#)" with 12 new episodes was produced as part of efforts to learn at home.

Under "Safely Back to School Campaign" led by UNICEF, vaccination of teachers has been encouraged, messages on the safety of vaccines have been disseminated, and information on how and where to get vaccinated has been largely shared. The advocacy around face-to-face learning was continued for schools to remain open with mitigation measures in place via digital media campaign. Thanks to the efforts, 1.6 million children in 14,000 schools were reached through RCCE materials. In addition, local community radios were assisted to broadcast information on COVID-19 response to communities in local languages, covering official news from the GoL and updates on gender equality, safe migration, and public health guidance.

A series of communication products were developed for [the 13<sup>th</sup> HL-RTM](#) in November 2021. Throughout

the year, UNCG jointly organized 14 key international days and several events.

In late 2021, the 16 Days of Activism Against GBV campaign led by UNFPA was a success, reaching 1.7 million people on both online and offline platforms. With the theme "Orange the world: End violence against women now!", 52 institutions from the GoL, development partners, CSOs and private sector actors participated in the campaign, calling for actions to increase awareness and galvanize advocacy, creating opportunities for discussion about challenges and solutions. Supporting the events, the buildings of the UN and the EU were lit up in orange during the 16 days. News and contributions from the campaign circulated widely with seven newspaper articles, 300 posts on social media, and 50 supporting videos created by both female and male leaders.

Under the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative, the Safe and Fair Programme commemorated the 16 Days of Activism Against GBV campaign with a focus on migrant workers. This included collaborating with Lao Youth Radio FM to organise a radio talk programme on the prevention of violence, available services for women migrant workers, as well as job opportunities for returnee women migrants. Community outreach and awareness raising activities were also organized in Bokeo and Savannakhet on the International Migrants Day and in collaboration with Lao Women's Union and the Lao Federation of Trade Unions.

More than 3000 people were sensitised to GBV prevention and response based on the Law on Preventing and Responding to Violence Against Women and Children (2014) at quarantine centres and communities in 6 provinces. Further outreach activities raised awareness on COVID-19 and the increased risk of GBV through the dissemination of 400 posters in 4 provinces and 37 districts, with an estimated reach of 8,000 people directly, and 16,000 people indirectly.

Hygiene and sanitary kits were provided to 18,772 women and girls in quarantine centres, COVID treatment facilities and communities across the country.

Eighty students from 20 schools across the country had a chance to express their views and concerns through a nationwide essay competition on the role of [Youth in Climate Action jointly organized by UNDP and UNFPA](#) in June 2021, which aimed to encourage young people to take action on the issues affecting them and their communities. It was also part of the World Environmental Day Celebration Campaign #GenerationRestoration.

Finally, the UN in Lao PDR maintained its active presence through its website and social media. In addition to an Op Ed penned by the MPI and the RCO on Finance in support of the SDGs and the 9th NSEDP and a joint Op Ed by the EU and the RCO on Human Rights Day, the UN in Lao PDR's [website](#) was regularly updated with ten stories, 32 press releases, and a number of publications and speeches in 2021. Two UNCG-produced stories were selected to share at the UNSDG Global website. The UN in Lao PDR [Facebook page](#) was updated regularly with 555 posts for 2021, gaining 20,542 page likes (up from 15,572 in 2020 and from 13,813 likes in 2019), and [the Twitter account](#) had 1,820 followers (up from 1,551 in 2020 and 1,231 followers in 2019). The new [YouTube channel](#) was structured with an attractive layout, being updated with 49 videos during the year.

### **Operations & Business Operation Strategy (BOS)**

In 2021, the Operations Management Team (OMT) continued to support the UNCT in moving towards harmonized business practices for further possibilities of cost optimization with greater efficiency. Despite the expanded lock-down and activation of working-from-home modality within the UN agencies since April 2021, the OMT still successfully maintained its business continuity and gained significant cost-saving with greater volume in more areas than 2020.

The 2020 highlight in cost-saving from the Fuel tax exemption Agreement signed between the GoL and the participating UN agencies and the long-term agreement for Internet Services Provider continued to sustain at USD61,148. Cost-saving gained from the Agreement on the special rate for USD-LAK exchange with Bank of External Commercial surged from USD33,398 in 2020 up to USD95,354 in 2021. Besides, the Finance sub-working group also recorded another USD19,797 saving from the waived fee for money transfer, and USD5,233 from using I-Banking system.

In addition to the Procurement and Finance sub working group, the Joint Harmonised Approach to Cash Transfer assessment exercise also resulted in more efficiency with USD12,799 of cost-saving recorded by December 2021. The overall tangible cost savings through these agreements is estimated at USD194,331, which is double the recorded figure of 2020 at USD95,549. With 2021 being the final implementation year of the 2017-2021 BOS cycle, the cumulative tangible cost savings is estimated at nearly USD0.8 million for the whole cycle.

Various common online platforms were operationalized with the fully populated BOS 2.0 platform digitalizing the 2017-2021 BOS cycle, the

UN-INFO platform tracking the UN system support at country level to local and central government to deliver on the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda, and the Information Management System platform strengthening joint reporting in both programmatic and normative work. Recently, the 2021 Country Common Premise Plan was migrated to the UN-INFO platform and work is under progress to finalise the UNCT Premise data for Lao PDR.

