



UNITED NATIONS
LAO PDR



2020 PROGRESS REPORT

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

The United Nations in Lao PDR, 2021

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Acronyms

AFP	Agencies, Funds and Programmes
ASEAN	Association for Southeast Asian Nations
BCEL	Banque pour le Commerce Exterieur Lao Public
BOS	Business Operation Strategy
CCA	Common Country Analysis
CEDAW	Conventional on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (1979)
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease
CPN	Child Protection Network
CSE	Comprehensive Sexuality Education
DP	development partners
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
ESSDP	Education and Sports Sector Development Plan
EOS	Emergency Operation Centre
EU	European Union
FAO	UN Food and Agriculture Organisation
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GHG	Green House Gases
HFC	Hydrofluoric carbon
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approach
HRC	Human Rights Council
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFI	international financial institutions
ICPD 25	International Conference on Population and Development
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMS	Information Management System
INGO	international non-governmental organisation
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
ITC	International Trade Centre of the UN – WTO
JSC	Lao PDR – UN Joint Steering Committee
LaCSA	Lao Climate Service for Agriculture
Lao PDR	Lao People’s Democratic Republic
LDC	Least Developed Country
LSIS	Lao Social Indicator Survey I, II, (III forthcoming)
LTA	Long-term Agreement
LWU	Lao Women’s Union
LYU	Lao People’s Revolutionary Youth Union
LNCCI	Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry

LNOB	Leave No One Behind - commitment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015)
LSB	Lao Statistics Bureau
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
MCM	Minamata Convention on Mercury
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoIC	Ministry of Industry and Commerce
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
MoLSW	Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare
MoNRE	Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
MoPWT	Ministry of Public Works and Transport
MPI	Ministry of Planning and Investment
MPTF	Multi Partner Trust Fund
MSME	Micro-, Small- and Medium sized Enterprises
NCAWMC	National Commission for the Advancement of Women, Mothers and Children
NDC	Nationally Determined Contributions
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NHI	National Health Insurance
NHRC	National Human Rights Committee (former National Steering Committee for Human Rights)
NPA	Non-Profit Association
NRDB	National Recommendations Tracking Database
NSEDP	National Socio-Economic Development Plan
NSPS	National Social Protection Strategy
NSSF	National Social and Security Fund
ODA	Official Development Assistance
ODF	Open Defecation Free
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OHRLLS	Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed and Landlocked Developing countries and Small Island Developing States
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
PSEA	Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
RCO	Resident Coordinator's Office
RMNCAH	Reproductive and Maternal, Newborn, Child, Adolescent Health
SAM	Severe Acute Malnutrition
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal(s) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015)
SEIA	Socio-economic impact assessment
SERRP	Socio-Economic Response and Recovery Plan
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
SUN	Scaling up Nutrition
SWG	Sector Working Group

TVET	Technical, Vocational Education and Training
TWG	Technical Working Group
UNAIDS	UN Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNCDF	UN Capital Development Fund
UNCG	UN Communications Group
UNCITRAL	UN Commission on International Trade Law
UNCT	UN country team
UNCTAD	UN Conference on Trade and Development
UN DESA	UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UN DPPA	UN Department of Political Affairs
UNDS	UN development system
UNEP	UN Environment Programme
UNESCO	UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNFPA	UN Population Fund
UN-Habitat	UN Human Settlement Programme
UNICEF	UN Children's Emergency Fund
UNIDO	UN Industry and Development Organisation
UN INFO	UNSDG's main data systems digitize the UNCTs' SDCF
UNODC	UN Office for Drugs and Crime
UNPF	UN Partnership Framework 2017-2021
UNRC	UN Resident Coordinator
UNSDG	UN Sustainable Development Group
UNSDCF	UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework or Cooperation Framework
UNV	UN Volunteers
UPR	Universal Periodic Review of Human Rights
UXO	unexploded ordnance
VAW	Violence Against Women
WinS	WASH in schools
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme
WFS	Women Friendly Spaces
WHO	World Health Organisation
WTO	World Trade Organisation

Executive Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic that erupted in 2020 brought significant disruption to Lao PDR but with a fortunate low caseload to date the impact has primarily been socio-economic. Since March, the UN system and international partners have rallied to support the country in its COVID-19 response. The UN's assistance covered both preparedness and response, including technical and financial support, procurement and logistics services for personal protective equipment (PPE) and medical equipment and supplies, data analysis and impact assessments, policy advice, programme interventions, capacity building as well as the provision of information and communications technology (ICT) and other equipment to ensure business continuity. A Socio-Economic Impact Assessment (SEIA), building on a number of joint surveys and rapid impact assessments of COVID-19 conducted in April to June, focused on key areas of livelihoods and employment, agriculture, health, education, social protection and other cross-cutting issues, with special attention paid to the most vulnerable groups including women, children and migrant workers.

Building on these findings, the UN Socio-Economic Response and Recovery Plan (SERRP) to COVID-19 was developed. Presenting a consolidated package of support offered by the UN, it contributed to the country's recovery effort, particularly in protecting the needs and rights of vulnerable groups. Under this, technical support was provided for preparedness planning, data monitoring, and development of relevant guidelines in detection of COVID-19 cases, contact tracing, laboratory testing and use of the medical equipment and supplies. With multi party trust fund (MPTF) support, capacity of Points of Entries, quarantine venues and health facilities were strengthened as was the support for the continuation of essential services in health, education, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and waste management, and improve livelihood opportunities and social protection to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19. In collaboration with partners, risk communication messages and materials were developed and disseminated to raise awareness, ensure effective prevention and reduce stigma. The *Safely Back to School* Campaign with key prevention messages reached over 6.5 million people via TV, radio and social media platforms. Collaboration with the Buddhist Fellowship Organisation enabled a country-wide outreach on COVID-19.

Weekly humanitarian flights organized by World Food Programme (WFP) in close collaboration with the Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO) from May maintained an access route for landlocked Laos with humanitarian flight path to Kuala Lumpur supporting 1,228 passengers from 96 organizations. This enabled the continuation of humanitarian and development operations and diplomatic relations as well as vital cargo services for PPE and vaccines following the suspension of commercial air services to Lao PDR. Despite the disruptions due to COVID-19, continued progress was recorded in all three pillars of the UN Partnership Framework (UNPF) 2017-2021.

Under Pillar 1 on Inclusive growth, livelihoods and resilience, the UN focused efforts on improving livelihoods and resilience to shocks, supporting the labor market and social protection, and strengthening economic opportunities and diversification through the provision of policy advice, guidance for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and trade, assistance for vulnerable groups and capacity building. Significant milestones were achieved in the adoption of National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS), the Land Law and Decree on Export of Lao Workers Working Abroad that benefitted vulnerable groups including unemployed, small-scale and subsistence farmers and migrant workers. Key data capacities were strengthened through the launch of Lao Climate Services for Agriculture and the national agricultural livelihood and adaptive capacity dataset (Lao PDR is the first least developed country (LDC) to produce a dataset of this kind).

Pillar 2 - Human Development: UN agencies continued to promote education, health, WASH, and nutrition through a comprehensive approach, engaging household, school and community levels as well as policy and system-strengthening support, which brought more sustainable results. Steady progress in key education areas were recorded providing pedagogical advisory support and strengthening comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) and skill development. Health support focused on response to COVID-19 by strengthening coordination, planning and monitoring and evaluation (M&E); enhancing national capacity for early detection and in ensuring the continuity of essential health services; improving system preparedness and readiness to vaccine roll-out; distributing distancing

and hygiene information as well as improving WASH infrastructure. The UN also provided guidance on food security and nutrition strategies and decrees, facilitated training on food production, and enhanced access to specialized nutritious foods.

Pillar 3 - Governance: the UN provided institutions with technical support and policy advice to enhance performance in meeting their commitments and functions and reach the most vulnerable. This includes strengthening of coordination among Government institutions, mainstreaming of key UN principles including gender equity, disability inclusion, and sustainability into legislation and strategies, including the critical support to implementation; conducting unexploded ordnance (UXO) risk awareness and institutional strengthening for UXO disposal, and supporting key data initiatives such as the development of national database system “[Laoinfo](#)” to inform decision-making. The UN supported improved access to justice by trainings for law professionals, supporting the awareness raising of and compliance with international standards and norms including advocacy for universalization through Lao ratifications, integrating commitments from the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD25) into policies, supporting the development of social services that strengthen child protection systems, address gender-based violence and help prevent sexual exploitation and abuse.

The UN played a key role in policy advisory support and providing technical assistance to the Government, whilst also coordinating broader development cooperation and support in the context of the finalization of the 9th National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDP). Drawing on expertise from across the UN development system (UNDS) and other development partners (DPs), the Government and the UN co-convened a Multi-Stakeholder Taskforce to assess the evolving pandemic situation and propose appropriate adjustments to policy priorities for the 9th NSEDP. This identified potential trade-offs between key policy areas and made recommendations aimed at recalibrating policy priorities over the coming years, focusing on the needs of those left furthest behind in areas of macro-fiscal framework and financing for development; trade and private sector, value chains and tourism; human capital; labor markets and migration; and green growth, resilience and risk management. Co-organized by the UN and the Government a series of High-level Thematic Policy Dialogues distilled a set of actionable recommendations. Building on these, the UN country team (UNCT) under the leadership of the UN Resident Coordinator (UNRC) successfully coordinated the broader development community’s contributions to the concluding High-level Consultation on the 9th NSEDP in December, aligning the programming of a broad set of DPs with the emerging national priorities. Agreement was also reached on the action points of a mid-term review of the 8th NSEDP introducing implementation arrangements comprising a financing strategy, costing of priorities, and an M&E framework to be developed in Q1 in 2021.

In preparation for the 2021 Triennial Review of progress towards LDC graduation the UN provided integrated policy advice to the Government. Drawing on expertise from the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the International Trade Centre of the UN – WTO (ITC), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), and the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed and Landlocked Developing countries and Small Island Developing States (OHRLLS), a virtual consultation was convened in September by the UN and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA). This briefing examined implications of graduation, and key lessons from experiences of other countries in preparing for a smooth transition. Follow-on joint efforts culminated in early 2021 with the announcement of the Committee for Development Policy that having conducted the triennial review of LDCs, Lao PDR was recommended for graduation with an extended 5-year preparatory period effectively setting the graduation to 2026 assuming a positive and continued development trajectory. Efforts to respond to the COVID-19 fallout leading into the recalibration of the NSEDP have set a good course for the graduation period. These preparations paved the way for the development of a clear and tailored smooth transition strategy in 2021 and an agreement within the Joint Lao PDR-UN Steering Committee overseeing the preparations of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF or Cooperation Framework) 2022-2026 to include a workstream on joint graduation support enabling a good foundation for all relevant stakeholders, to help pave the way towards a smooth and sustainable graduation.

In 2020, the budget across UNPF strategic outcome areas tallied USD 96M, with a USD 72 M (74.66%) delivery by CoB 2020. With COVID-19 disruptions, this is slightly lower than the 2019 delivery at USD 75M, but still higher than the previous two years of USD 63M and USD 44M respectively. In terms of sustainable development goals (SDGs), USD 19.5M of expenditure (42.03%) was invested in SDG3, followed by SDG2 with USD 10.3M (22.21%). In comparison, SDG5, 9 and 14 see least invested, accounting for less than 0.5% of total expenditure. Some 29.26% of the funding came from UN agencies' own resources whilst other sources, including trust funds, private sector, foundations and other organizations and governments accounted for the remainder. In total, partners' contributions amounted to USD 65M in 2020.

With the UNPF 2017-2021 coming to a close, the UNCT together with Government counterparts embarked on the planning of a new cycle of joint country programming following the guidance for the new generation of UN Cooperation Frameworks with objectives to continuously improve coordination, through a more strategic and integrated approach, emphasizing the normative value of the UN, with strengthened systemwide accountability to Government and partners, increased use of pooled funding mechanisms, and attention to transboundary issues and regional links for sustainable development. A Common Country Analysis (CCA) was drafted and an independent evaluation of the current framework conducted to inform the strategic prioritization exercise against the results of the 8th NSEDP and the focus of the new 9th five-year plan for 2021-2025 approved by the National Assembly in early 2021. Supported by the [UN75 strategic outreach](#), the UNCT conducted broad and inclusive consultations to grasp the visions and aspirations of key national stakeholders and partners, and the needs of vulnerable groups to turn the collective promise of leaving no one behind actionable.

The UN adopted a more visible joint stand on human rights, gender mainstreaming, disability inclusion, and prevention against sexual abuse (PSEA). Upholding its normative role, the UNCT undertook its first country stocktaking exercise in February to look at pressing risks facing the country to inform the CCA. Human Rights and Gender Equality Indicators were mainstreamed within the SERRP. Enforcing the human rights-based approach (HRBA) and Leave No One Behind (LNOB) principle across the UNCT, advocacy increased and trainings on Human Rights Up Front and the Secretary-General's Prevention Agenda were held and included in the bi-annual Induction Course for all UNCT newcomers. Marking the 75th anniversary of the UN and the 65th Anniversary of Lao PDR's membership of the UN, the UN used the opportunity to enhance its strategic partnership with the Government through joint advocacy reflecting on the history of collaboration and shared priorities for future strategic directions.

The UN House and UN services underwent a disability accessibility audit outlining improvements needed and incorporating them into a UNCT sanctioned action plan. A joint PSEA Strategy and Action Plan was formulated, and an Inter-Agency PSEA Network was launched with the aim to strengthen horizontal coordination across the individual agencies, funds and programmes (AFPs) and with external partners. The UNCT plans to further strengthen internal UN architecture underpinning the UNSDCF including the establishment of a LNOB Group supporting and overseeing UN contributions to the Result Groups charged with the periodic review of the CCA as well as to serve as the resonance chamber of an early warning system with the aim of ensuring that the Human Rights-Based Approach and commitment to leaving no one behind are at the center of the UNs programmatic and advocacy activities.