Following the second COVID-19 outbreak in the country and within the UN personnel, the OMT provided significant support on UN Duty of Care under the RC-led Crisis Management Team linked to Division of Healthcare Management and

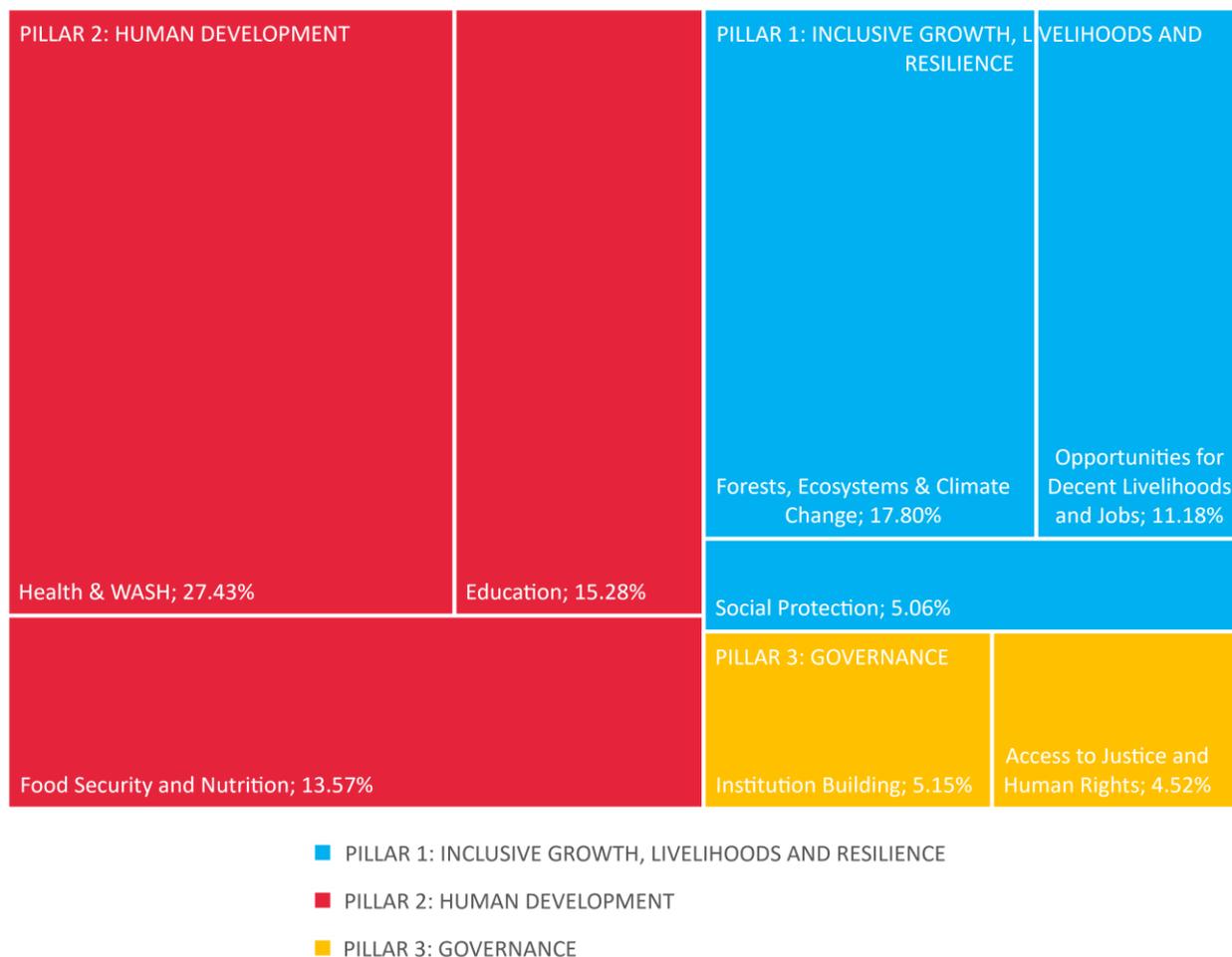
Occupational Safety and Health support at HQ. With support from UNDP and the UN Clinic, UN-specific isolation facilities were set up in a record time to provide accommodation support with full access to health care for the confirmed cases among the UN Personnel. Vaccines were secured by combining the efforts by the centrally supported UN COVID-19 vaccination programme and gaining access to the national COVID-19 vaccination programme. Additionally, agreements were reached with the Insurance providers and Kasemrad International Hospital to activate a direct billing system and secure the COVID-19 testing and medical treatment for the UN personnel in response to COVID-19 outbreak.



Photo: ITC

## 2.5 Financial overview

Figure 1: Proportions of delivery by Pillar and Outcome of UNPF in 2021



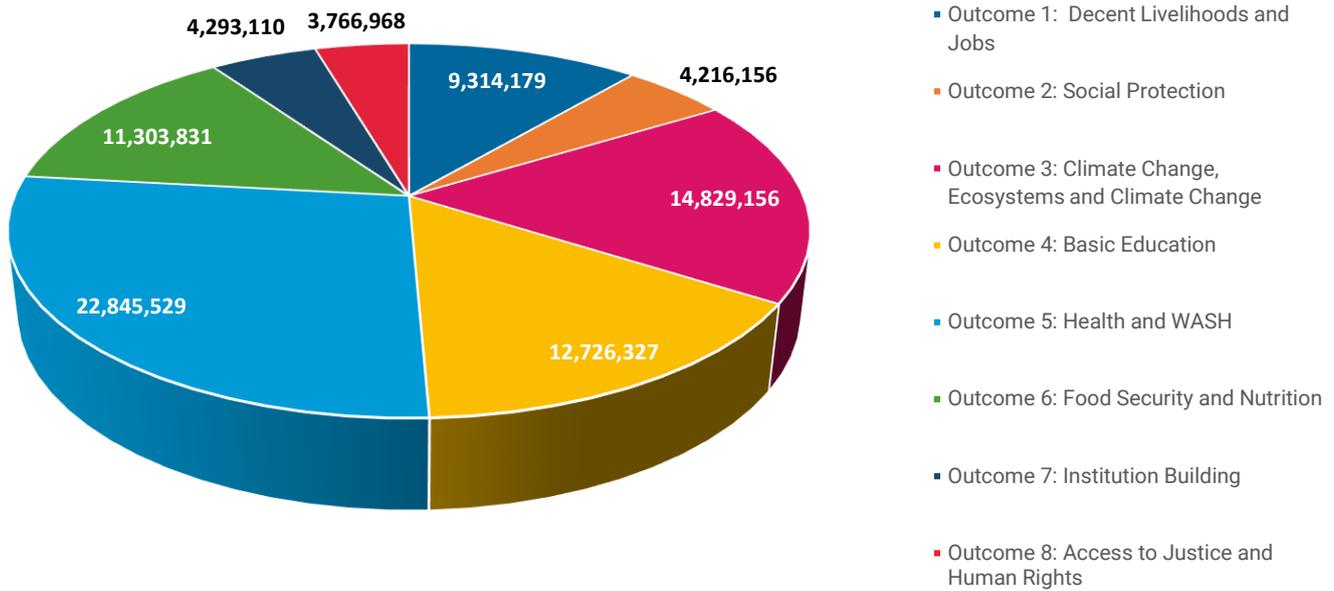
Resource requirements for 2021 implementation were estimated at USD104,269,383. Resources mobilised reached USD95,514,680, leaving a funding gap of USD11,754,703 in 2021. Total delivery amounted to USD83,295,256. This is the highest level of delivery since the beginning of the UNPF (USD74 mil in 2020, USD75.3 mil in 2019, USD63 mil in 2018 and USD44.2 mil in 2017).

Given the impact of COVID-19 on programme implementation in 2021 (which saw the most restrictive and prolonged lockdown regulations in Lao PDR since the outbreak of the pandemic), this is a high delivery (87%) – surpassing last year’s figures of 75.57% delivery – indicating a reassuring level of resilience in the UN to continually deliver despite significant disruptions.

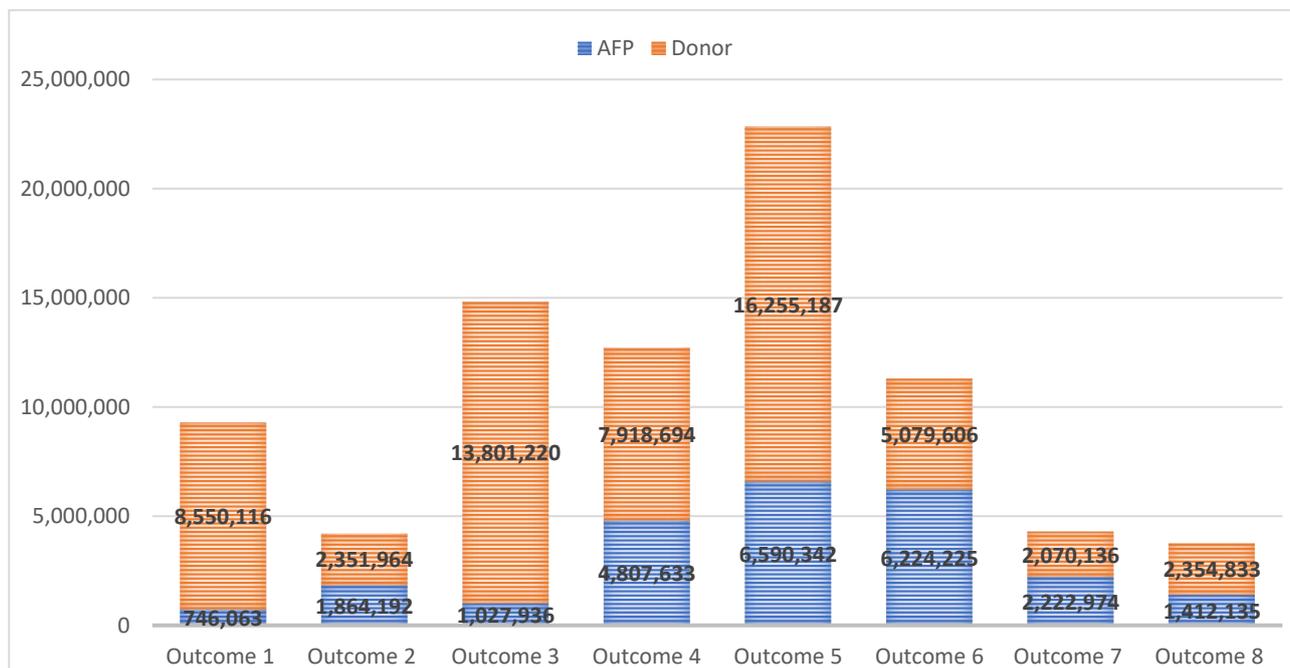
In terms of UN delivery against the pillars of the UNPF, USD28,359,491 was invested under Pillar 1 (Inclusive Growth, Livelihoods and Resilience), USD46,875,687 under Pillar 2 (Human Development) and USD8,060,078 under Pillar 3 (Governance).