Figure 1: Administration Map of Lao PDR, 2019 produced by Map Action

MA003



 <p>Administration map of Laos PDR</p>		<p>Settlements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ CAPITAL ● City <p>Borders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — INTERNATIONAL — ADMIN 1 — ADMIN 2 <p>Data sources</p> <p>OpenStreetMap, National Geographic Department</p>	<p>0 20 40 60 80 100 kilometers 1:3.250.000 (M A3)</p> <p>Created 13 Sept 2019 / U/TC+07:00 Map Document MA003_Laos_Admin Projection & Datum WGS 1984 UTM Zone 48N / Grid Number FL 2019-000103-LAO Produced by MapAction mapaction.org laospdr@mapaction.org</p> <p>Supported by German Humanitarian Assistance and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands. The depiction and use of boundaries, names and associated data shown here do not imply endorsement or acceptance by MapAction.</p>
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Chapter 1: Key developments in the country and regional context

Situated strategically along the Mekong in the center of Southeast Asia, Lao PDR is a land-locked LDC with an ethnically diverse,¹ largely rural² and agrarian³ population of approx. 7.2 million.⁴ The country is however experiencing the fastest urbanization rate in Southeast Asia⁵ with the population expected to reach 8.2 million by 2030 and 9.4 million by 2045.⁶

Following the COVID-19 outbreak, in April the Government was swift to enact a nationwide lockdown to contain the health impact. With only 49 cases recorded to date⁷, with no fatalities, the impact of the pandemic has largely been socio-economic and created both temporary and potentially long-term setbacks to the progress of the SDGs. Fragile businesses and supply chains were hit hard, – particularly in the informal sector, and key areas of the economy that have accommodated large parts of the labour force like tourism and hospitality. The economy contracted by 0.4% in 2020, marking the first negative growth since 1988.⁸ It is estimated that 361,000 people may fall back into poverty, adding approximately 5.2% to the national poverty rate.⁹ Remittances, generally estimated at 1.6%

of GDP¹⁰ are projected to decline by USD 125 million in 2020.¹¹ Since 2019, the unemployment rate has risen from 16 to over 23% and public external debt is now equivalent to 65% of GDP, up from 59% in 2019. Over the course of 2020-23 Lao PDR will face onerous debt service obligations with approx. USD 1.1 billion per year.¹² Further pressure is caused by the increased frequency and severity of natural disasters due to, amongst others, the slow onset climate crisis. Damage estimates due to floods and droughts stand at USD 255 million, with more than 175,000 people affected in 2020.¹³

Ranked as a medium human development country, Lao climbed slightly to 137 among 189 countries, but with a Gini Index at 38.8, inequality also rose from the 2016 level of 36.¹⁴ With a number of promising advancements in health, for example seen in falling infant and maternity mortality rates, and steady progress in key education areas, the country has advanced on key criteria paving the way for a recommendation for graduation from LDC status in 2021.¹⁵ However, despite these advancements, Lao still ranks low on a number of global indices including

¹ 50 ethnic groups recognised and registered by the National Assembly, MoFA, 2020.

² Rural population estimate at 68%, [Lao Social Indicator Survey II- Survey](#), Lao

Statistics Bureau (LSB), Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI), 2017.

³ Agricultural sector employed 62% of total workforce, [WorldBank, 2020](#).

⁴ [Lao PDR Population Projections 2015-2045](#), LSB, MPI; UNFPA, 2018.

⁵ at 5.3%, [World Cities Report](#), p. 198, UN Habitat, 2016.

⁶ [Lao PDR Population Projections 2015-2045](#), LSB, MPI; UNFPA, 2018.

⁷ Ministry of Health (MoH), 31 March 2021.

⁸ [IMF World Economic Outlook](#), April 2021.

⁹ Lao PDR Socio-Economic Impact Assessment of COVID-19, UN, 2020.

¹⁰ [World Bank](#), data accessed April 22, 2021.

¹¹ IOM, 2020; [COVID-19 to Impact Lao PDR Growth, Debt in 2020: New World Bank Report](#), World Bank, 2020.

¹² World Bank, [Lao PDR Overview](#). Data retrieved on April 6, 2021.

¹³ Government estimate referenced in UNDP annual report, 2020.

¹⁴ Expenditure and Consumption Survey, 2018-2019; [Human Development Report](#), UNDP, 2019.

¹⁵ LDC identification criteria include per capita gross national income (GNI), the human assets index (HAI), and the economic vulnerability index (EVI).

in governance, civic space and press freedom; business and competitiveness; food security and nutrition – with commensurate high rates of malnutrition, stunting and wasting, among others, implying that outcome areas to strengthen governance and rule of law, promote decent livelihood and inclusive growth, and improve human capital through nutrition etc. have remained relevant to the country's needs.¹⁶

Lao PDR has ratified several international and regional human rights treaties that address social, economic, and cultural rights; civil and political rights and the rights of specific groups of people (e.g., children, women, persons with disabilities, etc.). The country underwent its 3rd Universal Periodic Review (UPR) under the Human Rights Council (HRC) and accepted 160 out of 226 recommendations received, a 38% increase in the acceptance rate of compared with 2015.¹⁷ The Government issued several Decrees in 2020 addressing inequalities and strengthening inclusion, including of Ethnic Groups; on Export of Lao Workers Working Abroad; on Lifelong Learning, as well as the National Strategy on Persons with Disabilities along with a National Disability Policy.

Transitioning from the 8th NSEDP, Lao PDR saw the approval by the National Assembly of the 9th NSEDP in early 2021. With substantial inputs and coordination support from the UN, the 9th NSEDP was developed around six priority outcomes: sustainable quality economic growth; human capital; sustainable livelihoods; environmental protection and disaster risk reduction (DRR); regional integration; and governance. Drawing on expertise from across the UNDS and other DPs, the Government and the UN co-convened a [Multi-Stakeholder Taskforce](#) to assess the evolving pandemic situation identifying potential trade-offs between key policy areas, and recommendations aimed at recalibrating policy priorities over the coming

years. The year also saw the preparation by central, provincial and district authorities for the National Party Congress in January 2021 which constitutes an important quinquennial event of adjustments in the governance process and architecture of Lao PDR.

Over the next 10-20 years, the development trajectory of Lao PDR will move through a number of critical transformations. Entering a one-off 20-year window of opportunity during which the ratio of the working age population to older and younger dependents will be most favorable for progress calls for policies that invest in human capital to ensure cohorts reaching working age find opportunities to realize their potential. Regional interdependence will become more pronounced as value chain integration, urbanization, migration, and infrastructure connectivity accelerate. Aimed at increasing the benefit for Lao PDR from regional initiatives, knowledge and experience, the ASEAN-UN Plan of Action to implement the Joint Declaration on Comprehensive Partnership between ASEAN and the UN 2021-2025, adopted in October, and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership signed in November may further expand regional trade and investment and increase market access and employment opportunities in coming years. Managed effectively, this could present valuable socio-economic development opportunities, yet it will also require strategic vision and prioritization to prevent increased tension, division, and environmental and disaster risks. The Government has adopted the 'Build Back Better' approach with the aim to strengthen resilience, particularly in recovery efforts. With an updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) under the Paris Agreement, the Government has committed to net zero carbon emissions by 2050, 60% reduced Green House Gases (GHG) and 100% renewable energy by 2030.¹⁸

¹⁶ Lao PDR's global ranking in key development indicators, Annex 1.

¹⁷ [Lao PDR Infographics](#), UPR, OHCHR, 2020.

¹⁸ Nationally Determined Contribution Revision, presented by Lao PDR at Climate Ambition Summit, December 2020.



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Chapter 2 - UN support to national development priorities

2.1 Overview of Cooperation Framework Results

The COVID-19 pandemic brought significant disruption to Lao PDR and the impact has primarily been socio-economic. Since March, the UN¹⁹ system and international partners have rallied to support the country in its COVID-19 response. The UN's assistance covered both preparedness and response, including technical and financial support, procurement and logistics services for PPE and medical equipment and supplies, data analysis and impact assessments, policy advice, programme interventions, capacity building as well as the provision of ICT and other equipment to ensure business continuity. A [SEIA](#), building on a number of joint surveys and rapid impact assessments of COVID-19 conducted in April to June, focused on key areas of livelihoods and employment, agriculture, health, education, social protection and other cross-cutting issues, with special attention paid to the most vulnerable groups including women, children and migrant workers.²⁰

Building on the findings, the [SERRP](#) to COVID-19 was developed in August. Presenting a consolidated package of UN support, it contributed to the country's recovery effort. Under this, technical support was

provided for preparedness planning, data monitoring, and development of relevant guidelines in detection of COVID-19 cases, contact tracing, laboratory testing and use of the medical equipment and supplies. With support from the UN COVID-19 MPTF, capacity of Points of Entries, quarantine centres and health facilities were strengthened as was the support for the continuation of essential services in health, education, WASH and waste management; and for improved livelihood opportunities and social protection to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19. In collaboration with partners, risk communication messages and materials were developed and disseminated to raise awareness, ensure effective prevention, and reduce stigma. The *Safely Back to School* Campaign with key prevention messages by the UN Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) reached over 6.5 million people via TV, radio, and social media platforms. Collaboration with the Buddhist Fellowship Organisation enabled a country-wide outreach on COVID-19 preventative messaging.

Weekly humanitarian flights organized by the WFP in close collaboration with the RCO from May maintained an access route for landlocked Laos with humanitarian flight path to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, supporting 1,228 passengers from 96 organizations. This enabled

¹⁹ In the report, the UN system or 'development system' refers to the attribution to both resident and non-resident UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes operational in Lao PDR.

²⁰ Socio-economic Impact Assessment, UN together with Govt of Lao PDR, with technical lead by UNDP, 2020.

the continuation of humanitarian and development operations and diplomatic relations as well as vital cargo services for PPE and vaccines following the suspension of commercial air services to Lao PDR. Further to this, in 2020, the [75th anniversary of the UN](#) and the 65th Anniversary of Lao PDR's membership of the UN was an opportunity to further strengthen the strategic UN – Lao PDR partnership through joint advocacy reflecting on the history of collaboration and shared priorities for future strategic directions. Despite the disruptions due to COVID-19, continued progress was recorded in all three pillars of the [UNPF 2017-2021](#).

Under **Pillar 1 on Inclusive growth, livelihoods and resilience**, the UN focused efforts on improving livelihoods and resilience to shocks, supporting the labor market and social protection, and strengthening economic opportunities and diversification through the provision of policy advice and the policy brief on shock-responsive social protection system, guidance for MSMEs and trade, assistance for vulnerable groups, design of the Mother and Early Childhood Cash Transfer, and capacity building. Significant milestones were achieved in the adoption of the NSPS, the Land Law and Decree on Export of Lao Workers Working Abroad benefitting vulnerable groups including unemployed, small-scale and subsistence farmers and migrant workers. Key data capacities were strengthened through the launch of Lao Climate Services for Agriculture and the national agricultural livelihood and adaptive capacity dataset (Lao PDR is the first LDC to produce a dataset of this kind).

Pillar 2 - Human Development: UN agencies continued to promote education, health, WASH, and nutrition through a comprehensive approach, engaging household, school, and community levels as well as policy and system-strengthening support, which brought more sustainable results. Steady progress in key education areas were recorded in providing pedagogical advisory support and strengthening CSE and skill development. Health support focused on response to COVID-19 by strengthening coordination, planning and M&E; enhancing national capacity for early detection; ensuring the continuity of essential health services; improving system preparedness and readiness to vaccine roll-out; distributing distancing and hygiene information as well as improving WASH infrastructure. The UN also provided guidance on food

security and nutrition strategies and decrees, facilitated training on food production, and enhanced access to specialized nutritious foods.

Pillar 3 - Governance: the UN provided institutions with technical support and policy advice to enhance performance in meeting their functions and reach the most vulnerable. This includes strengthening of coordination among Government institutions; mainstreaming of key UN principles including gender equality, disability inclusion, and sustainability into legislation and strategies and their implementation; institutional strengthening for unexploded ordnance disposal, and supporting key data initiatives such as the development of the national database system "[Laoinfo](#)" to inform decision-making. The UN supported improved access to justice by trainings for law professionals; supporting the awareness raising of and compliance with international standards and norms including advocacy for universalization of international standards and norms through Lao ratifications; integrating ICPD25 commitments into policies; supporting the development of social services that strengthened child protection systems, address gender-based violence and help prevent sexual exploitation and abuse.

National development planning: The UN played a key role in policy advisory support and providing technical assistance to the Government, whilst also coordinating broader development cooperation and support in the context of the finalization of the 9th NSEDP. Drawing on expertise from across the UNDS and other DPs, the Government and the UN co-convened a Taskforce to assess the evolving pandemic and propose appropriate policy adjustments for the 9th NSEDP. Identifying trade-offs between key policy areas, the taskforce aimed at proposing recalibrated policy priorities over the coming years, focusing on the needs of those left furthest behind in areas of [Macro-Fiscal Framework and Financing for Sustainable Development](#); [Trade and Private Sector, Value Chains and Tourism](#); [Human Capital](#); [Labor markets and migration](#); and [Green Growth Resilience and Risk Management](#). Co-organized by the UN and the Government a series of High-level Thematic Policy Dialogues distilled a set of actionable recommendations. Building on these, the UNCT under the leadership of the UNRC as the Co-

Chair of the National Round Table Process, successfully coordinated the broader development community's contributions to the concluding [High-level Consultation on the 9th NSEDP](#) in December, aligning the programming of a broad set of DPs with the emerging national priorities. Agreement was also reached on the action points of a mid-term review of the 8th NSEDP introducing implementation arrangements comprising a financing strategy, costing of priorities, and an M&E framework to be developed in Q1 in 2021.

LDC graduation: In preparation for the 2021 Triennial Review of progress towards LDC graduation the UN provided integrated policy advice. Drawing on expertise from the UN DESA, UNCTAD, ITC, ESCAP, and OHRLSS, a virtual consultation was convened in September. The briefing examined implications of graduation, and key lessons from other countries in preparing for a smooth transition. Efforts to respond to the COVID-19 fallout leading into the recalibration of the NSEDP have set a good course for the graduation period. These preparations paved the way for the development of a clear and tailored smooth transition strategy in 2021 and an agreement within the Lao PDR-UN Joint Steering Committee (JSC) overseeing the preparations of the new UNSDCF 2022-2026 to include a workstream on joint graduation support, enabling a good foundation for all relevant stakeholders to help pave the way towards a smooth and sustainable graduation.