The three outcome areas with the highest delivery were Outcome 5 (People enjoy improved access to quality health services, and water, sanitation, and hygiene- USD22.9 mil), Outcome 3 (Forests and other ecosystems are protected and enhanced, and people are less vulnerable to climate-related events and disasters- USD14.9 mil) and Outcome 4 (Children and youth enjoy better access to inclusive and equitable quality basic education and vocational skills - USD12.8 mil) whilst the least was spent on Outcome 8 (People enjoy improved access to justice and fulfilment of their human rights- USD3.4 mil).

**Figure 2: Delivery by outcome area in 2021 in USD**



**Figure 3: UN Core Funds and Development Partner funding by outcome in 2021 in USD**



The UN in Lao PDR engages with public and private, traditional, and emerging partners exploring innovative financing opportunities to mobilize resources to deliver its mandate and plans, which involves:

- fostering a shared vision of priorities and results with the broadest possible range of partners from the Government, IFIs, foundations, businesses and

civil society as a basis for strong, sustained, flexible and predictable resourcing of UN programming;

- pursuing partnerships and resources that help to connect shared global development goals and targets to the priorities of the Lao Government in the implementation of the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP and the challenges it faces in COVID-19 response and recovery;

- aligning programme and funding arrangements both internally among UN agencies and externally with IFIs, DPs and others to break silos and tap synergies to maximize impact;
- more robust results-based management and budgeting, strengthening quality reporting and communication, recognizing our partners more systematically for their contributions.

Of total delivery in 2021, USD24,102,346 (29%) came from UN AFPs core funds while the majority, at 71% (USD59,192,910), were funded by additional development partner contributions. The largest donor contribution to the implementation of a single programme was in support of WHO’s ‘Preparedness,

surveillance and response – Category 9,10 &11’, under Outcome 4 (Health and WASH), which supports SDG target 3.D to strengthen the capacity of all countries, in particular developing countries, for early warning, risk reduction and management of national and global health. This included contributions from Germany (USD2,663,383), the International Finance Corporation (USD1,381,833), the EU (USD1,371,102), Luxemburg (USD947,410), Australia (USD564,086) the Republic of Korea (USD380,724), Centre for Disease Control (USD305,630), Defence Threat Reduction Agency (USD100,00) and Japan (USD86,511); amounting to USD7,833,780.

**Figure 4: Total Annual Delivery 2017-2021 in USD**

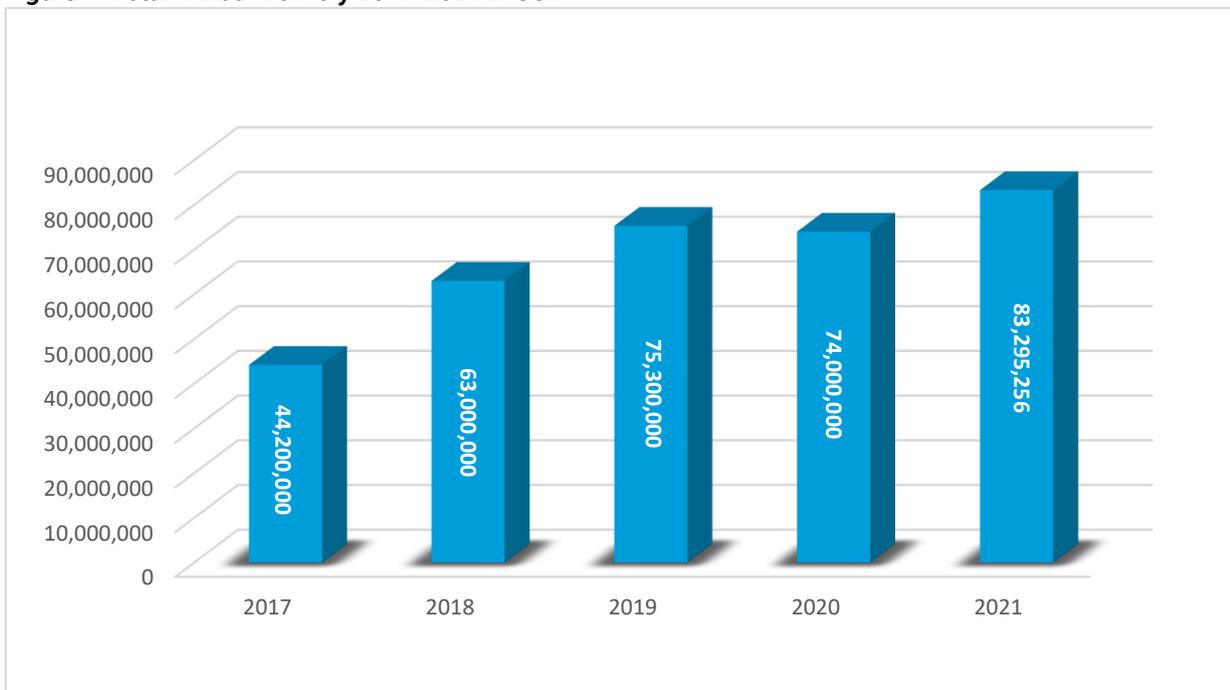




Photo: FAO

## Chapter 3: UNCT key focus for 2022

The UNCT in 2022 will focus on implementation of the newly developed CF aligned with the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP in support of national development priorities and the 2030 Agenda, amongst others.