Joint country programming: With the UNPF 2017-2021 coming to a close, the UNCT and Government counterparts embarked on the [planning](#) of a new cycle of joint country programming following the new UNSDCF guidance with objectives to continuously improve coordination, through a more strategic and integrated approach, emphasizing the normative value of the UN, with strengthened systemwide accountability, increased use of pooled funding mechanisms, and attention to transboundary issues and regional links for sustainable development. A CCA

was drafted and an independent evaluation of the current framework conducted to inform the strategic prioritization against the results of the 8th NSEDP and the focus of the new 9th NSEDP. Supported by the [UN75 strategic outreach](#), the UNCT conducted broad and inclusive consultations to grasp the visions and aspirations of key national stakeholders and partners, and the needs of [vulnerable groups](#) to turn the collective promise of leaving no one behind actionable.

Normative work: UN adopted a more visible joint stance on human rights, gender mainstreaming, disability inclusion, and prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse. Upholding its normative role, the UNCT undertook its first country stocktaking exercise in February, identifying risks to inform the CCA. Human Rights and Gender Equality Indicators were mainstreamed within the SERRP. Enforcing the HRBA and the LNOB principle across the UNCT, [advocacy](#) was increased and trainings on Human Rights Up Front and the UN Secretary General's Prevention Agenda were held and included in the bi-annual [Induction Course](#) for UNCT newcomers.

UN House and UN services underwent a disability accessibility audit outlining improvement needed and incorporating them into a UNCT sanctioned action plan. A joint [PSEA Strategy and Action Plan](#) was formulated, and an [Inter-Agency PSEA Network](#) was launched with the aim to strengthen horizontal coordination across the individual AFPs and external partners. The UNCT plans to further strengthen internal UN architecture underpinning the UNSDCF including the establishment of a [LNOB Group](#) supporting the UN's contributions to the Result Groups charged with the periodic review of the CCA as well as to serve as the resonance chamber of an early warning system to ensure that the HRBA and commitment to LNOB are at the center of the UNs programmatic and advocacy activities.

2.2 Cooperation Framework priorities, outcomes, and outputs

Pillar 1: Inclusive Growth, Livelihoods and Resilience

Outcome 1 and 2: Decent Livelihoods and Social Protection

Outcome 1: All women and men have increased opportunities for decent livelihoods and jobs ²¹			
Indicator	Baseline	Target	Status 2020
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 Ministry of Finance (MoF): 8 th 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, ຈ / ຈ	15.6% - ຈ: 15% / ຈ: 75% (2010)	30% - ຈ: 30% / ຈ: 70% (2021)	27.1% - Labour Force Survey (2017)
Outcome 2: Social Protection			
2.1 # of formally employed workers enrolled in Social Security Fund (SSF) excl. army officials	267,858 (2015)	300,000 (2021)	306,210 people - ຈ 147,709. <i>Self-employed insured voluntarily enrolled in NSSF - 10,306 - ຈ 4,254</i> SSF Office, (2020)
2.2 % of poor covered by social protection schemes (national SDG indicator 1.3.1)	80% (2015)	95% (2021)	93% National Health Insurance annual report (2019)

Under **Outcomes 1 and 2**, UN's support in ensuring decent livelihood opportunities and social protection are available and accessible to Lao citizens took many forms in 2020, with focus on improving agriculture productivity, social protection, and export diversification. Special attention was given to vulnerable groups such as women, youth and migrant workers impacted by COVID-19. Amongst other things, the UN assisted in mainstreaming pro-poor policies into the 9th NSEDP, taking into consideration the fallout of COVID-19, and developed the tourism recovery roadmap. A briefing note was developed for the Government on a shock-responsive national social protection system to respond to the crisis as well as a

technical note on Financial Impact Assessment on National Social Security Fund in response to COVID-19. It further facilitated the adoption of the NSPS that sets out a vision for 2030 that will allow all Lao people to access a basic social protection floor, including health insurance, social security and social welfare, equitably, effectively and sustainably. To strengthen the NSPS implementation, the [UN Joint Programme](#) to "Leave No One Behind: Establishing the basis for social protection floors in Lao PDR" was set-up with the aim to enhance national capacities to improve public finance management and the piloting of an integrated mother and early childhood grant. The merger of the statutory health insurance schemes

²¹ Outcome 1 contributing UN entities: UNDP (lead), IFAD, ILO, IOM, ITC UNCDF, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNODC, UN Women, UNV, and WFP.

under National Social and Security Fund (NSSF) and National Health Insurance (NHI), through the design of the institutional, technical, financial and operational features with a monthly supervision of the implementation of the merged scheme in the two pilot provinces was also delivered. The support also included the costing of the health benefit package and health facilities, in collaboration with other DPs. The UN also supported the Government in finalizing its first [National Rural Employment Strategy 2021-2025](#).

Lao PDR signed the Global Compact for Migration in 2017 but has not yet ratified the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrants Workers and Members of their Families, creating a legal vacuum. Supported by International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and International Labour Organisation (ILO), the Decree on Dispatch of Lao Workers Working Abroad was passed aimed at strengthening management of recruitment services and safe labour migration. The UN facilitated the transformation of subsistence farming to a more productive and profitable activity for Lao farmers, using ICT to learn new techniques and market their products. In particular, rice, fish, organic vegetables, pig, and cattle were identified and promoted. Targeting the most vulnerable in flood-affected areas nearly 6,000 farming households in 100 villages of 10 districts in southern provinces received agricultural and aquacultural inputs, cash for work, and capacity development support to strengthen food security and productivity. The model is now being replicated to other areas of the country. In Huaphanh Province 383 farmers in 12 villages established the "[Vanmai Cooperative](#)" with UN Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC) support to strengthen livelihoods by promoting alternative development policies which support higher and more sustainable income by switching from illicit poppy cultivation to coffee and livestock farming.

Contributing to trade and private sector development with a focus on MSMEs, the UN is providing tailored support to both public and private sector stakeholders. In partnership with European Union, ITC with the [ARISE Plus Lao PDR](#) project works to boost exports through improving the business environment with a focus on regional economic integration; to increase trade and participation in global value-chains in particular for

companies in the wood processing and coffee sectors; and to improvement of food safety and market access through better governance and application of norms and standards by raising awareness and strengthening the regulatory framework for plant health control and reduction of pesticide use in fruits, vegetables and other plant products including to watermelon, chili and basil producers. In response to COVID-19, support was provided to LNCCI on drafting the COVID-19 SME impact survey as well as sector specific [COVID-19 impact assessments](#), including clear recommendations for a more resilient recovery. Efforts towards a smooth LDC graduation, on e-commerce and green growth were further advanced in close collaboration with Ministry of Industry and Commerce (MoIC) and the Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LNCCI) Through the '[Brand Lao](#)' initiative, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) helped improve the standing of rice, coffee, and tea producers.

Assisting women and other vulnerable groups affected by COVID-19, a USD 1.9 million project supported by UN was initiated to help garment sector workers, expecting to benefit all 17,289 workers, who are mostly female, delivering awareness-raising campaigns on occupational safety and health. Preparing for recovery, through Lao Women's Union (LWU) women received support in Saravan and Xaysomboun provinces with 21 industrial sewing machines which were used to train 184 women in tailoring. The women also benefited from a cash for work program to produce 12,000 face masks. Moreover, 2,400 essential packages were provided to poorest households.

To reap demographic dividends, the UN in partnership with national partners worked towards creating an enabling environment for youth and established a model youth technical and vocational education and training (TVET) facility in Savannakhet and Khammouane provinces to strengthen rural livelihood capacities of disadvantaged youth, and to increase business opportunities and MSMEs development skills of young women entrepreneurs in Huaphanh province.

Heavily affected by explosive remnants of war, Lao works to align the UXO sector with the country's poverty reduction goals with livelihoods and socio-economic development imperatives guide clearance

priorities. With UNDP support, more than 39,000 people took part in 147 risk education sessions in 42 villages and 1,670 hectares of land were surveyed with

594 hectares cleared by [UXO Lao](#) in Xieng Khouang and Bolikhamxay provinces. The number of UXO casualties decreased from 41 in 2017 to 27 in 2020.

Outcome 3: Climate Change, Disaster Management and Environment

Outcome 3: Forests and other ecosystems are protected and enhanced, and people are less vulnerable to climate-related events and disasters ²²			
Indicator	Baseline	Target	Status 2020
3.1 % of land covered by forest National SDG Indicator 15.1.1	58% (2015)	70% (2025 ²³)	57.5% Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF)
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	In October 2020 Saravan, Savannakhet and Sekong were affected by flooding with 163 villages with an estimated 10,637 households (69,764 people) affected. Savannakhet is the worst affected province with 135 villages with more than 10,000 households affected. International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)
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, COVID-19 amplified an already existing rice and water crisis: a result of 2 years of drought in Luang Prabang province alone, 80% of 756 villages ran out of rice by April indicating that increased rural poverty induced by COVID-19 risks increase malnutrition levels. Loss of buying power reduced demand for farmer's products w/ 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; prices of vegetables have come down due to lower urban demands. WFP and FAO Rapid Food Security and Agriculture Assessment, (2020)
3.4 (a) level of Hydroflouric carbon (HCFC) ²⁴ consumption; (b) sign. & ratification of the Minamata Convention on Mercury – (MCM)	(a) HCFC consumption of 2.3 Ozone Depleting Potential Tons (2010); (b) MCM not signed (2010)	(a) HCFC consumption of 1.5 Ozone Depleting Potential Tons (2020); (b) MCM signed and ratified (2021)	a) Official HCFC consumption in 2019 was 1.29 ODP tons b) 21 September 2017, Lao PDR ratified the MCM becoming a state party in Dec 2017.

²² Outcome 3 contributing UN entities: FAO (lead), IFAD, IOM, UN-Habitat, UNDP, UNESCO, UNEP, UNICEF, UNV, WFP, and WHO.

²³ [Vision 2030 and 10 year Socio-Economic Development Strategy 2016-2025.](#)

²⁴ HCFC – [hydrochlorofluorocarbon.](#)

Outcome 3 is anchored at the efforts aimed at ensuring that citizens are less vulnerable and more resilient to climate-related disasters and its critical ecosystems are well protected. At policy level, the National Assembly approved the Land Law in August 2020 following the adoption of the amended Forestry Law in 2019 with the support of UN. The Land Law introduces progressive developments in the recognition of rights and roles of local communities over land. By developing a Long-Term Low Carbon Development Strategy, the UN is also working with ministries and private sector partners to accelerate the transition to a circular economy, a concept which for the first time was incorporated into the revised NDC's guiding the national legal and policy framework on climate change.

The Government assisted nearly 30,000 beneficiaries in asset creation and livelihood activities focused on resilience building with technical support from the UN. These community resilience building activities helped establish productive assets for communities including over 15 km of roads to productive areas and 50 community fishponds through food assistance for assets. Additionally, 3,800 beneficiaries were reached by trainings on community asset management and maintenance, reducing post-harvest losses through hermetic rice storage bags and climate-resilient agricultural practices through climate-smart villages.

In disaster relief efforts, cash assistance and resilient recovery support was provided in flood-affected communities in southern provinces aimed at empowering women with the cash transfer incentives. In Savannakhet, 4,000 vulnerable and flood affected households were supported with crop and aquaculture inputs to recover livelihoods and 1,577 households in Attapeu were supported with vegetable gardens to diversify family meals and increase nutritious intake. In October in response to floods 7,262 people were provided with critical WASH emergency supplies. The UN also provided financial and technical expertise to support the Government in conducting a flood impact

assessment in Savannakhet, Saravan and Sekong Provinces using [KoBo Toolbox](#). Also, through the [Lao Climate Services for Agriculture](#) (LaCSA) initiative, Lao farmers played an increasingly important and active role in the analysis and dissemination of climate information. The number of beneficiaries reached through the public announcement system is now estimated at approx. 30,000 in Luang Namtha, Savannakhet, Saravan, Champasak and Vientiane provinces with roughly 67.3% of target farmers supporting the initiative. The MoNRE has continued to produce monthly bulletins at province level and weekly bulletins at district level.

In partnership with MoNRE, a National Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment has generated info that help identify the location and distribution of affected villages and a national multi-hazard map, 18 provincial vulnerability profiles, and a set of recommendations for hazard mitigation, management and protection. A national agricultural livelihood and adaptive capacity dataset for the rural sector in the country was developed, using an innovative method merging participatory mapping and advanced data analysis. With the collaboration of more than 300 district and province officials, Lao PDR is the first LDC to produce a map of this kind.

In March the [National Eld's Sanctuary](#) was created by Prime Minister Decree with support from UNDP. Covering over 130,000 hectares the sanctuary in Savannakhet is unique as it is the only Category 4 protected area which preserves dry forest wildlife habitat while allowing for communities to sustainably use landresources for livelihoods. Further to these developments, a climate resilient water supply system was built and supplied water to over 10,000 people in 17 remote rural villages, which government is now replicating in other provinces. As a Party to the Kigali Amendment, Lao PDR met its obligations with the establishment of the HFC²⁵ licensing system by 1 January 2021.

²⁵ Hydrofluoric carbon (HFC).

Outcome 4: Education

Outcome 4: Children and youth enjoy better access to inclusive and equitable quality basic education and vocational skills ²⁶			
Indicator	Baseline	Target	Status 2020
4.1 % of new entrants in Grade 1 with pre-school experience	51% - 52% / 50% (2015)	75% - 75% / 75% (2021)	70% - 71% / 69% Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) Education Management Information System (2020)
4.2 Survival rate in primary education	78% - 80% / 77% (2015)	93% - 93% / 93% (2021)	82% - 84% / 80% MoES Education Management Information System (2020)
4.3 % of youth employed as a result of participation in vocational training programmes	30% (2015)	70% (2021)	Proxy indicators: Youth employment: 17% - 19%; and 43% youth who report that their highest education completed is TVET are in employment, Labour Force Survey (2017)

Prior to COVID-19 Lao PDR had inadequate learning outcomes due to inequality in educational opportunities, poor learning outcomes and low skills-acquisition, especially among those most vulnerable. The pandemic has further aggravated the situation as schools closed in early 2020, affecting around 1.7 million children. Supporting the Government in providing continued access to quality education and skills development opportunities while minimizing the impacts of COVID-19 disruption, UNICEF helped print and disseminate textbooks for over 756,000 students (early childhood education to secondary) and teachers’ guides for 35,000 teachers with the Global Partnership for Education support. A digital platform was set up based on UNICEF’s [Learning Passport](#) for blended learning which include digitalized curriculum content, interactive global contents translated to Lao (Khan Academy, digital literacy modules), videos and Apps with offline access. An education television programme was shown on national TV and a dedicated Education and Sport satellite TV channel was launched. To support children returning to school, UN agencies and the World Bank jointly developed and translated the Framework for

Reopening Schools, and UNICEF launched the #SafelyBackToSchool campaign, with guidelines and communication materials in Lao languages. School meals were provided to a total of 2,095 schools through the Government, UN, and non-governmental organisation (NGO) partners, helping to reduce dropouts, improve education indicators and promote inclusive education, especially in remote and ethnically diverse areas.

Despite COVID-19, the Education and Sports Sector Development Plan 2021-25 (ESSDP) was endorsed with technical and coordination support from the UN. It addresses critical issues such as poor learning outcomes and inequalities. UNICEF further supported the development of a National Education Sector Emergency Contingency Plan and relevant trainings for enhanced teaching-learning practices and disaster risk reduction. The MoES disseminated results of learning outcome assessments for Grade 9 and launched the Southeast Asia-Primary Learning Metrics Grade 5 assessment. Results of these large-scale assessment show a trend that Lao children are in school but not learning. These findings must inform policy making and requires continued policy dialogue

²⁶ Outcome 4 contributing UN entities: UNICEF (lead), ILO, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNV, WFP, and WHO.

and advocacy to accelerate reforms to reverse this alarming trend. Capacity development of government officials at different levels, school administrators, teachers and communities continued to be a key pillar of UN support to enhanced knowledge and skills of key stakeholders in delivering quality education services, particularly for disadvantaged learners. MoES is being supported to develop national capacity on distance learning modalities for teacher education in response to COVID-19. A pedagogical advisory support system was designed to provide on-the-job support to teachers and school principals, and all primary education pedagogical advisers in 9 out of 18 provinces nationwide were trained on observing lessons, sharing feedback and co-teaching models.

MoES with technical support from the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) included CSE in the ESSDP. UNFPA partners for scaling up CSE include Plan International and Child Fund. System strengthening for CSE in-schools included provision of pre-service training to teachers through 8 teacher training colleges, as well as for in-service training of teachers in primary and secondary TVET. The CSE curriculum for in-school primary, secondary and TVET was progressively rolled out in Bokeo, Savannakhet, Oudomxay, Houaphan, Xieng Khouang and Vientiane Provinces. Coverage of CSE by age group, in-school, and out-of-school youth and TVET is being tracked by age and province. Similar cumulative tracking is being done for teacher trainings. For out-of-school adolescents, the Nang-Noi Girls Groups Curriculum on Essential life skills was delivered to 1,200 adolescent girls in 59 villages in Savannakhet, Bokeo and Oudomxay provinces by 120 female mentors. Over 12,000 parents were sensitized on reproductive and sexual

health and rights of adolescent girls and technical material for inclusion of adolescent boys in similar programme was developed. As a response to COVID-19, virtual and remote tools for CSE included the mobile application "Noi Yakhoo" launched to provide basic sexual and reproductive health information to adolescents and young people and to facilitate referral to adolescent helplines for in-depth information. A series of videos was developed to provide online CSE to students.

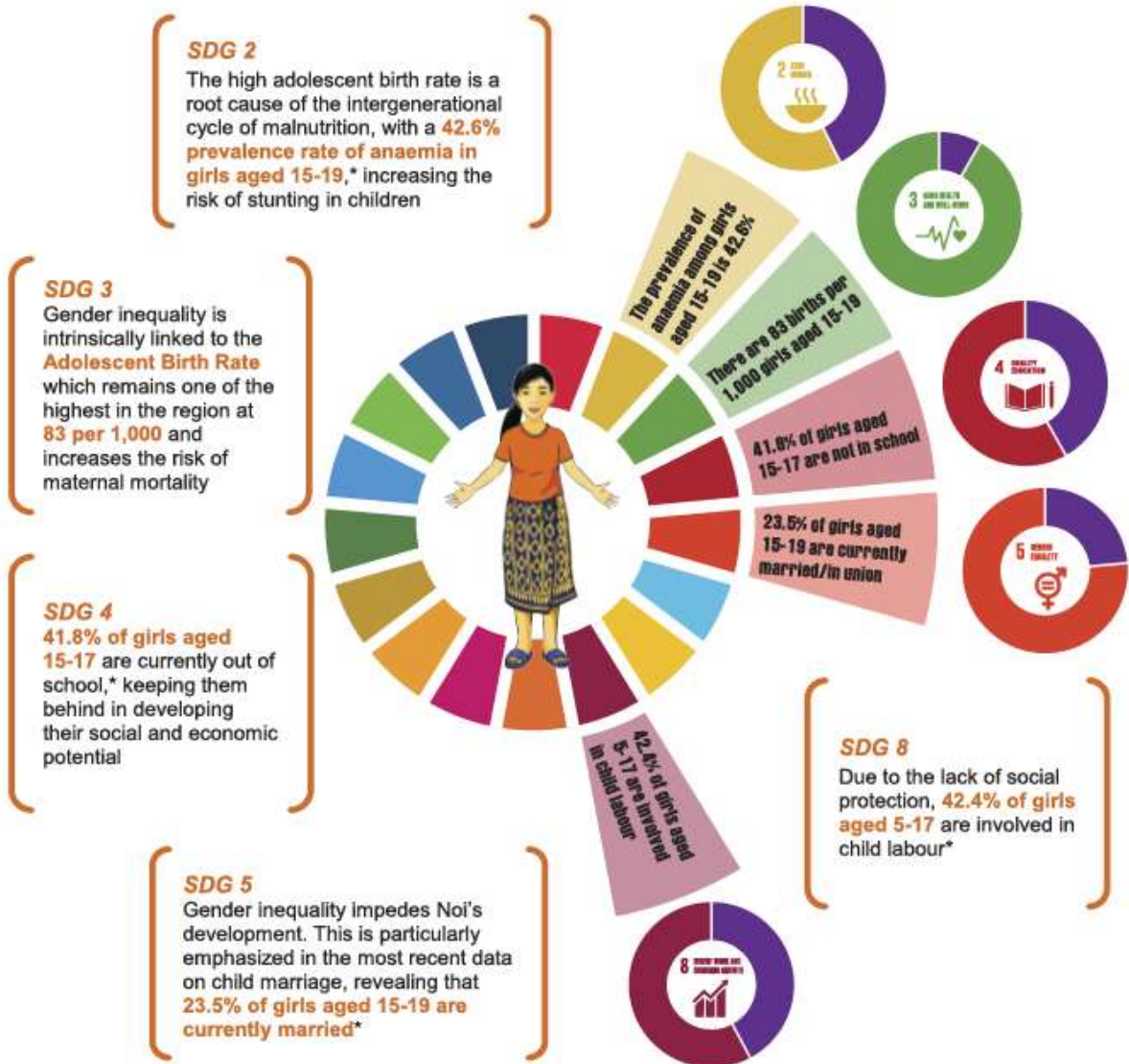
Further to these developments, the Employer Skills Needs Survey was conducted to update on the situation of enterprises, employers, and employees amidst the COVID-19 crisis. Safe Migration and relevant soft skills training were institutionalized into existing Skills DPs including provincial and Vientiane Capital TVET and initial vocational education and training (IVET) schools and Skills Development Centres, with 3,452 young people and aspirant migrants trained of which 36% were women. To address post-disaster needs and strengthen disaster preparedness, UNICEF is tackling the floods' impact on Education in three districts: Sanamxay (Attapeu), Khoune and Nonghed (Xieng Khouang), benefiting 295 pre-primary and primary schools and approximately 18,800 children. UNFPA and partners also organized participatory activities and virtual campaigns under '*Me, My Body, My Planet, My Future*' campaign with active participation of young people for advancing SDGs related to their health and well-being, environment protection, gender equality and COVID-19 response. Over 13,000 adolescents and young people were engaged in these activities and 1,409,684 people were reached through social media.

Figure 2: Noi 2030 Framework from problem to solution through Noi ecosystem

The Noi 2030 Framework – Achieving Gender Equality & Empowerment of Adolescent Girls

Noi represents all 700,230 adolescent girls aged 10-19 in Lao PDR.** The unfinished MDG agenda has proven that adolescent girls have been left behind. The SDGs aim to reach those left furthest behind.

Noi was created as an advocacy tool to raise awareness, build partnerships and increase investments in adolescent girls that enable them to achieve their full potential. Noi was launched on the International Day of the Girl Child in 2016.













Noi's progress is closely monitored through 5 indicators aligned with the global SDG framework until 2030 when she turns 25, using the available disaggregated data on adolescents generated by the Lao Social Indicator Survey every 5 years.

A holistic approach to addressing Noi's obstacles accelerates the progress towards the SDGs, inducing a virtuous circle with a poverty reduction outcome, benefiting Noi, her community and the nation.

*Lao Social Indicator Survey (2017) **Census (2015)

Outcome 5: Health, Water and Sanitation

Outcome 5: People enjoy improved access to quality health services, and water, sanitation, and hygiene ²⁷			
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; 71% sanitation coverage (2015)	90% water supply coverage (2020); 80% sanitation coverage (2020)  : 30% /  : 70 % (2021)	83.9% water supply coverage, LSIS II (2017) 71.0% sanitation coverage, LSIS II (2017)

The UN supported the adoption of the 9th Health Sector Development Plan 2021-2025 and the 3rd phase of Health Sector Reform Strategy 2021-2025 with Primary Health Care as the overarching strategy to reaching Universal Health Coverage, with emphasis on reaching all ethnic groups, and based on the 3-builds policy to strengthen provincial strategic planning, district management and strong community engagement. With UNFPA support, the government adopted an updated Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health Services (RMNCAH) Strategy and Action Plan for 2021-2025 and the implementation of the National Strategy and Action Plan for Integrated RMNCAH (2016-2025) by developing national standards, guidelines and tools to improve RMNCAH service delivery, and strengthening institutional capacity. As such, it also contributes toward achievement of the Health Sector Reform Strategy (2013-2025) and the national multi-sectoral strategy for nutrition. Further to this, UN also supported the Ministry of Health (MoH) to develop a National Strategic Plan 2021-2030 for the Prevention and Control of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections and its Action Plan 2021-2025, which prioritizes interventions including prevention activities directed at those most at risk affected populations. The advocacy for expansion of HIV treatment service led to the establishment of two additional points of care for Anti-retroviral distribution.

To address health challenges and related impacts due to COVID-19, the support of agencies, funds and programmes focused on:

- 1) Strengthening coordination, planning and M&E for COVID-19 response** providing technical support for the development of the National COVID-19 Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan for Health 2020-2025. A multisectoral COVID-19 response plan for health and nutrition and the National Clinical Management Guideline for COVID-19 Patients were developed in close collaboration with MoH. The Health Partners Network, the Risk Communications Taskforce and Health Logistics Committee were established. Technical assistance was provided to MoH and the COVID-19 Ad-Hoc Committee to improve inclusive and proactive COVID-19 communications, ensuring access to timely and accurate information in several languages, including sign language, and through appropriate mediums.
- 2) Strengthening national capacity for early detection** through enhanced surveillance, laboratory testing and management of Points of Entry. The UN supported provincial and district level COVID-19 preparedness by providing training and information on COVID-19 screening and the identification and management of quarantine and isolation centres. Eight facilities were inspected

²⁷ Outcome 5 contributing UN entities: UNFPA (lead), IOM, UN-Habitat, UNAIDS, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNODC, UNV, WFP, and WHO.

and supported with renovation work and PPE, and about 200 local officials joined workshops on preventing, isolating, and treating COVID-19 cases. The World Health Organisation (WHO) also supported the establishment of a system for the community to detect and report clusters of COVID-19 cases nationwide, established and strengthened molecular testing capacity in 4 central hospitals/centers and 11 provincial hospitals, built capacities in the national Emergency Operation Centre (EOC) and 18 provincial EOCs, conducted trainings on COVID-19 sample collection and transportation to all districts and provinces in Lao PDR, and developed the “national guidelines for domestic specimen packaging and transportation” and several guides on laboratory work. Some 618 doctors and nurses from designated hospitals in all provinces were trained to handle potential COVID-19 cases.

3) Improving system preparedness and readiness to introduce COVID-19 Vaccine. As key actors within the global COVAX facility, WHO and UNICEF provided technical assistance to develop the national deployment and vaccination plan, and design COVID-19 vaccination data collection and management tools including pre-vaccination screening, immunization register and immunization cards. A video for the Hmong language group was developed to address vaccine hesitancy and promote immunization as a safe and effective means of protecting health.

4) Ensuring continuity of essential health services at facility and community level during the pandemic. The UN redesigned sexual and RMNCAH services to continue providing essential health services. 270 midwives and health providers across the country were trained on sexual and RMNCAH services while 50 hotline staff were trained on psychosocial support. Some 26,800 adolescents and women accessed information on Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH)/Gender-based Violence (GBV), 139,960 pregnant women received antenatal health services while 71,815 women benefitted from postnatal health services and 542,420 women and adolescent girls received SRH including family planning services. More than 75% of health facilities with a total of 387 health workers in three provinces were trained in national

adolescent youth friendly services guideline providing information and services to 26,000 adolescents and young people. The telehealth approach was also piloted and applied by 38 health service providers from 3 district hospitals and 16 health centres in Luang Prabang Province, with more than 260 women benefitting from this service.

5) Additionally, through technical assistance and global logistics support the UN facilitated the mobilization of over USD 25 million of medical supplies and equipment to strengthen central and provincial health facilities in preparing and responding to COVID-19, and handed over health supplies worth over USD 1 million, with funding support by the EU, Ireland, Japan, UNICEF National Committee for Australia and other partners.