### **Implementation of UNSDCF**

The next stage of the CF implementation is strategic work planning; to operationalise the framework commitments and identify programming and resource mobilization needs. The JWPs will contain planned interventions and resource contributions from the UN entities towards the achievement of joint outputs and outcomes. The JWPs at the outcome-level are critical instruments to avoid duplication and fragmented approaches and to ensure UN-wide coherence in collective programming for the country. Individual entity contributions in the JWPs will be consistent with the theory of change of the CF and directly contribute to the outputs and outcomes of the CF.

### **COVID Recovery Framework**

After research and consultations at the HL-RTM on the COVID-19 Recovery Framework, a key focus for UNCT and the GoL in 2022 finalising the framework and adapting to the 'new normal' as the country starts to open up its borders. The timeline for the finalisation of the Recovery Framework is yet to be finalised. The COVID-19 recovery framework should complement other National Plans of Action and the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP and should be developed in a collaborative manner with development partners, the UN and the GoL fully on board. The HL-RTM set a solid and inclusive foundation for the development and finalisation of the strategy.

### **LDC Graduation**

Graduating from LDC is a key strategic priority of the GoL and therefore a priority of the CF. This will require special efforts to maximize the benefits and manage a smooth and sustainable transition. Lao PDR will, if the timeline holds, be a LDC until the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP, which suggests taking advantage of concessional LDC-specific finance, while preparing for the next cycle, and managing potential negative trends in Official Development Assistance due to graduation. The extended five-year preparatory period, combined with a transition strategy, will ensure these factors will receive adequate consideration. The UN will continue to provide specific support to Lao PDR including training, workshops, studies and support for the development of the STS.

### **Financing For Development (F4D)**

The finalisation of the financing strategy for the 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP will be a key priority for UNCT in 2022. The UN will continue to provide technical support to GoL to finalise the strategy, including through the 3<sup>rd</sup> structured dialogue. This will bring an end to the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the INFF and will aim to provide an

advanced draft of a set of prioritized outputs and financing policy options. The next steps are as follows:

- A [policy formulation step](#), to refine relevant policy options. This step includes more policy discussions in smaller clusters under each financing policy area, to define practical options.
- A [validation step](#), to integrate final technical-level feedback and progress towards the endorsement of the financing strategy at a high-level.

### **Addressing the Triple Planetary Crisis at a domestic level**

Lao PDR remains highly vulnerable to climate change; currently the UN's support in this area is insufficient. A transformational shift in Lao PDR's development pathway, which has so far heavily focused on natural resources extraction, is required. Adapting to and mitigating the impacts of the triple planetary crisis will be critical to ensure that future generations have prosperous and fulfilling lives. Studies have identified that Lao PDR does not access/leverage available climate and green finance as much as it could, and that the potential is relatively untapped. Overcoming challenges linked to national capacity to access climate funds, or exploring opportunities to finance biodiversity, environmental management and climate adaptation through conventional and innovative finance, need to be explored.

### **Sustainable Food Systems**

Linked to the triple planetary crisis, but also incorporating other areas of priority for the UN (e.g., equitable livelihood generation, nutrition and food security), the Food System Summit has successfully raised awareness of the importance of sustainable food systems to reach a wide range of SDG targets. This is particularly important in a largely agrarian society. The UN will continue to support the GoL on improving the sustainability of food systems in 2022 as a key priority through, for example, the development of the National Plan of Action on Sustainable Food Systems.

### **Human Rights**

The UN will continue to support the GoL to finalise the UPR action plan and continue to integrate LNOB and HRBA across all UN programming, in particular through the Programme Oversight Group under the CF. Other essential actions will include supporting the development of a PSEA 2-year action plan, as well as preparations for 11 Organizations of Persons with Disabilities in advance of the review Lao PDR CRPD scheduled for August 2022. The UN will continue to support the GoL to prepare pending reports for other treaty bodies, such as the Report on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