As a result, the country maintained a regular supply of vaccines for routine immunization, PPE, medical supplies and nutrition commodities and the capacity of border and health facilities for detection and treatment of COVID-19 patients was strengthened. With clear consistent messages, together with partners, the UN’s efforts in WASH kept the population informed on hygiene practices. More than four million people were reached on social media, and 1.4 million schoolchildren were provided with accessible advice on hygiene measures and behavior change communication on handwashing with soap. UNICEF’s support enabled the declaration of the country’s first open defecation free (ODF) province (Bolikhamsay), reflecting a growing momentum in national sanitation social mobilization and the joint commitment of all Vice-Governors to achieving a national ODF status by 2025.

Essential hygiene and recreational kits were handed over for more than 1,000 children in residential care institutions. The UN Human Settlement Programme (UN-Habitat) and the Ministry of Public Works and Transport (MoPWT) built 102 small-scale water points, improving the lives of those living in vulnerable settlements of southern Laos. With support from WHO, MoH succeeded in mobilizing USD 1.8 million to boost the national “Safe Clean and Climate Resilient Green” initiative for improving WASH services in 62 health care facilities and to provide cleaning and disinfection materials and PPE for 157 hospitals as

well as 58 water tanks and pumps in select hospitals in water scarce districts. UNICEF's support in partnership with GIZ enabled the finalization and approval of national gender-responsive WASH in Schools (WinS) standards and the development of the 3-Star monitoring tool to recognize and encourage incremental improvements of WinS programmes. Innovative resilient water supplies providing household-level connections were demonstrated in 5

villages, providing over 3,500 people with water with the success of these systems has led to replication in other provinces by the Government and international NGOs (INGOs). These interventions are implemented in synergy with other essential UN-supported sectoral assistance, including education, health and nutrition and child protection, which will help maximize the effectiveness of the overall interventions.

Outcomes 6: Food Security and Nutrition

Outcome 6: The most vulnerable people benefit from improved food security and nutrition ²⁸			
Indicator	Baseline	Target	Status 2020
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	45.3% LSIS II (2017)
6.3 Wasting prevalence among children under 5 years, National SDG Indicator 2.2.3	9.6% LCAAS (2015)	5 %	9% LSIS II (2017)
6.4 Annual data on nutrition generated by national nutrition surveillance system	Nil	Available source: Annual reports	Wasting 7.7%, Prevalence of underweight 22.5%, Prevalence of stunting 31%. 2 nd round of nutrition surveillance
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)	17.1% Mid-term review NSEDP, data related to 2018
6.7 % of rural households with poor and borderline food consumption	11.2% Annual Risk and Vulnerability Survey, and biennial Government/WFP Food Security Assessment, (2013)	8% (2021)	1.8% households have poor and 4.5% have borderline food consumption. Source: LECS6

²⁸ Outcome 9 contributing UN entities: WFP (lead), FAO, IFAD, UN-Habitat, UNDP, UNICEF, UNODC, UNV, and WHO.

Despite significant progress in overall poverty reduction, Lao PDR has one of the highest under-nutrition rates in the world, particularly for children. To bring stunting rates in the areas most severely affected in line with the 25% national target by 2025, UN agencies worked to build the capacity of institutions by increasing the availability, access, quality and utilization of nutrition services and promote nutrition related behaviors including improved infant and child feeding practices, hygiene practices, health seeking behavior, and other care related behaviors and practices. Key national strategies and policies were developed, including the finalization of the national decree on breastmilk substitutes and designated products and its implementation guideline, and a national Nutrition COVID-19 response plan including the integration of interventions across various sectoral COVID-19 response plans including health and education; the Agricultural Development Strategy for 2021-2030, which will strengthen an enabling environment for sustainable market-led improvements in nutrition-rich and diverse agricultural production and productivity as well as rural employment and incomes. The UN also contributed to further strengthening multisectoral planning and coordination for nutrition at all levels, including the integration of both nutrition specific and nutrition sensitive interventions in the RMNCAH Strategy and Action Plan 2021-2025. It further supported the development and budget analysis of the 2016-2020 National Plan of Action on Nutrition and recommendations as well as efforts to improve the collection of routine data on nutrition through the inclusion of nutrition specific indicators in the RMNCAH M&E framework, setting the direction for the revision of related indicators for the national health information system (DHIS2).

The Rome-based agencies provided support to improve access of vulnerable communities to local nutritious foods, including refresher trainings to 1,200 village facilitators to deliver Farmer Nutrition School modules to 12,743 beneficiaries, most of them pregnant and nursing women, through practical learning sessions about household nutrition, diet diversity, basic hygiene, food preservation and processing techniques, keeping small livestock, and menu planning. Also, financial incentives in the form of garden grants of USD 120 was provided to 7,075

pregnant and nursing mothers. As part of the wider COVID-19 response, over 300,000 meals were distributed to 20,000 beneficiaries (most of them returning migrant workers) at 7 quarantine centres through the WFP partnerships with local stakeholders, World Vision International and the Swiss Red Cross.

To support flood recovery in southern Laos, nearly 1,800 vulnerable households in Attapeu at risk of food insecurity, received guidance on nutrition-sensitive agriculture and related equipment; 1,500 households were provided with individual vegetable garden kits and agriculture tools in order to grow vegetables in the dry season; 100 households received poultry kits and an additional 200 households participated in seven communal garden programmes receiving garden kits with seeds, fencing material, and watering equipment. To improve the overall diets of the most vulnerable children and women, 60 metric tons of lipid-based nutrient supplements were distributed in target villages in Khammouane and Attapeu, reaching 12,247 children aged 6-59 months and 653 pregnant and lactating women. Daily school meals and/or contributions of food to school meals were provided by the UN to 137,117 children in remote and rural areas to meet their nutritional needs. During the 2020 COVID-19 lockdown, schoolchildren from 925 primary schools and their families were supported with take-home food distribution. Additional capacity strengthening support was provided to both the host government and communities to ensure that they have sufficient knowledge and resources to manage the school feeding programmes sustainably after handover. Support was also extended to design and improve school feeding policies and legislations and mobilized communities for greater ownership of the programmes.

The UN also supported efforts to strengthen the delivery of direct nutrition interventions across all districts in 10 provinces, including the distribution of micronutrient supplements (vitamin A and iron folate) for children and pregnant women, deworming of children aged 6-59 months of age, growth monitoring promotion, nutrition education, and the screening and referral of severe acute malnutrition (SAM). Procurement and distribution of key nutrition commodities for both inpatient and outpatient treatment of SAM to support the treatment for nearly

4,500 SAM children, including anthropometric equipment to cover the needs of the entire country was also undertaken, for a total value of USD 793,855. Finally, the UN supported government efforts aimed at improving the use of data for evidence-based policies

and programming. A web-based [nutrition dashboard](#) and data repository was launched to support the monitoring of results and investments in nutrition, hosted by the Lao Statistics Bureau (LSB).

Pillar 3: Governance

Outcomes 7: Institution Building

Outcome 7: Institutions and policies at national and local level support the delivery of quality services that better respond to people's needs. ²⁹			
Indicator	Baseline	Target	Status 2020
7.1 # of new households receiving 2 or more basic services from their districts	373,948 households (2015)	600,000 households (2021)	126,321 households in 2020, cumulative figure is 575,269 households by 2020, Governance and Public Administration Reform Project Annual Progress Reports, (2020)
7.2 Percentile rank on aggregate Government effectiveness	39.4% (2014)	45% (2021)	20.6% Annual World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicator, (2020)
7.3 Extent to which NSEDP monitoring informs evidence-based policy making	Limited extent (2015)	Large extent (2021)	9 th 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.

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 Government and communities to strengthen provincial and district preparedness and surge capacity, including at Points of Entry. 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 provided infrastructure support in ICT equipment including teleconferencing and software licenses and related training to 7 Ministries, 4 local government offices, and 18 provincial ministry offices to enhance the digitalization of work and ensured continuity during the pandemic. In realizing the importance of

²⁹ Outcome 7 contributing UN entities: UNDP (lead), FAO, IFAD, IOM, UN-Habitat, UNCDF, UNCITRAL, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNODC, UNV, WFP, and WHO.

digitalization, UNDP provided technical support to convene the first ever multi-sectoral digital transformation consultation to initiate a framework for the development of the National E-government Master Plan, including its implementation arrangement and digital standard.

UNDP and the UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) facilitated 7 districts in 5 provinces to develop and finance multi-sectoral plans based on community-set priorities to provide quality services for vulnerable groups covering education, connectivity, irrigation facilities and waste management. Some 17,871 citizens (9,051 women) in 40 villages covering 2,391 households – including 1,401 poor households and 1,949 ethnic communities' households – benefitted from improved services which also contributed to fiscal decentralization, in turn leading to an increased empowerment and fiscal space for local administrations to provide public services in line with the Sam Sang or 3-build policy directives, and specifically enhanced women's participation in local planning processes. The Customary Land Guideline and Guideline on Collective Agriculture Land Management model that focus on participatory collective land management and planning have been developed and now become official guidebooks, with support from UN-Habitat and the Global Land Tool Network.

As a first time occurrence, a Service Users Feedback Survey on public services such as education, health, roads and infrastructure, etc. was conducted in 4 districts in 4 provinces, with results published and roundtables organized at national and provincial levels to discuss and follow-up on the findings. In addition, training sessions were provided to members of National Assembly and People's Provincial Assemblies to increase their awareness and understanding of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs, including on how to monitor SDG implementation, both at the national and provincial levels.

To address the challenges in GBV, UN agencies collaborated with the National Center for the Advancement of Women, Mothers, and Children to integrate international instruments and agreement, including Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and UPR recommendations, Beijing Platform for Action, and

ICPD25 into a 5-year National Action Plan on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and the 5-year National Action Plan on Gender Equality for 2021-2025 with indicators included in the 9th NSEDP. A total of 3.4 million people were reached by messages on GBV, psychosocial support, mental health and parenting developed in Lao, sign language and two non Lao-Tai ethnic group languages, disseminated via community loudspeakers, TV, radio, social media and in-person sessions. The UN also supported two Women Friendly Spaces and assisted the establishment of a recent one in Attapeu. In total, 426 affected women reached out to the three facilities while 295 counselling sessions were provided, benefitting more than 2,500, especially women and girls, with increased knowledge of violence against women (VAW) and maternal health care. LWU, the Lao People's Revolutionary Youth Union (LYU) and Vientiane Youth Centres received support to provide mental health and psychosocial support through telephone helpline, hotline, and outreach activities. Around 9,676 people in quarantine centers and communities received mental and psychosocial counselling. Compared to 2019, the hotline and helpline provided by LWU increased with 197%.

To ensure evidence-based policy making and implementation for the benefit of the most vulnerable groups, the UN provided technical support to the Government in building capacity to collect, analyze, and report on progress of various national development indicators including SDG indicators. Several key data initiatives were undertaken in 2020 including the national database system "[Laoinfo](#)" by LSB which will allow the public to access updated information and progress toward SDGs and NSEDP indicators. Hands-on training on collecting, managing and analysing national and SDG data was provided in five provinces. This training increased the reliability of the system and led to more result-oriented data and information on Laoinfo; the [DHIS2 Tracker](#) based module of the National Centre for Laboratory and Epidemiology with the design, development and rollout including training on managing COVID-19 surveillance data; the establishment of the national Land Resources Information Management System (IMS). Historically, data in Lao PDR has been produced, managed and applied in sectoral silos which restricted evidenced-based inter-sectoral insights and

comprehensive analysis but with this system the data has not only been centralized but also made available to a wider range of users, and the new national [LaCSA](#) as an online tool providing monthly and

country-wide provincial-level and district-level seasonal bulletins with climate-smart actionable recommendations which are key to early warning for crop and livestock production.

Outcomes 8: Access to Justice

Outcome 8: People enjoy improved access to justice and fulfilment of their human rights ³⁰			
Indicator	Baseline	Target	Status 2020
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: n/a; Village Mediation Units: 2,534 Ministry of Justice - MoJ, (2020) 🇰🇷 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)
8.3 % of accepted recommendations of 2 nd UPR cycle implemented	0 (2015)	60% / 70 of 116 (2021)	(tbc) Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), (2020)
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: 27.5%, distribution of seats to 🇰🇷; 10% 1 out of 11 Politburo members, 7 🇰🇷 out of 69 central committee members, NA, (2020)

2020 saw significant achievements with the strategic shift towards child protection system strengthening from an issue-based approach. A National Vision for Child Protection was formulated based on the mapping of existing child protection system component, which was supported by a National Plan of Action for Child Protection 2021-2025 and the National Strategy for the Social Service Workforce Development. The UN supported the development of the National Action Plans on Mothers and Children, on Violence against Women and Children, and on Prevention and Elimination of Child Labour; the National Guideline on Protection, Assistance and Referrals for Victims of Trafficking; and the National Manual on the Prevention and Elimination of Violence

Against Children at Secondary Schools. Prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse and GBV risk mitigation was integrated in the standard Child Protection Network training modules piloted in 720 CPN established in 144 villages in Attapeu Province.

The UN assisted the Government during the HRC Session on UPR, as well as timely reporting and effective follow-up. In support of acceptance of the UPR 3rd cycle conclusions and to facilitate the Government's internal discussions, the UN provided the National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) with a matrix demonstrating the progress made by line ministries, national institutions, local authorities, and mass organizations in partnerships with UN entities. The matrix linked 3rd cycle recommendations with the

³⁰ Outcome 8 contributing UN entities: UNDP (lead), ILO, UN Women, UNCITRAL, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNODC, and UNV.

116 recommendations accepted by Lao PDR in the 2nd cycle as practical evidence of interlinkages and achievable progress, which led to an increase of 38% in the acceptance rate ([160 recommendations](#) accepted out of [226 recommendations](#) received) in the 3rd UPR. In addition, the UN participated in several briefings and consultations on the UPR follow-up and implementation process and reaffirmed its commitment to provide technical advice and assistance in the development of a national UPR Action Plan along with an M&E Framework and National Recommendations Tracking Database (NRDB) and its implementation. The UN also supported the NHRC to incorporate into the 9th NSEDP a key priority with regard to its engagement with international human rights mechanisms and UPR implementation.