## Annex: Outcome Indicator Tables

| Outcome 1: All women and men have increased opportunities for decent livelihoods and jobs <sup>30</sup>  |  |   |   |
|--|--|---|---|
| Indicator  | Baseline   | Target  | Status 2021   |
| 1.1 % of total population living below the national poverty line (National SDG Indicator 1.2.1)  | 23.2% (2012-2013)  | 16.2% (2020)  | 18.3% Expenditure and Consumption Survey, (2018-2019)   |
| 1.2 Gini coefficient   | 36.2 (2012/13)   | Gini coefficients improved for Lao PDR, urban and rural as compared to coefficients estimated in 2013 (MoF): 8 <sup>th</sup> NSEDP (2020) | 38.8 Expenditure and Consumption Survey, (2018-2019)  |
| 1.3 % of labour force in formal sector as a share of total employment rate, ♀ / ♂  | 15.6% - ♀: 15% / ♂: 75% (2010)                                 | 30% - ♀: 30% / ♂: 70% (2021)  | 27.1% - Labour Force Survey (2017).<br>No sex-disaggregated available and no data is available after 2017.  |
| Outcome 2: More people have access to social protection benefits, in particular vulnerable groups and the poor   |  |   |   |
| Indicator  | Baseline   | Target  | Status 2021   |
| 2.1 # of formally employed workers enrolled in Social Security Fund (SSF) excl. army officials   | 267,858 (2015)   | 300,000 (2021)  | 314,753 member of social security fund (female: 144,810) <sup>31</sup>  |
| 2.2 % of poor covered by social protection schemes (national SDG indicator 1.3.1)  | 80% (2015)   | 95% (2021)  | 94% <sup>32</sup>   |
| Outcome 3: Forests and other ecosystems are protected and enhanced, and people are less vulnerable to climate-related events and disasters <sup>33</sup> |  |   |   |
| Indicator  | Baseline   | Target  | Status 2021   |
| 3.1 % of land covered by forest National SDG Indicator 15.1.1  | 58% (2015)   | 70% (2025 <sup>34</sup> )   | 71.90% <sup>35</sup>  |
| 3.2 # of pax / 100,000 affected by natural disasters National SDG Indicator 1.5.1  | tbc by Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment – (MoNRE) | tbc by MoNRE  | Floods, drought, storms, landslides and crop pest invasions were recorded 65 times and affected a total of 70,200 people in 15 provinces, 94 districts and 786 villages <sup>36</sup> |
| 3.3 Agricultural value affected by natural disasters and climate change  | tbc by MAF   | tbc by MAF  | Reductions in agricultural activity or access to inputs have not been reported yet  |
| Outcome 4: Children and youth enjoy better access to inclusive and equitable quality basic education and vocational skills <sup>37</sup>                 |  |   |   |
| Indicator  | Baseline   | Target  | Status 2021   |

<sup>30</sup> Outcome 1 contributing UN entities: UNDP (lead), IFAD, ILO, IOM, ITC UNCDF, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNODC, UN Women, UNV, and WFP.

<sup>31</sup> This included 180,609 (female: 84,077) from the public sector, 121,698 (female: 54,944) from the private sector and 12,446 (female: 5,789) were voluntary contributors. (Social Security Fund Office, 2020). 2021 data will be updated in Jan 2022 after the report from LSSO is finalized.

<sup>32</sup> Although the national coverage of social security and other social protection schemes remains low, National Health Insurance (NHI) has achieved 94% overall national coverage.

<sup>33</sup> Outcome 3 contributing UN entities: FAO (lead), IFAD, IOM, UN-Habitat, UNDP, UNESCO, UNEP, UNICEF, UNV, WFP, and WHO.

<sup>34</sup> Vision 2030- and 10-year Socio-Economic Development Strategy 2016-2025.

<sup>35</sup> (FAO: 2020) <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/AG.LND.FRST.ZS?locations=LA>

<sup>36</sup> Over 70,000 people affected by natural disasters in 2021, Vientiane Times, February 7, Pg. 3

<sup>37</sup> Outcome 4 contributing UN entities: UNICEF (lead), ILO, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNV, WFP, and WHO.

|  |                              |                              |  |
|--|------------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| 4.1 % of new entrants in Grade 1 with pre-school experience                            | 51% - ♀: 52% / ♂: 50% (2015) | 75% - ♀: 75% / ♂: 75% (2021) | 71% - ♀: 72% / ♂: 70% MoES Education Management Information System (2021)  |
| 4.2 Survival rate in primary education ♀/♂   | 78% - ♀: 80% / ♂: 77% (2015) | 93% - ♀: 93% / ♂: 93% (2021) | 83% - ♀: 85% / ♂: 81% MoES Education Management Information System (2021)  |
| 4.3 % of youth employed as a result of participation in vocational training programmes | 30% (2015)                   | 70% (2021)                   | Proxy indicators:<br>Youth employment: 17% - 19% ♀; 16% ♂, 34% of ♂ youth; and 43% ♀ youth who report that their highest education completed is TVET are in employment, Labour Force Survey (2017) |

#### Outcome 5: People enjoy improved access to quality health services, and water, sanitation, and hygiene<sup>38</sup>

| Indicator  | Baseline   | Target  | Status 2020  |
|--|--|---|--|
| 5.1 Maternal mortality ratio, National SDG Indicator 3.1.1   | 197 per 100,000 (2015)                                       | 160 per 100,000 (2020)  | 185 per 100,000, 2017 UN estimate published in 2019                                      |
| 5.2 Under-five mortality rate, ♀ / ♂, National SDG Indicator 3.1.2   | 64 per 1,000 (2016) - ♀ 83 per 1,000/ ♂ 95 per 1,000         | 40 per 1,000 (2021) ♀ and ♂   | 45.5 per 1,000 live births - ♀ 40.6 and ♂ - 50.1 per 1,000 live births                   |
| 5.3 % of population using improved drinking water source and sanitation facility, National SDG Indicator 6.1.1 | 76% water supply coverage;<br>71% sanitation coverage (2015) | 90% water supply coverage (2020);<br>80% sanitation coverage (2020) ♀: 30% / ♂: 70 % (2021) | 83.9% water supply coverage, LSIS II (2017)<br>71.0% sanitation coverage, LSIS II (2017) |