National commitments to ICPD25, especially the ones related to ending GBV, ending maternal mortality, and increase investments in adolescents and youth were integrated into the National Action Plans for Gender Equality, GBV, Mother and Child for 2021-2025, National adolescent and youth strategy, the National Population and Development Policy, the 9th NSEDP and 5-year sector plans. UN further supported the country in preparation for the ratification of the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, and the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention by facilitating high-level consultations between the Government and workers' and employers' organizations.

The quality of legal services was improved through increased capacity of those in charge of delivering them including among 650 legal professionals: lawyers, judges, prosecutors and police officers, improving their understanding of rule of law principles, including their application to civil and criminal cases. Support was also given to launch and promote a new Civil Code, a central document to enshrining the rights of citizens across a multitude of aspects of their lives. Agreement was reached to establish two additional legal aid offices in Xieng Khouang and Huaphanh provinces.

2.3 Key challenges across the Outcome areas

Data

Limited quality and disaggregated data and mechanisms of coordinated monitoring and evaluation, including action plans for implementation of international human rights recommendations, hampers evidence-based policymaking. The overall national statistical capacity score at 67.8 was below the average of East Asia and the Pacific (75.1).³¹ The country collects data from administrative records and surveys. However, there are gaps in official data which are, with some exceptions, often not disaggregated by gender or vulnerability criteria (e.g., disability, ethnicity, migrant status, etc.) and thus impedes policymakers from gauging the differential impact of policies on different groups making targeting of interventions a challenge. There are also significant data needs for monitoring and reporting on SDG progress, with at least 102 out of the 238 SDG national indicators for which no data are available.

This presents an opportunity for the UN, both as data producers and users, to support the national statistical system in improving its capacity to produce and disseminate statistics that comply with international standards and to promote their use in policymaking. The UN has extended support to build the national statistical capacity. The UNCT also provided joint support to the 9th NSEDP M&E framework with the integration of SDG indicators. With the ongoing growth in the number of human rights recommendations addressed to Lao PDR by the international and regional human rights mechanisms, there is also an opportunity for UN to support the NHRC in streamlining the recommendations emanating from various mechanisms through an endorsed UPR Action Plan along with an M&E Framework and NRDB. This would contribute to the collection of evidence to allow for informed "course correction" as required, to improve both the quality and outcome of interventions.

Institutional capacity

Inadequate coordination among the different national actors, and an associated lack of effective inter-ministerial and inter-sectoral collaboration hampers the effective implementation of priorities and response to emergencies, resulting in either gaps or

³¹ World Bank Statistical Capacity Index 2019.

overlaps of implementation. It is therefore vital to enhance development support to strengthen capacities of public institutions in planning, implementing, and monitoring plans and interventions, while at the same time avoiding parallel interventions that could overwhelm relevant technical departments. As national capacity development requires continuous support, it is important that capacity development is owned and driven by national and subnational partners, in particular on planning, monitoring, reporting and evaluation.

Resources

Lao PDR faces severe fiscal challenges, including a high and unsustainable debt burden, and a limited domestic revenue base. The foreign investment that has been a key driver of growth to date has limited linkages to domestic business and gains in terms of local jobs and growth of domestic private sector has been limited, corruption has persisted, and inequalities have widened. Increased productivity of MSMEs is critical, as these account for 96% of all businesses in Laos. Poor learning outcomes and healthcare challenges, and lack of meaningful social protection coverage are challenges that need to be addressed to reap a potentially transformational demographic dividend, but with limited investment in human capital and the current development finance situation challenges, it is difficult to see a turning point at which domestic revenue can start contributing more to the development priorities in the short term. Compounded by the COVID-19 impact on the domestic revenue base and rising expenditure on COVID-19 response, challenges to the implementation of the policy priorities of the 9th NSEDP are significant and will affect the ability to respond to the growing needs of the most vulnerable. Comprehensive public finance reform in a more transparent manner, and reprioritizing spending on key priorities that would generate long-term sustainable recovery is imperative. An integrated and coordinated approach in resource mobilization and allocation by the Government and DPs should also be encouraged to avoid overlaps and intervention gaps.

2.4 Support to Partnerships and Financing the 2030 Agenda

In 2020, UNCT developed extensive partnerships with the Government, international financial institutions (IFIs), think tanks and universities, international and national civil society organisations, (CSOs), and the private sector. The cooperation spans from upstream policy processes, strategic/sectoral analysis and assessment to data, financing, and advocacy.

UN system and IFIs

Important collaboration and contributions from non-resident agencies located at global and regional levels such as UN DESA, the UN Department of Political Affairs (DPPA), UNCTAD, the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), UN Women and Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), were leveraged in capacity building and providing substantial support to the CCA/UNSDCF process. The analysis of transboundary issues on environment, connectivity, infrastructure, illicit financial flows, trafficking in persons, and border management has benefited from intra-regional UNCT engagement. OHRLLS, UN DESA and UNCTAD have extended support to the assessment and preparation for Lao's potential LDC graduation. The World Bank, IMF and Asian Development Bank have been mobilized to support the recalibration of the context of COVID-19 to inform the 9th NSEDP formulation in the macroeconomic-fiscal framework analysis.

Government

UN's consultation and coordination support to the Government in national planning in 2020 received broad support and was referred to as transformative by both Government and DPs, due to inclusive open and transparent discussions, based on comprehensive preparations with concrete outcomes. The co-convening with the Government of a Multi-Stakeholder Taskforce to assess the evolving COVID-19 situation and propose appropriate adjustments to the 9th NSEDP and organization of a series of High-level Thematic Policy Dialogues as well as the coordination with DPs on their inputs to the 9th NSEDP have been widely appreciated. Traditional Sector Working Groups (SWGs) co-chaired by the Government and UN agencies/ DPs have been innovated and moved towards more interactive panel and plenary discussions.

Given the rugged geography of Lao PDR and its diverse ethnic groups, many of whom live in isolated and hard-to-reach communities, community engagement is particularly important in development cooperation. The UN successfully partners with mass organizations such as the LWU and LYU to disseminate messages on GBV, UXO, nutrition, etc. and engage with local communities for an inclusive process. For example, to raise awareness of the threats posed by UXO and to inform locals of hazardous areas, UNDP engaged with the LYU volunteers at district and local level and trained them on UXO Risk Education, as well as equipping them with essential education material to disseminate to villagers and school children. The commitment and support at the local level has greatly enhanced the sustainability of the project.

Private Sector

Recognizing the business sector has a critical role to play in achieving the SDGs, the UN has stepped up its engagement with private sector. The Noi Friendly Business Criteria was launched in October, encouraging private sector investment in employee's wellbeing and empowerment of adolescent girls and young women to attain the SDGs. New partnerships were established with Crowne Plaza Hotel and Burapha Agroforestry for mobilizing resources and their alliance for encouraging other private partners to adopt the Criteria. Partnerships with the private sector have been expanded for improvements in women's reproductive health and for prevention of VAW and girls. As part of it, Banque Franco Lao and Crowne Plaza have contributed to the COVID-19 response through in-kind donations of provision of hygiene and dignity items and essential food supplies benefitting 3,000 women.

The Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Business Network represents a multi-stakeholder partnership encouraging the collaboration between the Government, private sector, associations, and chambers of commerce to improve nutrition. SUN members like EuroCham Laos, the Lao ICT Association and Association of Lao Garment Industry enhanced their engagement in nutrition to develop workforce nutrition guidelines, support nutritious food production (including food fortification) and promote advocacy. Lao Airlines was

also mobilized to raise awareness and visibility on food and nutrition security.

The Community Radio Station for Development was launched in Nakai District, Khammouane Province, helping to ensure that people living in remote and rural areas can access important information to enable informed decisions in community development and livelihood improvement. New partnerships with telecommunication companies, including ETL, Lao Telecom, Tplus and UNITEL, have been mobilized to assist with dissemination of early warning text messages and crisis calls; and with local start-ups such as Go Teddy to reduce the use of plastics in food delivery.

Civil Society

Partnerships with local non-profit associations (NPAs), and national and international NGOs played an increasing role in implementing activities in 2020. During the year UN provided support to NPAs enabling their participation in the ASEAN People's Forum. INGOs (including Big Brother Mouse, Catholic Relief Services, Comité de Coopération pour le Laos, Education for Development Foundation, Lutheran World Federation, Plan International Laos, Pum Anh, Room to Read and World Education) were mobilized for the implementation of school feeding activities and related literacy components. New partnerships were established with Health Poverty Action for nutrition related interventions, with the International Institute of Rural Reconstruction to support climate-smart and community-driven school feeding, and with the Lao Red Cross, Swiss Red Cross and World Vision International for the provision of food to returning migrant workers in state run COVID-19 quarantine facilities. As Buddhist monks and local temples play a central role in the local social life of most Laotians, the UN teamed up with the Buddhist Fellowship sharing collectively designed preventative messaging, further disseminating the communications of the national task force on COVID-19 led by MoH. The UNCT also engaged in the broad consultation on Lao PDR's UPR Addendum with local NPAs and facilitated the participation of the civil society representatives at the panel discussions on COVID-19 and its human rights dimensions to mark 2021 Human Rights Day in Lao PDR.

South-South Cooperation

The UN has actively supported Lao PDR in its cooperation with other developing countries through identification of partners with knowledge and relevant info for peer learning; provision of access to knowledge and expertise; management of cooperation projects as an administrative agent; delivery of cross-border and interregional projects or programmes; support towards regional integration; as well as capacity building and financial support.

Under the ILO-China South-South and Triangular Cooperation Framework, ILO mobilized financial resources, technical assistance and advisory services to support Laos' skills development, which improve employability of workers and increase productivity of enterprises through better quality of employment services, skills strengthening and institutional capacity building. UNDP facilitated positive south-south cooperation between Lao PDR and its neighbors, especially Viet Nam and Thailand, encouraging the sharing of information and experiences to show paths towards enhancing own capacities/capabilities in fulfilling international obligations. The messages held more resonance with the target audience coming from practitioners who work in similar contexts and face similar challenges. With MoH and the MoIC, and in coordination with WHO, UNDP finalised and developed activities that learn from China's experience to improve the ability of response to COVID-19. Activities will improve safe healthcare waste management systems to contain the pandemic and protect people and the environment, as well as provide technical training on medical waste management to health care professionals, local government staff and others that carry out essential services.

Financing

Due to severe liquidity stress, constrained financing options, and weak external and fiscal buffers, major credit rating agencies including Fitch Ratings and the Moody's downgraded the outlook for Lao PDR's foreign currency debt rating in 2020. Amongst Lao PDR's traditional donors, unprecedented spending domestically in response to the pandemic may potentially impact investments in official development assistance (ODA) over the coming years and make concessional international support harder to secure.

Given the disruption to economic activities, banks are likely to have to contend with increasing numbers of non-performing loans, limiting their capacity to step up investments in the recovery.

Against the headwinds, the UNCT has pro-actively been reaching out to resource, policy, and programme partners to provide information on needs and funding requirements, and to mobilize resources to respond to the COVID-19 impact as well as to support interventions oriented towards achieving transformative results under the UNPF. The UNCT developed the SERRP to COVID-19 as a joint offer to national stakeholders with a catalogue of ongoing and potential projects. Meetings with DPs were organized to build partnerships in joint delivery and mobilize resources with immediate results achieved in fundraising for food provision for migrants in quarantine centres, and in improving WASH facilities and practices. The UN in Lao PDR further secured USD 1 million in funding from the newly established COVID-19 MPTF Fund in support of two joint programmes: on Provincial Health Preparedness and Surge Capacities, including at Points of Entry; and on supporting essential sexual, reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health services. The UNCT also secured USD 2 million from the Joint SDG Fund and USD 0.7 million from Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Australia to launch the UN Joint Programme on "Leaving No One Behind: Establishing the basis for social protection floors in Lao PDR" in 2020 (by ILO, UNICEF and UNCDF); and another USD 0.9 million from the Joint SDG Fund to implement a joint programme on efficiency and optimization of Lao PDR's public budget to finance the SDGs through the National Plan (by UNDP, UNCDF and UNFPA).

To address the challenges associated with the COVID-19 recovery, budget constraints and sustainability, and to help ensure that the adoption of the national development plans is followed by actual progress the UN is providing support to the Government in developing implementation arrangements under the NSEDP expected to be finalized in Q1, 2021. Linked to the SDG funded programme above, under the overall lead of UNRC technical working groups (TWGs) led by UNDP on behalf of the UNCT have been established. The Financing Strategy TWG is drafting an evidence-based financing strategy for the coming five years

which sets out the expectations for each source of development finance, as well as the dedicated policies and reforms needed, and eventually, in a resource-constrained environment, this exercise should lead to prioritization of NSEDP objectives. The Costing TWG is producing a context-specific methodology to estimate the costs of policy priorities and investments. The results generated will then feed into the financing strategy, which should then match available sources of finance and financial policies to the identified costed policy priorities. The direction is to realign government expenditures towards national development priorities and the SDGs, and to ensure investment in essential and catalytic areas during the prioritization exercise of 9th NSEDP under the changing financing landscape due to COVID-19.

2.5 UN coherence, effectiveness, and efficiency

Despite the negative impacts of COVID-19, the UN has demonstrated readiness towards achieving milestones in respect to coherent, effective, and efficient delivery in Lao PDR. In response to COVID-19, UN agencies jointly produced a series of surveys and rapid assessments of the socio-economic impact to better understand who is worst affected, how they are affected, and what they need to recover, and developed the SERRP as a joint offer of ongoing and potential projects to mobilize resources.

The process of developing a new UNSDCF features a participative and active engagement from across the UNCT, Government, DPs and other stakeholders. Close working relationships with global and regional offices and UNCTs in neighboring countries were developed to support the process.

Under the leadership of the UNRC, the UNCT further provided substantial support to the national planning process, by effectively coordinating both internally and with DPs through the Multi-stakeholder Task Force and related high-level thematic dialogues as well as the organization of high-level consultations under the Round Table Process that provided consolidated inputs from both the UNCT as well as the broader community of DPs into the final version of the NSEDP.

The number of UN joint programmes increased to ten in 2020, including two new joint programmes on social

protection and financial efficiency launched with funding support of USD 2.9 million from the Joint SDG Fund and donors; another two joint programmes were initiated in response to COVID-19 with USD 1 million secured from the UN COVID-19 MPTF; two in disaster relief and recovery in flood-impacted Attapeu and one on GBV with USD 2.7 million funding support from KOIKA.

Business operations

In the context of UN reform, the UNCT continued to move towards harmonized business practices—common procurement, services, recruitment, ICT, among others—in the search for efficiencies through economies of scale and collective bargaining to explore further possibilities of cost optimization. By the end of 2020, the current Business Operation Strategy (BOS) 2017-2021 was successfully migrated into the online BOS 2.0 platform. To date the UNCT is benefiting from five Long-term Agreements (LTA) covering car rental, travel, stationery, internet service provider, and job advertisement. Cost savings were recorded in the fuel tax exemption agreement with the Government saving participating agencies USD 7,020, the LTA for Internet Services Provider with USD 55,131, and the money exchange rate agreement in which the partner bank BCEL agrees to top-up 25 LAK per 1 USD of the exchange rate when participating agencies convert their money from USD to LAK is estimated to save up to USD 33,398. The overall tangible cost savings through these agreements is estimated at USD 95,549, which brings the cumulative cost savings since 2017 to near USD 0.6 million. The Operations management team also advocated for more environmentally friendly and sustainable practices in fuel, photocopy, garbage sorting and plastic use.

The UN INFO platform was adopted to track the UN system support at country level to local and central government to deliver on the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda. The new IMS platform was adopted towards the end of 2020 to strengthen joint reporting in both programmatic and normative work.

Following the COVID-19 outbreak and early lockdown, the Crisis Management Team met regularly discussing reprogramming and overseeing the establishment and maintenance of a Duty Station Contingency Plan covering UNDS operations and Duty of Care. With support from the RCO and UN Clinic, UNDP secured

1,000 COVID-19 test kits and other PPE despite logistical challenges during the lock-down. Working from home arrangements and PPE were provided with the office accessible for critical staff and enhanced messages on the importance of preventive practices and security protocols conveyed to all staff. Effective response and preventive measures reduced the risk of contagion of COVID-19 and as a result no UN staff in Lao PDR was infected in 2020.

Communicating and Advocating Together

The UN Communication Group (UNCG) updated the Joint UN Communication Strategy 2017-2021 focusing on improving interagency cooperation to ensure consistent and cohesive messaging and enhance the image of UN. Using the occasion of [UN75](#) and in the context of COVID-19 shocks, a series of campaigns and activities were organized to raise awareness on the UN's vision and mission with the aim of nurturing a renewed commitment to multilateralism among stakeholders.

Celebrating UN75, the high-level event "[The Future We Want; the UN We Need](#)" was co-hosted by H.E. Mr. Saleumxay Kommasith, Foreign Minister and Ms. Sara Sekkenes, UN Resident Coordinator with participation of over 200 key stakeholders. An [Op-Ed](#) co-penned by the two was published and the [Video](#) on "[The Future We Want](#)" was produced and premiered, highlighting voices of ethnic groups, persons with disabilities, persons belonging to the diverse group of LGBTIQ, religious affiliations and youth. Ten UN75 interview sessions by the Lao Youth Radio were aired, featuring round table discussions with the UN Resident Coordinator and representatives from UN Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, the UN Industry and Development Organisation (UNIDO), the UN Volunteers (UNV), WFP and WHO. Live streamed on Facebook, the interviews attracted great attention across the country with 35,800 views, 1502 likes, 466 shares and 445 comments. A series of UN75 dialogues were run throughout the country engaged over 30,000 university students and the [UN Charter](#) was produced in the main Lao language with copies donated to the National University and distributed at the UN75 event.

Figure 3: A series of campaigns and activities to celebrate UN75 in Lao PDR



In the context of COVID-19, the UNCG, with the technical lead of WHO and UNICEF, supported the Governments risk communication together with other national stakeholders through a series of workshops and trained near 100 provincial and district level staff. Some 46,921 information, education and communication materials on COVID-19 precautions were distributed across nine provinces. 36 districts benefited from the community radio programme on essential COVID-19 and safe migration information, and 300,000 people across five provinces were reached through the broadcasting of No Stigma radio script. The Safely Back to School Campaign with key messages on the COVID-19 prevention reached over 6.5 million people via social media platforms. Throughout the year UNCG launched joint campaigns on key international days including the Human Rights Day, International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and International Day of Persons with Disabilities, advocating for "building back better" and putting the most vulnerable groups at the center of the response. In collaboration with China Radio International awareness raising and information campaigns on COVID-19, GVB, sexual reproductive health, and social-economic impact were implemented through live radio program every Friday.

Finally, the UN in Lao PDR maintained its active presence through its website and social media platforms. The new UN in Lao PDR website (English version) was launched in June using global template and accumulated 79,915 pageviews by year-end. A Lao

version of the website is under preparation to be launched in early 2021 to better engage local people. The UN in Lao PDR [Facebook page](#) gained 15,572 page likes (up from 13,813 likes in 2019 and 10,643 likes in 2018), and the [Twitter account](#) had 1,551 followers (up from 1,231 followers in 2019 and 1,013 in 2018).

2.6 Evaluations and Lessons Learned

An independent evaluation of the UNPF was launched in September to assess progress and results against intended outcomes, including gender equality and other cross-cutting themes. Key findings that will be used to inform the development of the next UNSDCF include that:

- the UN is a neutral partner with strong technical expertise supporting the Government to achieve the 8th NSEDP and SDG targets,
- the UNPF is well aligned with national plans and priorities of the 8th NSEDP with specific results primarily delivered through individual UN entity efforts working with partners, and that the UNPF has contributed to progress towards most targets but the implementation results are mixed,
- overall, the UNRC and UNCT is leading movement towards both improved interagency and broader stakeholder collaboration but differing administrative modalities make it difficult to optimize results and avoid duplication,
- sustainability needs to be supported as an integrated whole including focusing on resiliency, institution strengthening, building, and sustaining human capital within the Government and widening the partnerships to include private sector, non-governmental organizations, and new DPs,
- the UN has provided good entry points to discuss sensitive topics but needs to better coordinate with other DPs and the Government to continue to advance the gender equality agenda,
- the Government requests a UN lead agency on gender issues since UN Women is no longer in country,
- promotion and strengthening of human rights have a transformative effect but is still weak in some policy areas,
- disaster management has worked as a critical entry-point for challenges related to environmental

- sustainability since it has a high degree of acceptance,
- an articulated Theory of Change with key assumptions and outcomes would help provide an overarching strategy on the programme and result-based management,
- the 10 SWGs set up by the Government in partnership with the UN and DPs and the eight UN Results Groups set up under the UNPF are not well coordinated,
- the uniqueness of UN Agencies and the large number of indicators makes it challenging to collect data and ensure government ownership. More support will be needed to help Lao PDR overcome data related and statistical capacity concerns,
- the UNPF can provide an overall umbrella mandate but more emphasis is warranted on contribution rather on attribution of results to make this workable for all DPs.

In addressing some of these findings, key recommendations include the:

- introduction of uniform administrative procedures among UN agencies, funds and programmes,
- broadening the partnerships under the new cooperation framework,
- increased Government engagement through the development of the UNSDCF and major coordinated programmes,
- increased participation by Government counterparts in programmes designed and implemented by and with UN entities,
- outcome level alignment of SWGs and Results Groups to promote and track transformational changes,
- strengthened M&E and statistical management as well as overall joint reporting,
- continued efforts by UNRC to support culture change encouraging joint programme design and implementation,
- ensured overall centrality of resilience for sustainability of initiatives, including for disasters,
- internal UN entity enforcement of policy changes at national, regional, district and local level,
- extension of gender mainstreaming to programme implementation to ensure women and girls benefit equally from progress,

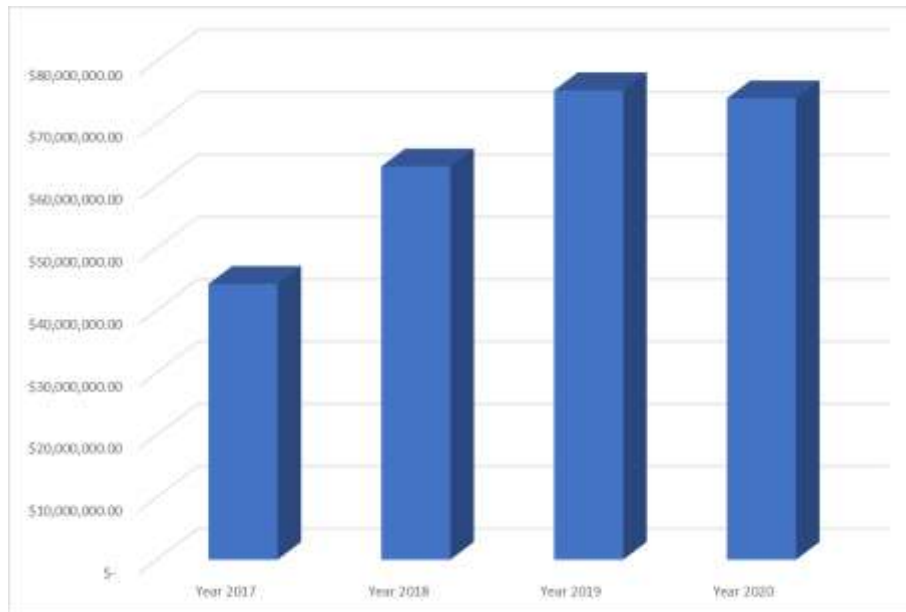
- better utilization of human rights entry points, beginning with child rights, educational rights, and addressing poverty alleviation, health, and social justice concerns,
- utilisation of disaster risk management as entry point for environmental sustainability, as a lead towards climate issues and ecosystem degradation,
- a Theory of Change developed jointly with the Government, including on the identification of indicators,

- increased baseline data and data coordination, and the development with the Govt of a joint integrated capacity development plan, including on building M & E capacity to help develop baselines and measure progress.

2.7 Financial Overview and Resource Mobilization

2.7.1 Financial Overview

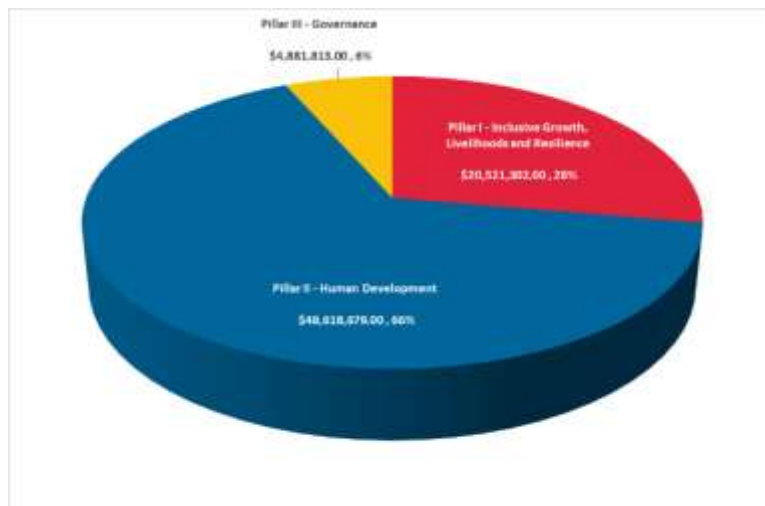
Chart 1: UN in Lao PDR programmatic delivery, annually 2017-2020



In 2020, the total budget across the UNPF strategic outcome areas tallied USD 96.5 million, of which USD 74.0 million (75.57%) was delivered during the year. In absolute numbers, this is slightly lower than the delivery in 2019 (USD 75.3 million), but higher than 2018 and 2017 (USD 63.0 million and USD 44.2 million

respectively, see Chart 1 below). Given the impact of COVID-19 to the overall programming, the relatively high level of delivery indicates a reassuring level of resilience in the ability of UN in Lao PDR to continuous delivery despite significant external disruptions.

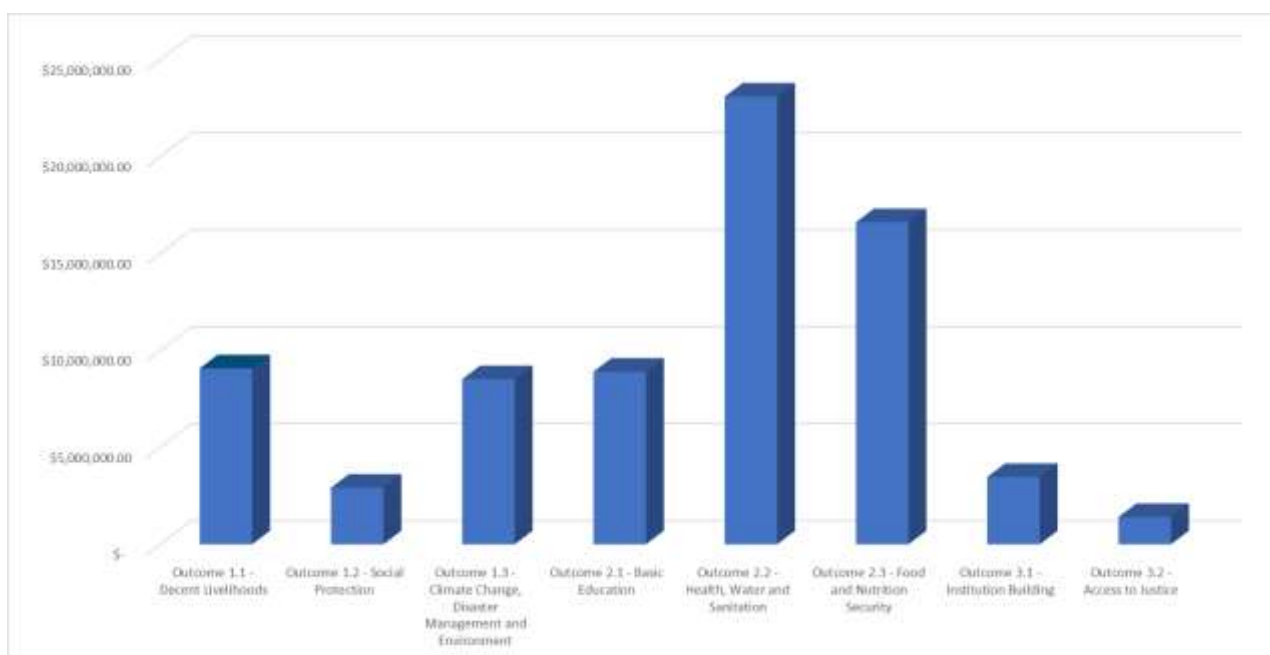
Chart 2: UN in Lao PDR programmatic delivery in 2020, by pillars



In terms of programmatic expenditures by pillars, Inclusive Growth, Livelihood and Resilience accounted for 27.72%; Human Development accounted for 66.89%; and the Governance pillar accounted for 5.79% respectively. As for outcome areas, Health and WASH as well as Food Security and Nutrition accounted for over half of the expenditure (31.20% and 22.45% each), followed by Decent livelihood (12.26%), Education (12.03%), and Climate Change, Disaster

Management and Environment (11.51%). Measured against SDGs, highest investments were found in health (SDG3) reaching USD 22.9 million of expenditure (or 31.61%), followed by USD 17.38 million of expenditure or 23.98% invested in SDG2 on food security. By comparison, no expenditure was reported against SDG14, and SDG7, 9 and 11 each saw less than one % of the total expenditure.