#### Outcome 6: The most vulnerable people benefit from improved food security and nutrition<sup>39</sup>

| Indicator   | Baseline                       | Target                           | Status 2021   |
|---|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| 6.1 Prevalence of moderate and severe food insecurity, FIES (2018) National SDG Indicator 2.1.2         | FIES within the LECS 2017/2018 | TBC                              | Moderate food insecurity: 10.4% and severe food insecurity: 9.4% of households (LECS6)  |
| 6.2 % of children 6-23 months with improved dietary diversity   | TBD from LSIS II               | TBC                              | 60.1% (National Nutrition surveillance – not entirely comparable but is the only national level data available since LSIS II)   |
| 6.3 Wasting prevalence among children under 5 years, National SDG Indicator 2.2.3                       | 9.6% LCAAS (2015)              | 5 %                              | 9% LSIS II (2017) figures from the national nutrition surveillance system indicate that the rate is similar (7.7-9.9% depending on the time of year data was collected). Please note that data is not directly comparable but helps indicate trends (trend is limited-to-no progress) |
| 6.4 Annual data on nutrition generated by national nutrition surveillance system                        | Nil                            | Available source: Annual reports | National nutrition surveillance system was established in 2019 but after the initial 2 rounds in 2019, no further collection was possible in 2020 and 2021 due to COVID-19. Data collection for round 2 of 2021 is planned for early 2022 <sup>40</sup>                               |
| 6.5 % of children under 5 years affected by stunting, LSIS, (2012; 2017) National SDG Indicator 2.2.1   | 44% - ♀ 43% / ♂ 46% (2012)     | 34% - ♀ and ♂ (2020)             | % of children under 5 years affected by stunting: 33%, ♀ 32% / ♂ 34%. Source: LSIS (2017)   |
| 6.6 Prevalence of undernourishment in the population, Annual FAOSTAT data, National SDG Indicator 2.1.1 | 22% (2014)                     | 10% (2021)                       | Dramatic decrease since baseline and continued downward trend. 5.3% in 2019/2020. No data available yet for 2021 <sup>41</sup> .  |

#### Outcome 7: Institutions and policies at national and local level support the delivery of quality services that better respond to people's needs.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Outcome 5 contributing UN entities: UNFPA (lead), IOM, UN-Habitat, UNAIDS, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNODC, UNV, WFP, and WHO.

<sup>39</sup> Outcome 9 contributing UN entities: WFP (lead), FAO, IFAD, UN-Habitat, UNDP, UNICEF, UNODC, UNV, and WHO.

<sup>40</sup> The data from the national nutrition surveillance system is available on the NIPN dashboard which presents all national and sub-national level nutrition data: <https://nipn.lsb.gov.la/dashboard/nutrition-surveillance.html>

<sup>41</sup> Source: 2.1.1 Prevalence of undernourishment | Sustainable Development Goals | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (fao.org)

<sup>42</sup> Outcome 7 contributing UN entities: UNDP (lead), FAO, IFAD, IOM, UN-Habitat, UNCDF, UNCITRAL, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNODC, UNV, WFP, and WHO.

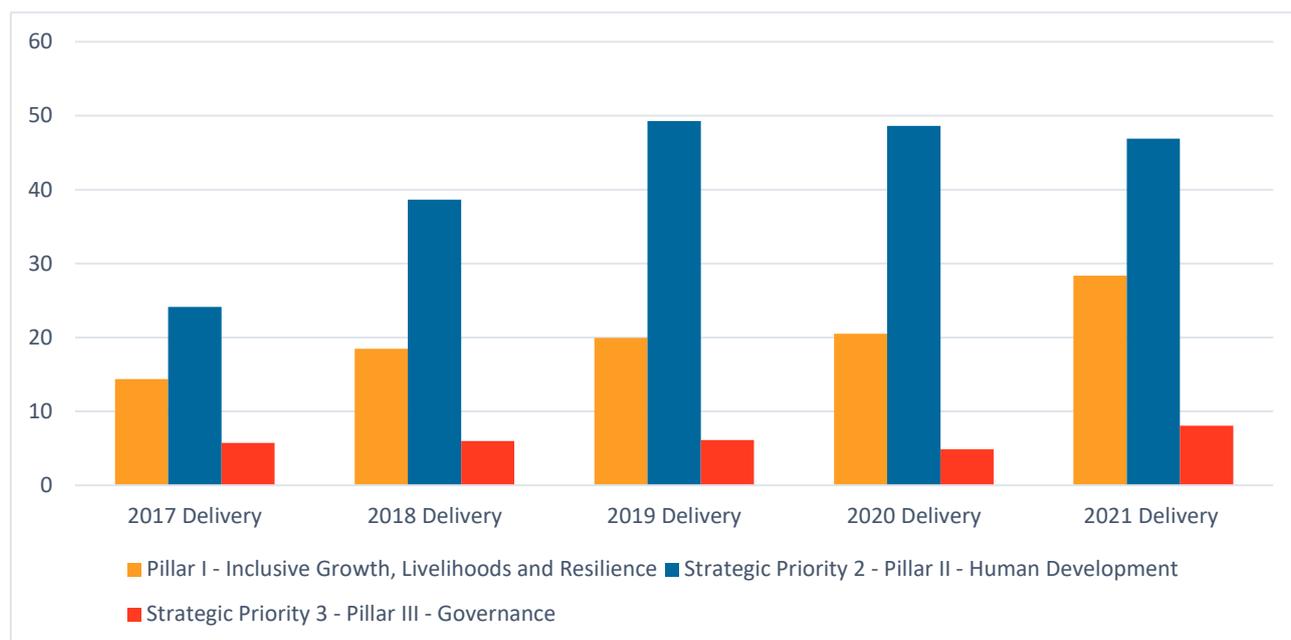
| Indicator   | Baseline                  | Target                    | Status 2021   |
|---|---------------------------|---------------------------|---|
| 7.1 # of new households receiving 2 or more basic services from their districts | 373,948 households (2015) | 600,000 households (2021) | 142, 541 households in 2021, cumulative figure is 717,810 households by 2021, Governance and Public Administration Reform Project Annual Progress Reports, (2021) |
| 7.2 Percentile rank on aggregate Government effectiveness                       | 39.4% (2014)              | 45% (2021)                | 20.6% Annual World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicator, (2020).2021 data not yet available  |
| 7.3 Extent to which NSEDP monitoring informs evidence-based policy making       | Limited extent (2015)     | Large extent (2021)       | Limited extent (2021) <sup>43</sup>   |