Chart 3: UN in Lao PDR programmatic delivery in 2020, by outcome

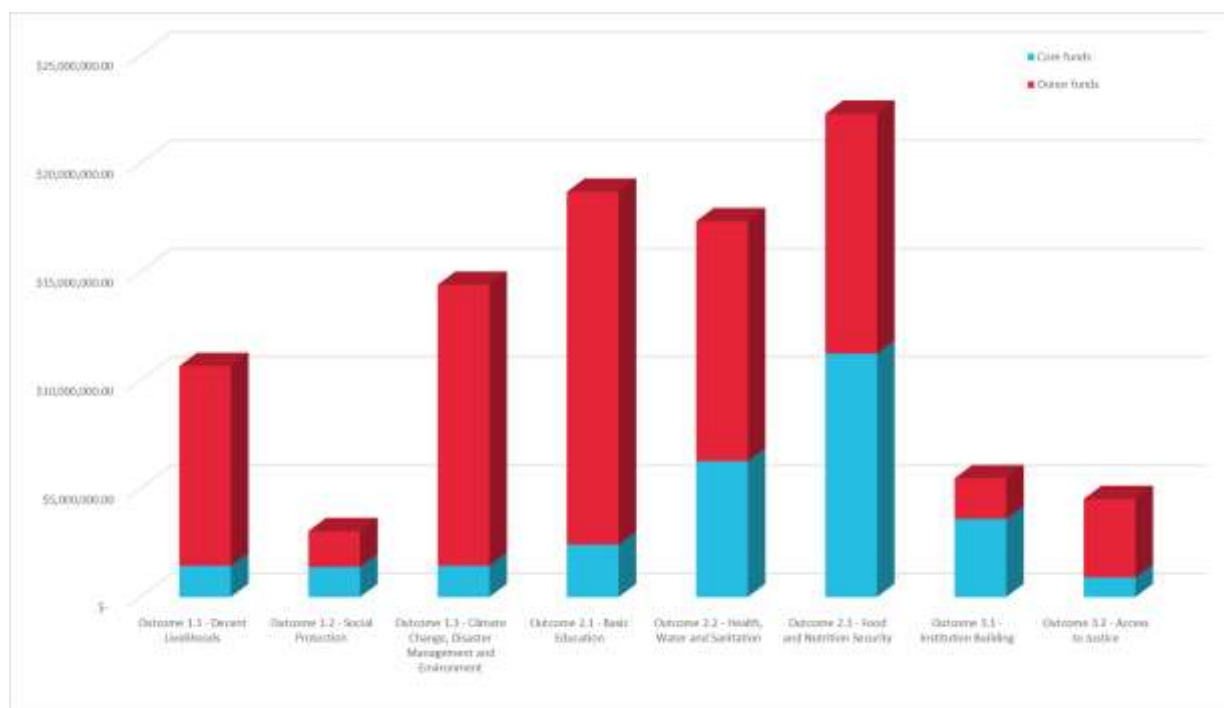


2.7.2 Resource mobilization

In 2020, 29.35% of the funding came from UN agencies' core funds while the remaining originated from trust funds, the private sector, foundations and other organizations and governments. UN received contributions from over 60 partners and/or sources at the country level, regionally and globally. In total,

partner contributions amounted to USD 69.2 million by the end of 2020, with the largest contribution from the Global Environmental Facility (USD 6.35 million). The total financial resources required for UNPF implementation for 2021 across the UN system in Lao PDR is estimated at USD 85.20 million, of which USD 3.72 million is to be further mobilized.

Chart 4: UN in Lao PDR Available Budget (core funds and donor funds) based on outcomes in 2020



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 (e.g. through the ongoing consultation on the new UNSDCF) 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 9th 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.



WFP, 2021

Chapter 3 - UNCT key focus for 2021

Similar to last year, 2021 will not be a regular year of implementation for the UN in Lao PDR. As the direct impact of COVID-19 on the health of the Lao people becomes clearer, the reverberating economic and social consequences are evolving. While it is imperative that the immediate threats posed by the pandemic are addressed, it is also essential that UNCT enhance coordination and cooperation, mobilize resources and adapt its development planning and programming to support Lao PDR in building back better towards a more sustainable development pathway. Key priorities for UNCT in 2021 include:

- the completion of the new integrated **UNSDCF** which prioritizes interventions in the most critical and transformative areas to which the UN can bring the most added value. Anchored in Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, the new UNSDCF will be aligned with the 9th NSEDP, taking into consideration the evolving context, and ensuring the commitments towards leaving no one behind explicitly identifying the most vulnerable groups. With regular monitoring and evaluation and common country analysis, necessary course corrections can be enabled in operational programme plans and documents to ensure programmatic outcomes.
- Supporting Government in the rollout of the 9th **NSEDP**, including its implementation arrangements for M&E, costing, and financing the plan including with an analysis of the financial landscape and in proposals for optimizing public sector financial management. With a tight fiscal space, the UN will support the best use of available resources in line with sound prioritization enabling a sustainable development for all. This will include careful examination of options for the financing of the NSEDP (in light of COVID-19), budget tagging to better track expenditure against development priorities, and strengthen the national architecture for managing and allocating development finance to support more efficient and effective use of resources at this critical moment.
- As Lao PDR prepares to **graduate from LDC status** in 2026, UNCT will continue to support the Government for a smooth transition, including preparation of briefings and policy analysis on the implications of LDC graduation, coordination and generation of a clear shared understanding of priorities and key issues during the graduation process, strengthen Lao PDR's capacity to comply with rules and regulations of bilateral and multilateral preference schemes once graduated

from the LDC status, and further develop a Smooth Transition Strategy for graduation.

- Supporting Government in **integrating SDG** targets and indicators into national planning, bringing the SDGs to the local level, and preparing its 2nd Voluntary National Review in 2021. Work will continue to link human rights with the national development achievements and SDGs; and build capacities of central and local authorities on M&E to improve data availability and quality, and with civil society, academia and the private sector to strengthen their engagement in the SDGs.
- In response to **COVID-19**, UN will provide substantial support to the COVID-19 vaccines roll-out, including the national COVID-19 vaccine deployment plan formulation, vaccines procurement, cold room set-up and logistical support, communication, and awareness-raising, etc. The UNCT will also continue to address the socio-economic challenges brought by COVID-19.
- The UNCT will continue supporting the Government in fulfilling its international **human**

rights obligations through the coordinated engagement with the international human rights mechanisms, such as Treaty Bodies, UPR, and Special Procedures. In 2021, the UNCT's assistance will be focused on the preparation for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities periodic review, development of a trackable UPR Action Plan, and implementation of the recommendations emanating from the recent reviews by CEDAW, Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

- With the potential decline of external financing (ODA in particular) due to the prolonged global recovery from COVID-19 and the forthcoming LDC graduation, UNCT will aim to enhance **partnership and resources mobilization** with not only traditional donors but also emerging DPs, the private sector and CSOs to expand the resource pool and tap synergies in advancing the SDGs to ensure leaving no one behind.

Annex 1: Lao PDR's Global Rankings in Key Development Indicators

#	Index	Organization	Year	Rank	Direction	Rank	Year
1	Doing Business ³²	World Bank (WB)	2020	154/190	=	154/189	2019
2	Logistics Performance Index ³³	WB	2018	82/160	↑	152/160	2016
3	Index of Economic Freedom ³⁴	The Heritage Foundation	2021	141/180	↓	129/178	2020
4	Sovereign Credit Rating ³⁵	Fitch	2020 (Sept)	CCC	↓	B(-)	2020 (Pre-Sept)
5	Country Risk Classification ³⁶	OECD	2020	7 [1=Best 7=Worst]	=	7 [1=Best 7=Worst]	2010-2015
6	The Corruption Perception Index ³⁷	Transparency International	2020	134/180	↓	130/176	2019
7	Democracy Index ³⁸	The Economist Intelligence Unit	2020	161/167	↓	155/167	2019
8	Worldwide Press Freedom ³⁹	Reporter Without Borders	2021	172/180	=	172/180	2020
9	Global Innovation Index ⁴⁰	WIPO	2020	113/131	No information available		
10	E Government Development Index ⁴¹	UNDESA	2020	167/193	↓	162/193	2018
11	Global Competitiveness Index ⁴²	World Economic Forum (WEF)	2019	113/141	=	113/141	2015-16
12	Statistical Capacity Indicators ⁴³ (Overall score)	WB	2020	62.2/100	=	67.8/100	2019
13	Human Development Index	UNDP	2019	137/189 (0.613)	↑	137/188 (0.609)	2015
14	Sustainable Development Goals	SDSN	2020	116/166	No information available		
15	Political Stability and Absence of Violence / Terrorism ⁴⁴	WB Worldwide Governance Indicators	2019	64.76	↑	62.38	2014
16	Government Effectiveness	WB Worldwide Governance Indicators	2019	20.67	↓	39.42	2014
17	Voice and Accountability Index	WB Worldwide Governance Indicators	2019	3.94	↓	4.43	2014
18	Rule of Law Index	WB Worldwide Governance Indicators	2019	17.31	↓	25.48	2014
19	Regulatory Quality Index	WB Worldwide Governance Indicators	2019	23.56	↑	21.63	2014
20	Control of Corruption Index	WB Worldwide Governance Indicators ⁴⁵	2019	13.46	↓	21.15	2014
21	Global Freedom Score ⁴⁶	Freedom House	2020	14/100 (Not Free)	=	14/100 (Not Free)	2019
22	Environmental Performance Index (EPI)	Yale University	2020	130/180 (34.8)	↑	153/180 (43)	2018
23	Climate Risk Index (CRI)	German Watch	2019	45/130 ⁴⁷	NA	22/135	2018

³² World Bank *Doing Business Indicators Database*

³³ World Bank *Aggregated Logistics Performance Index 2012-2018*

³⁴ The Heritage Foundation, *2020 Index of Economic Freedom*

³⁵ Fitch Ratings, *Rating Action Commentary- Fitch Downgrades Laos to CCC (23 September 2020)*

³⁶ OECD, *Country Risk Classifications of the Participants to the Arrangement on Officially Supported Export Credits*

³⁷ Transparency International, *Corruption Perceptions Index 2020*

³⁸ Economist Intelligence Unit, *World Democracy Index*

³⁹ Reporters Without Borders, *2020 World Press Freedom Index*

⁴⁰ Global Innovation Index 2020 (September 2020)

⁴¹ UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *2020 United Nations E-Government Survey (July 2020)*

⁴² World Economic Forum, *Global Competitiveness Report 2019: How to end a lost decade of productivity growth (October 2019)*

⁴³ World Bank, *Statistical Capacity Indicators*

⁴⁴ World Bank, *Worldwide Governance Indicators*

⁴⁵ For all World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicators, percentile rank (0-100), with 0=lowest ranked country, 100=best ranked country.

⁴⁶ Freedom House, *Global Freedom Score*

⁴⁷ Read as follows: Lao PDR has been the 45th most affected country by extreme weather events in 2019 (fatalities and economic losses)

Annex 2: Indicative Financial Overview

Yearly Financial overview	2017 Delivery	2018 Delivery	2019 Delivery	2020 Delivery	2021 Planned commitments	2021 funding gaps
Pillar I - Inclusive Growth, Livelihoods and Resilience	14,361,449.00	18,462,541.00	19,927,298.00	20,521,302.00	29,639,149.00	2,946,267.00
Outcome 1.1 - Decent Livelihoods	8,119,269.00	7,728,390.00	7,264,215.00	9,077,352.00	10,257,177.00	1,297,321.00
Outcome 1.2 - Social Protection	181,518.00	1,130,909.00	1,369,454.00	2,923,131.00	5,104,618.00	1,085,473.00
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	14,277,353.00	563,473.00
Strategic Priority 2 - Pillar II - Human Development	24,143,868.00	38,647,035.00	49,284,953.00	48,618,679.00	46,922,999.00	573,316.00
Outcome 2.1 - Basic Education	9,413,117.00	11,691,722.00	12,586,691.00	8,904,129.00	10,451,574.00	-
Outcome 2.2 - Health, Water and Sanitation	8,863,299.00	13,972,558.00	22,410,278.00	23,097,492.00	26,729,940.00	573,316.00
Outcome 2.3 - Food and Nutrition Security	5,867,452.00	12,982,755.00	14,287,984.00	16,617,058.00	9,741,485.00	-
Strategic Priority 3 - Pillar III - Governance	5,750,291.00	5,984,634.00	6,105,649.00	4,881,813.00	9,461,459.00	750,000.00
Outcome 3.1 - Institution Building	3,931,200.00	4,215,699.00	3,752,987.00	3,473,388.00	4,426,241.00	-
Outcome 3.2 - Access to Justice	1,819,091.00	1,768,935.00	2,352,662.00	1,408,425.00	5,035,217.00	750,000.00
TOTAL	44,255,608.00	63,094,210.00	75,317,900.00	74,021,794.00	86,023,607.00	4,269,583.00



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2021