| Outcome 8: People enjoy improved access to justice and fulfilment of their human rights <sup>44</sup>            |  |  |   |
|--|--|--|---|
| 8.1 # of people's grievances redressed through courts and village mediation units using legal aid services       | Formal Courts 4,000; Village Mediation Units 4,746 (2015)                | Formal Courts: 7,000; Village Mediation Units 8,000 (2021)       | Formal Courts: 931; Village Mediation Units: 666, MoJ, (2020). 2021 figures not yet available ♀ and ♂   |
| 8.2 # of laws certified by the MoJ compliant with requirements of drafting / amending and public consultations   | 0 (2014)   | 8 (2021)   | 8 laws: Penal code, Law on Lawyers, Law on Judgement Enforcement, Law on Treaties and International Agreement, Law on Supreme People's Prosecutor, and Law on Disaster and Climate Change, Civil Code, and Land Law, MoJ (2020)<br>2021 figures not yet available |
| 8.3 % of accepted recommendations of 2 <sup>nd</sup> UPR cycle implemented                                       | 0 (2015)   | 60% / 70 of 116 (2021)   | 95% of 116 accepted recommendations have been implemented (MoFA), (2020)<br>For 2021, there is limited information, including the absence of an M&E framework.  |
| 8.4 % of ♀ in National Assembly (NA), and in state and party leadership positions, National SDG Indicator 16.7.1 | 27.5% in NA (2016); 6.06% in state and party leadership positions (2013) | 35% in NA and 20% in state and party leadership positions (2021) | NA: 22%, distribution of seats to ♀; state and party leadership: 18% (2021)   |

<sup>43</sup> 9<sup>th</sup> NSEDP M&E framework will be a key tool for the improvement of government service (i) providing information to political leadership, National Assembly and the public as a means of strengthening accountability; (ii) help formulate and justify budget requests; (iii) help make operational resource allocation decisions; (iv) trigger in-depth examinations of performance problems and corrections needed; (v) help motivate personnel to plan and programme improvements; (vi) monitor the performance of DPs against performance targets; (vii) provide data for special in-depth plan evaluations; (viii) provide more efficient services; (ix) support strategic and other long-term planning; (x) communicate better with the public to build public trust.

<sup>44</sup> Outcome 8 contributing UN entities: UNDP (lead), ILO, UN Women, UNCITRAL, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNODC, and UNV.

## Annex 2: Indicative Financial Overview (in USD)



Unit: million USD

| Yearly Financial overview   | 2017 Delivery        | 2018 Delivery        | 2019 Delivery        | 2020 Delivery        | 2021 Delivery     |
|---|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Pillar I - Inclusive Growth, Livelihoods and Resilience</b>    | <b>14,361,449.00</b> | <b>18,462,541.00</b> | <b>19,927,298.00</b> | <b>20,521,302.00</b> | <b>28,359,491</b> |
| Outcome 1.1 - Decent Livelihoods                                  | 8,119,269.00         | 7,728,390.00         | 7,264,215.00         | 9,077,352.00         | 9,314,179         |
| Outcome 1.2 - Social Protection                                   | 181,518.00           | 1,130,909.00         | 1,369,454.00         | 2,923,131.00         | 4,216,156         |
| Outcome 1.3 - Climate Change, Disaster Management and Environment | 6,050,661.00         | 9,603,242.00         | 11,293,629.00        | 8,520,818.00         | 14,829,156        |
| <b>Strategic Priority 2 - Pillar II - Human Development</b>       | <b>24,143,868.00</b> | <b>38,647,035.00</b> | <b>49,284,953.00</b> | <b>48,618,679.00</b> | <b>46,875,687</b> |
| Outcome 2.1 - Basic Education                                     | 9,413,117.00         | 11,691,722.00        | 12,586,691.00        | 8,904,129.00         | 12,726,327        |
| Outcome 2.2 - Health, Water and Sanitation                        | 8,863,299.00         | 13,972,558.00        | 22,410,278.00        | 23,097,492.00        | 22,845,529        |
| Outcome 2.3 - Food and Nutrition Security                         | 5,867,452.00         | 12,982,755.00        | 14,287,984.00        | 16,617,058.00        | 11,303,831        |
| <b>Strategic Priority 3 - Pillar III - Governance</b>             | <b>5,750,291.00</b>  | <b>5,984,634.00</b>  | <b>6,105,649.00</b>  | <b>4,881,813.00</b>  | <b>8,060,078</b>  |
| Outcome 3.1 - Institution Building                                | 3,931,200.00         | 4,215,699.00         | 3,752,987.00         | 3,473,388.00         | 4,293,110         |

